



**DATE:** September 18, 2018

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** City Manager

**SUBJECT** Resolution Affirming the Continuance of the Hayward Poet Laureate Program, the Establishment of City Protocol for Poet Laureate Appointments, and the Extension of the Appointment of Bruce Roberts as the City of Hayward Poet Laureate through June 30, 2019

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That City Council approves the attached Resolution affirming the continuance of the Hayward Poet Laureate Program, the establishment of protocols for the selection of future Poet Laureate appointments effective July 1, 2019, and the extension of the appointment of Bruce Roberts as the Hayward Poet Laureate through June 30, 2019.

### **SUMMARY**

The City Council established a pilot Hayward Poet Laureate Program in 2015 to raise awareness of the power of poetry and other forms of literature. The Council appointed Mr. Bruce Roberts as the City's first official Poet Laureate and, having performed his duties in an exemplary manner at a variety of public events, the City Council approved his re-appointment in FY2017 and again in FY2018.

Based on the success of the program, staff recommends that the Poet Laureate Program continue and that a formal protocol be established for the selection of Poet Laureates effective July 1, 2019. Furthermore, staff recommends that the appointment of Bruce Roberts as the City's Poet Laureate be extended through June 30, 2019, and that the budgeted \$500 Poet Laureate stipend be extended to Mr. Roberts in recognition of his continued work during this period. If approved by Council, staff from the Library Services Department will be assigned to support the Poet Laureate Program and the work of the Poet Laureate.

### **BACKGROUND**

A Poet Laureate is a poet officially appointed by a government or conferring institution who is expected to represent their institution and community through the art of poetry. The Hayward Poet Laureate's general responsibility and duties are to develop poetry that is dedicated to the Hayward community, to read poetry works at official occasions and special public events, and to raise the public's awareness of the power of poetry and other forms of literature to uplift and inspire people.

On June 2, 2015, the City Council established a pilot Hayward Poet Laureate Program, and appointed Mr. Bruce Roberts as the first official Poet Laureate for the City of Hayward. On June 28, 2016, the City Council approved Resolution No. 16-124 establishing a permanent Poet Laureate Program for Hayward, reappointing Bruce Roberts as the Poet Laureate for FY 2017, and approving the introduction of a program stipend of \$500 to support the work of the Poet Laureate for that year. On November 27, 2017, City Council approved Resolution 17-174, officially extending Mr. Roberts' appointment through FY 2018.

## **DISCUSSION**

As the City of Hayward's Poet Laureate, Mr. Bruce Roberts prepared and read poetry at several public meetings and City events. He also supported poetry events conducted by local art and cultural organizations and encouraged the community's appreciation, creation, and performance of poetry. In doing this important work, Mr. Roberts successfully demonstrated and raised the awareness of the power of poetry, along with other forms of literature, to uplift and inspire others.

Because of the program's success, staff was directed by the City Council to create a competitive process by which future Poet Laureate appointments would be made, with the approval of the City Council. Council also directed the provision of an annual financial recognition or other token remuneration associated with each Poet Laureate appointment.

**Proposed Structure for the Hayward Poet Laureate Program:** Staff recommends that the following Poet Laureate structure be established:

*Term of Poet Laureate Appointments:* Staff recommends that Poet Laureate appointees serve two-year terms, at the pleasure of the Mayor and Council. Staff also recommends that the first Poet Laureate that is selected by a Poet Laureate Selection Panel serve from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021 (i.e., the two-year term: FY 2020 – FY 2021). To accommodate this time schedule and fill the time-gap, Staff also recommends that the appointment of Bruce Roberts as the City's Poet Laureate be extended through June 30, 2019.

*Remuneration:* All persons appointed as the City's Poet Laureate would be provided a \$500 stipend for each year served. The financial remuneration is intended to partly defray the cost of the Poet Laureate's travel and materials, and to recognize the significant contribution of time and service that the Poet Laureate makes to the Hayward community. Staff recommends that this remuneration be extended to Bruce Roberts as well if his re-appointment for the FY 2019 term is approved.

*Responsibilities:* The Hayward Poet Laureate responsibilities would include the following:

- 1)** Create and read or perform poetry and other forms of literature at City public meetings and community events when requested. The poetry should reflect on current events, cultural matters, and community issues impacting Hayward – including challenges, accomplishments, and causes for civic engagement and community pride.

- 2) Write at least one poem for each year in office that is dedicated to the City of Hayward, and which can be displayed in public places.
- 3) Raise awareness about the power of poetry and other forms of literature that are designed to uplift and inspire others.
- 4) Work with the Hayward Public Library, Hayward Unified School District, the Hayward Area Recreation and Park District, Cal State University East Bay, Chabot College, and/or other Hayward community organizations serving youth and/or adults to promote literary creativity and an appreciation of literary arts.
- 5) Participate in at least one poetry workshop per year where poetry writing is taught, and where workshop participants have an opportunity to share, reflect, and discuss one another's work.

*Qualifications:* Staff recommends that candidates meet the following qualifications. The ideal candidate will be:

- 1) A Hayward resident who is 18 years old or older and is active in Hayward neighborhood / community activities;
- 2) Someone who celebrates the spirit of Hayward and portrays the diversity of the Hayward community and its potential through poetry;
- 3) Someone who demonstrates a commitment and passion for poetry, and through it embraces the opportunity to address the Hayward community's triumphs and struggles;
- 4) Someone who can serve as a role-model to others and inspire future generations of Hayward poets;
- 5) An advocate for poetry, literature, and the use of the arts in general to raise community awareness, promote Hayward pride, and inspire Hayward community members to engage in civic action;
- 6) An influential public speaker, an effective teacher and coach, and an inspirational poetry presenter / performer in front of live audiences;
- 7) Able to commit to a two-year term, representing the City of Hayward and the Hayward community, as the Hayward Poet Laureate; and
- 8) Able to demonstrate past achievements in the art of poetry through sample works based on the following criterion:
  - a) Overall Impact                      Poetry that is memorable.

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|------------------------|---|
| b) Beauty              | Poetry that is artful in its descriptive use of language. |
| c) Power               | Poetry that is emotionally moving.                        |
| d) Inspirational       | Poetry that encourages action.                            |
| e) Entertaining        | Poetry that is amusing and/or interesting.                |
| f) Technically Correct | Poetry with no grammatical errors or misspelled words.    |

*Poet Laureate Selection Structure and Process:*

Poet Laureate Selection Process:

Staff recommends that the selection process for appointing Hayward Poet Laureates consist of three steps, including: 1) A paper review of applications and sample works of poetry by a selection panel; 2) Applicant in-person interviews of the finalists chosen and interviewed by the selection panel; and 3) A recommendation made by the selection panel to, and a final two-year appointment made by, the Hayward City Council.

Creation of a Poet Laureate Selection Panel:

A Poet Laureate Selection Panel (Selection Panel) would be created to carry out the process described above. Staff from the Library Services Department will be assigned to support the Selection Panel and the work of the Poet Laureate once appointed.

Staff recommends that the Poet Laureate Selection Panel consist of seven voting members, plus one seat filled by the most recent appointed Poet Laureate who would serve in an ex-officio, advisory capacity. The voting members of the Selection Panel would be made up of appointees selected by the following:

- 1) The Mayor, or the Mayor's designee (Two Appointees);
- 2) The Hayward Youth Commission (One Appointee);
- 3) The Hayward Library Commission (One Appointee);
- 4) A Hayward Unified School District (HUSD) faculty member appointed by the HUSD Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee (One Appointee);
- 5) A Chabot College faculty member appointed by the Chabot College President or the President's designee (One Appointee); and
- 6) A California State University, East Bay (CSUEB) faculty member appointed by the CSUEB President or the President's designee (One Appointee).

To foster continuity over time, staff recommends that the appointed Selection Panel members serve staggered terms. To achieve this, for first panelist appointments only – the appointees from HUSD, Chabot College, and CSUEB would serve two-year terms, and the remainder of the panelist appointments would serve three-year terms. In subsequent years, all panelist appointments would be for three-year terms thereafter.

The first Poet Laureate that is selected by a Poet Laureate Selection Panel serve a two-year term effective July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021. This would allow their term to start near the beginning of the academic year for local school and college systems.

### **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

The Poet Laureate Program is designed to encourage student and adult community members to develop lifelong enrichment, and even careers, in the literary and performing arts field. The Poet Laureate Program will also be designed to elevate Hayward's profile as a literary and performing arts destination that will in turn draw the interest of celebrated writers and poets in supporting literary arts in Hayward. If successful, residents from the broader San Francisco Bay Area will want to travel to Hayward to participate in local literary arts programs and events, which in turn increases the opportunity to visit and buy from local businesses, boosting the local economy.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

If approved, the \$500 Poet Laureate stipend will be absorbed in the City's Adopted FY 2019 budget. In subsequent years, staff recommends that the stipend be appropriated as part of the Mayor and Council adopted budget.

### **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

This item supports the City Council's Complete Communities Strategic Initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to create and support structures, services, and amenities that provide inclusive and equitable access with the goal of Hayward becoming a thriving and promising place to live, work, and play for all. This item supports the following goal and objectives under the Complete Communities Initiative:

Goal 1: Improve the quality of life for residents, business owners, and community members in all Hayward Neighborhoods.

Objective 2: Foster a sense of place and support neighborhood pride.

Objective 3: Increase collaboration with businesses, nonprofits, and neighborhood groups in placemaking projects.

Objective 5: Actively value diversity and promote inclusive activities.

### **PUBLIC CONTACT**

The agenda for this item was posted in compliance with the California Brown Act.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Upon the City Council's adoption of a Resolution affirming the continuance of the Hayward Poet Laureate Program and the establishment of protocol for selecting Poet Laureate appointments, staff will initiate the creation of a Poet Laureate Selection Panel and begin the recruitment process for Hayward Poet Laureate candidates. The Selection Panel's recommendation for the Hayward Poet Laureate for the FY 2020 – FY 2022 two-year term will then be presented to Council for approval.

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*Recommended by:* Jane Light, Interim Library Director

Approved by:



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Kelly McAdoo, City Manager