

City of Red Bank
Public Art Citizens' Advisory Board Meeting
June 17, 2026, 6:00 PM
Red Bank Community Center
3653 Tom Weathers Drive

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Tessa Ross called meeting to order

II. ROLL CALL

Chair Tessa Ross called roll.

Attendees: Tessa Ross, Megan Ledbetter, Philip Luckey, Amy Griffith, Julie Goss, and Meghan Furr, Cathy Billings

Absent (with notice): Monique Clouse, Taylor Kinser

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

A. Public Art Citizens' Advisory Board Meeting May 20, 2026

Motion to approve: Amy Griffith; Second: Meghan Furr. Motion Passed.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. Follow-up Discussion: Red Bank Arts Festival

The board received administrative updates following formal notification of the unexpected cancellation of the 2026 Red Bank Arts Festival, which had been scheduled for September 26, 2026, and a review of the Discussion Paper shared by the City Manager during the June 3, 2026 administrative meeting with Chair Tessa Ross. Board members held a detailed discussion regarding how these operational challenges, administrative constraints, and structural impacts limit the board's capacity to fulfill its mission to advise the City Commission, support city staff, and guide public art initiatives for the community. The board noted that community input from the Red Bank Public Arts Survey has consistently helped shape its recommendations.

Philip Luckey made the motion (seconded by Amy Griffith) to enter the Chair's statement presented at the June 16th Red Bank Commission Meeting as an addendum in our meeting minutes, adopting the remarks in representation of the entire Board (the motion passed in favor).

V. ADJOURNMENT Tessa Ross

Next meeting Wednesday, July 15, 2026 from 6-7 PM at RB Community Center

Discussion Paper
Red Bank Art Citizens Advisory Board (CAB)
2 June 2026

The current Art CAB Bylaws need to be re-accomplished. Especially the portion in Article II, C, 5; the various 'authorities' are problematic and need deletion or wholesale revision. Indeed, the Bylaws need a complete reset to re-align with the Art CAB resolution, acknowledge staff role and responsibilities, and provide a framework for all to operate within. Specific needs include: completion of the signal box wraps, and two other park restroom murals

Lastly, and regrettably, working relationships between the Art CAB and staff are strained; the relationship has reached a point where the status quo is no longer tenable. Hence, we will undertake meaningful conversations to restore good relationships and outcomes where all can be pleased

The path forward:

There will not be an Art Festival in 2026

In partnership with the Art CAB, staff will undertake to revise the Bylaws in accordance with the enabling resolution to include a mission and vision statement that accurately characterizes the focus of the Art CAB's work going forward

The Art CAB will interact with the Director of Community Development Leslie Slay

The Art CAB will undertake a body of work that is approved and supported by staff

The City of Red Bank deeply appreciates the work of the Art CAB and looks forward to more collaboration and success in the future

* Staff originally envisioned the Art Festival to be roughly the same scale of event... and similar staff level of effort... as a Food Truck Friday. What this means on a practical level is limited planning is required; one parks staff, one Laborer, one tent... maybe 20 hours of total work. What has emerged is a third major annual event on par with the Jubilee and Christmas Parade.

Red Bank Arts - Tessa Ross Commission Statement on June 16, 2026

Good evening. My name is Tessa Ross. I'm a resident, and this is my third year serving as chair on the Public Art Board.

The City of Red Bank's mission is to build a vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive community. But you cannot achieve that without supporting the arts.

The Red Bank Arts Festival was created to be a free, family-friendly event to celebrate and engage our community. The Public Art Board has poured our hearts into planning this year's event since January – and honestly, since October, when we began reviewing past feedback specifically to streamline the process and decrease city staff bandwidth constraints.

Yet, on Wednesday, June 3rd, I was informed that City Manager Martin Granum canceled this highly-anticipated community event due to a 'lack of staff capacity.' However, despite asking how many staff hours were contributed last year to justify this decision, I received no answer. Having learned how far out city planning occurs, I can't fathom how this decision was made so late and so hastily.

Our city's mission statement explicitly promises a transparent government. True transparency means backing up major cancellations with public data, not sudden executive decisions based upon assumptions.

So, I did my own math. I have personally invested 92 hours just since January. Collectively, the Public Art Board has put in approx. 200 hours to plan this event. We didn't just brainstorm; we did the heavy lifting. We identified performers, demonstrators and volunteer groups; created all marketing resources and sponsorship packets to cover costs; and when asked by city staff, we even hand-measured the site to map it out.

To cancel this event one week before vendor applications opened is a profound disservice to commission-appointed volunteers, to our community, and to our local economy.

Administration has tried to equate the Arts Festival to the Jubilee or the Christmas Festival. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of municipal strategy. Those are wonderful neighborhood celebrations, but the Arts Festival was doing entirely different, mission-driven work – it's a hands-on cultural showcase built to deliver on our city-approved mandate for a wide variety of public art experiences, while actively driving regional foot traffic to our local businesses. Yet, I was told recently that the city 'didn't ask the Art Board to create another festival' and was recommended to just stick to visual arts.

But our mission, approved by this commission, is 'to encourage and support a wide variety of high-quality public art experiences.' These experiences are not limited to murals and electrical box wraps. They include the musicians, dancers, and makers who anchor our community and activate our public spaces.

Studies show that investing in the arts is not a luxury; it's a blueprint for thriving cities. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, for every single dollar invested in the arts, the economy gains up to five dollars in return through local spending. By narrowing our scope, administration is leaving money, community vibrancy, and our approved mission on the table.

In a time of deepening division, the arts offer a rare arena where empathy and belonging can thrive. When we rely solely on infrastructure, we get a city with a stage but no performance.

I hope these words serve as a reminder to this Commission that investing in the arts is not just investing in beautification – it is an investment in our economy, our public well-being, and our identity. As leaders, our job is to find creative solutions to capacity problems, not to cancel the initiatives that bring us together. Thank you.