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Palo Alto Online News

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Art commission names new chair, vice chair
Chair Usich and Amanda Ross elected Thursday night

by Eric Van Susteren
Palo Alto Weekly Staff

The Palo Alto Public Art Commission elected two of its members to the positions of chair and vice chair during its annual election Thursday night, Sept. 20.

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Larisa Usich, a five-year veteran of the commission and former vice chair, was elected unanimously to the position of chair, replacing Ally Richter. Richter will continue to be a member of the commission.

Usich said she would focus on bringing murals downtown -- including new works in civic buildings such as libraries -- and bringing the city's art collection to the public's attention.

Amanda Ross, who joined the commission in 2011, was elected vice chair, filling Usich's position.

Richter also announced that commissioner Richard Ambrose had resigned from the board.

The commission voted to preliminarily approve temporary public art piece "Aurora," designed by San Francisco artist Charles Gadeken.

The sculpture is a 30-foot-tall metal willow tree adorned with 40,000 full-color LED lights and 4,000 metal leaves. The commission agreed that the likely location for the piece would be in front of City Hall.

Gadeken said he hoped "Aurora" would stay in Palo Alto for at least a year. Full approval to include the piece would be contingent on outside fundraising efforts, word from engineers that the piece would meet specifications for the site, and finally permission from the city.

The commission agreed to provide up to \$1,200 to pay for permitting and insurance for the piece as an "olive branch."

The commission also voted to include donated sculpture "La Guitarra" at Cogswell Plaza in downtown Palo Alto with the stipulation that its de-installation, transportation and moving costs be less than \$5,000.

The commission also voted to approve an additional \$3,000 for manufacture and installation of artwork for the Mitchell Park Library and Community Center teen room.

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