

City of Olympia Arts Program

Olympia Poet Laureate

Policy No. _____

BACKGROUND: In November 2015, Olympia City Council made a referral to the Olympia Arts Commission to investigate the creation of a Poet Laureate Program for Olympia.

PURPOSE: To celebrate and expand upon poetry in our community.

“POET LAUREATE”: Historically, a Poet Laureate was appointed by a government to compose or recite poems for special occasions. Poet Laureates also conduct workshops and readings, activities and events. The City wishes to pursue a Poet Laureate program in order to:

- Promote poetry as an art form
- Expand access to the literary arts
- Connect the community to poetry
- Promote poetry as a community voice that contributes to a sense of place

AUTHORITY: Policy of the Olympia Arts Commission, Olympia Parks, Arts & Recreation, and the Olympia City Council.

1.0 Policy:

1.1 The Olympia Arts Commission is responsible for providing Poet Laureate recommendations to the Olympia City Council. The Olympia Arts Commission, using an inclusive jury process, will evaluate the applicants according to stated criteria.

2.0 Selection Process:

2.1 A 5-member jury, selected by the Arts Commission and composed of two Arts Commission members, one representative of the literary poetry community, one representative of the spoken word poetry community, and one citizen at large shall be convened to review the poet laureate submissions. The Arts Program Manager shall serve as facilitator to this panel.

2.2 Prior to the submission deadline, the Arts Commission will offer a free workshop to prospective applicants, clarifying the application and selection process. In future years this panel will include former Olympia Poets Laureate, who can share their individual experiences.

- 2.3 Applicants must be Olympia residents (within city limits or in the Urban Growth Area) over 18 years of age. A residency verification process will be conducted prior to approval.
- 2.4 Submissions require a resume and samples of work, from published and self-published volumes and/or video recorded readings and performances.
- 2.5 Each Poet Laureate shall serve a term of two years.
- 2.6 The selected Poet Laureate will offer a minimum of 2 instructional workshops per year, and participate in Arts Walk spring or fall of each year.
- 2.7 Each submission must include a proposal for a minimum of 6 additional hours of contact time with the public per year, that actively contributes to and advances Olympia's literary community.
- 2.8 The jury recommends to the full Arts Commission one Poet Laureate and an alternate. The Commission's recommendation will be communicated to the City Council for formal acceptance or rejection.
- 2.9 For their term of service in the community, each Poet Laureate will receive a stipend of \$1,000 per year (\$2,000 total) from the Municipal Art Fund.

3.0 **Selection Criteria:**

The jury reviews each application for aesthetic quality, community involvement, and capacity for public engagement in the literary arts, all equally weighted.

3.0(a) ***Aesthetic Quality***

- Do the written or recorded work samples exhibit strong aesthetic merit?
- Are the works consistently strong? Does the applicant produce poetry on a regular basis?

3.0 (b) ***Community Involvement***

- Does the applicant demonstrate a history of involvement and activity within the literary arts?

3.0 (c) ***Potential for Engagement***

- Does the proposal support the poet's ability to engage Olympia's citizens in meaningful ways to further the literary arts in our community?

4.0 **Administration**

- 4.1 Each selected Poet Laureate will enter into an agreement with the City.

- 4.2 Each Poet Laureate will manage their own schedule, be the point of contact for all programming inquiries from the public, arrange details for their programs and coordinate press releases with the City's Arts Program staff.
- 4.3 If a poetry reading at an official City occasion is one item on the agreed scope of work, the Mayor reserves the right to review the proposed poem(s) beforehand (either their own or the work of another poet(s)), and accept or decline the reading. If the reading is declined, the Poet Laureate will replace the event in their schedule.
- 4.4 Each Poet Laureate will help to choose and transition the successor Poet Laureate.