



## JOINT LIBRARY AND CIVIC ARTS AGENDA REPORT

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May 2, 2022  
Item 2

**TITLE: APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF THO NGUYEN AS THE PLEASANTON TEEN POET LAUREATE FOR THE 2022/2023 SCHOOL YEAR**

### **SUMMARY**

The Teen Poet Laureate provides poetry at civic events and aims to raise awareness of the importance of poetry toward the development and enhancement of the lives of Pleasanton teens. In March 2022, the Civic Arts Teen Poet Laureate subcommittee began the recruitment for the Teen Poet Laureate for the coming 2022/23 school year. Candidates participated in interviews with City commissioners, our current Teen Poet Laureate, and City staff and provided writing samples and community references. From the pool of applicants, a candidate was selected on April 20, 2022.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve the appointment of Tho Nguyen as the Pleasanton Teen Poet Laureate for the 2022/23 school year.

### **FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

The City Teen Poet Laureate receives no remuneration. Any expenses related to the Teen Poet Laureate program such as supplies for workshops, poetry readings, and teen events are allocated in the Civic Arts budget #00150407-433154, in an amount not to exceed \$1000.

## **BACKGROUND**

On November 17, 1998, the City Council approved the Civic Arts Commission's recommendation to create the position of a Pleasanton Poet Laureate, to provide poetry at civic events and promote the appreciation of the literary arts in the community. These Poet Laureates established a tradition of poetry readings and community programs, such as television broadcasts and the Poetry, Prose, and Arts Festival.

With the success of the adult Poet Laureate, the City started the formal process to recruit and appoint a Teen Poet Laureate in August 2012. The Teen Poet Laureate Program was established to raise awareness of the importance of poetry toward the development and enhancement of the lives of Pleasanton teens. The Teen Poet Laureate would conduct community writing workshops, poetry readings and events, and share poetry and literary pieces at public events and dedications. In January 2013, the first two students from Amador Valley High School and Foothill High School were appointed to serve as the City's Teen Poet Laureates for the 2012/2013 school year. Since the appointment of the first two students, there have been 15 total Teen Poet Laureates. Their collective projects and initiatives have included readings on school campuses and at civic events, open mic nights, afterschool library pop-up poetry sessions and creative poems set to music in collaboration with the Firehouse Art Center's High School Music Collaborative.

Past Teen Poet Laureates include:

- Arany Uthayakumar (2012-2013)
- Diana Fu (2012-2013) & (2013-2014)
- Nive Raghavan (2013-2014)
- Nicole Tsuno (2014-2015)
- Maya Lyubomirsky (2014-2015)
- Frances Tang (2015-2016)
- Kyler Juarez (2015-2016 and 2016-2017)
- Kyle Mular (2016-2017)
- Irene Sha (2016-2017 and 2017-2018)
- Nithya Swaminathan (2016-2017 and 2017-2018)
- Yasmin Ghaemmaghani (2017-2018)
- Varsha Vaidyanath (2017-2018)
- Sandra Chen (2018-2019)
- Kanchan Naik (2019-2020)
- Nikita Jayaprakash (2021-2022)

In March 2022, Library and Recreation staff began the formal recruitment process for the Teen Poet Laureate position for the 2022/23 school year. Incoming high school juniors and seniors who enjoy writing and inspiring others and interested in contributing to their community were encouraged to apply. Applications were accepted through April 13, 2022.

City commissioners representing the Civic Arts Commission and Library Commission, along with the 2021/22 Teen Poet Laureate and City staff, participated in an interview panel on April 20, 2022. The City's next Teen Poet Laureate was selected from a pool of five candidates. The successful candidate was chosen based on their passion for creative writing and experience in the field of poetry. They also represented a high level of community engagement for all ages and inclusivity that was highlighted in their innovative program ideas.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Teen Poet Laureate subcommittee recommends that the Civic Art Commission and the Library Commission appoint Tho Nguyen from Amador Valley High School for the school year term of 2022/23. Tho is a Pleasanton teen who is actively involved in school clubs including Science Olympiad, Amador Writers Ensemble, and Girls Who Start. She also participates in the Amador Marching Band, Pleasanton Student Inter-Schools Action Council, and the Cantabella Children's Chorus. Tho is a staff editor for Interstellar Literary Magazine and an essay editor for Tri-Valley Editing Services. Her poetry has been published in Kalopsia Magazine, Cathartic Literacy Magazine, and the Bitter Fruit Review.

With the recommendation of the Civic Arts Commission and the Library Commission, the Teen Poet Laureate will read an inaugural poem at the June 7, 2022 City Council meeting and upon Council approval, will serve from August 2022 through May 2023.

The Civic Arts Commission and the Library Commission are encouraged to support the incoming Teen Poet Laureate through their community connections, advocacy, marketing ideas, and attendance at programs.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel Prater".

Rachel Prater  
Recreation Manager