



DATE: May 19, 2020

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Director of Library Services

SUBJECT: Adopt a Resolution Extending the Appointment of Bruce Roberts as the Hayward Poet Laureate Through June 30, 2021

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopts a resolution (Attachment II) extending the appointment of Bruce Roberts as the Hayward Poet Laureate through June 30, 2021.

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, FY2018, and FY 2019.

With the opening of the new library in October 2019, Library staff were unable to give the process of vetting and selecting a new poet laureate for the City the attention it deserves. Mr. Roberts has continued to serve as Poet Laureate, even after his latest term ended on June 30, 2019. Staff recommends that Mr. Bruce Roberts' appointment as Hayward's Poet Laureate continue for another 2-year term, from July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2021. Library staff recommends that Mr. Roberts receive the \$500 Poet Laureate stipend in recognition of his continued work through the June 30, 2020 period. Library staff recommends discontinuation of the Poet Laureate stipend from July 1, 2020 until further notice. Mr. Roberts has agreed to continue his duties as Poet Laureate through June 30, 2021, without the stipend if the Council agrees to continue his appointment.

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, to help promote creativity and appreciation of the literary arts. 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, the City Council approved Resolution 17-174, officially extending Mr. Roberts' appointment through FY 2018. On September 18, 2018, the City Council again extended the appointment through June 30, 2019 (CONS 18-599). At that time City Council established an annual stipend of \$500 for the Poet Laureate program and directed Library staff to oversee and implement the competitive process by which future Poet Laureate recommendations would be made for the City Council's approval.

With the focus on the opening of the new 21st Century Library over the last year, it has been difficult for Library Staff to give the process of vetting and selecting a new Poet Laureate for the City the attention it deserves. However, Mr. Roberts has continued to function in this role, including writing a poem for the opening of the new library in September of 2019. Under the circumstances, the Library Services department recommends that the City Council extend Mr. Bruce Roberts' appointment as Hayward's Poet Laureate for another 2-year term, from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021.

DISCUSSION

As the City of Hayward's Poet Laureate, Mr. Bruce Roberts has prepared and read his poetry at several public meetings and City events. In addition, Mr. Roberts has been an active supporter of the Literacy Plus program, through his participation in the Literacy Plus Council and his poetry contributions for the Literacy Plus Program and the Library as a whole. He has shown strong commitment to the Literacy Plus program through his advocacy in the community, his active participation in the monthly Literacy Plus Council meetings, and his willingness to volunteer in several different capacities.

Mr. Roberts' poetry submissions have been of great value to the Library and Literacy Programs, and he has poems prominently displayed both in the Education Services Office and on the first floor of the Library. Additionally, his poetry has been a highlight of the annual Literacy Plus Volunteer Reception, where it has been read aloud as part of the program and printed on mementos for attendees of the event. The work Mr. Roberts contributes skillfully expresses the importance and relevance of literacy and value of poetry in the Hayward community, inspiring tutors and learners alike. He has 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.

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. Creating a love of reading and the arts in children is known to have a positive impact on the academic performance of students. The Poet Laureate Program is designed to elevate Hayward's profile as a literary and performing arts destination that will help 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. The study *Arts & Economic Prosperity IV*, published by Americans for the Arts, gives detailed data on revenue that investment in the arts can bring to a community.

FISCAL IMPACT

Per the recommendations in CONS 18-599, the \$500 Poet Laureate annual stipend is appropriated as part of the Mayor and Council adopted FY 2020 budget.

STRATEGIC ROADMAP

This item is not specifically related to a project identified in the Strategic Roadmap.

PUBLIC CONTACT

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

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of the attached Resolution, Bruce Roberts' tenure as Poet Laureate will be extended by 2 years, from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021 and payment for the FY2020 stipend will be processed.

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Recommended by: Jayanti Addleman, Library Director

Approved by:



Kelly McAdoo, City Manager