

For Immediate Release

Contact: Daniel Brezenoff
(562) 570-5843

Garcia Introduces Arts and Culture Initiative for Long Beach Blue Ribbon Panel, Policy Changes on March 2 Council Agenda

February 17, 2010

Long Beach – Councilmember Robert Garcia has authored four pieces of legislation and cosponsored a fifth intended to revitalize and reinvigorate the arts and cultural life of Long Beach. All five will appear on the March 2 City Council agenda, and artists and art supporters are expected in large numbers to show their support.

After months of research and discussions with arts advocates and community leaders, Garcia is proposing a Blue Ribbon panel to examine how the arts are funded, as well as changes to the municipal code that would support struggling artists, ease some entertainment permitting processes, and encourage more performance and entertainment in nontraditional venues.

“Long Beach has a fantastic artistic and cultural community, and there is a groundswell of creativity happening that offers a great opportunity for the City,” said Garcia. “These proposals will support what is already naturally occurring, and help Long Beach reach its fullest potential as an arts and cultural center.”

Craig Watson, Executive Director of the Arts Council, says he looks forward to the implementation of this initiative. “The arts provide a competitive advantage for cities working to attract business and smart growth,” Watson noted, “as well as provide amenities to citizens and healthy alternatives for youth, particularly in tough economic times. These arts initiatives are part of an overall strategy to keep Long Beach growing as a great, American city”.

Garcia is also cosponsoring a motion, authored by Councilmember Lowenthal, to adopt the Cultural Master Plan, a document of objectives and goals for the City drafted by arts advocates last year. Many of those goals and objectives are addressed by the arts initiative on the March 2 agenda.

“Long Beach has a rich and diverse history of arts and culture dating back to its inception, contributing significantly to the fabric of our city, its economic development and traditions,” said Councilmember Lowenthal. “This comprehensive package of arts-related motions recognizes that significance and seeks to build upon the discussion begun by our residents, businesses and organizations about the current status of the arts in our city and their fundamental role in our city’s economic, social and civic culture.”

The Blue Ribbon panel will look not only at how to raise more funds for arts and culture, but also how those funds are distributed and put to use in the community. The suggested changes to the municipal code come out of months of discussion with arts advocates, who helped to identify sections that are obsolete or not conducive to a thriving urban arts community.

Councilmember Patrick O'Donnell of the Fourth District cosponsored two motions. "Creating a Blue Ribbon Commission helps create a voice for our neighborhoods in the arts community, as well as provides important recognition for the need to fund arts projects on every level," he said. Councilmember O'Donnell also cosponsored a motion to ease the entertainment permitting process for certain venues.

Third District Councilmember Gary DeLong, who cosponsored a measure to strike the obsolete street performance restrictions, stated that, "Particularly in today's difficult economic environment, it is essential that we all continue to support our City's arts and cultural institutions."

Vice Mayor Val Lerch of the Ninth District and Councilmember Dee Andrews of the Ninth also cosponsored parts of the arts initiative.

"There are so many creative people in our city," said Garcia. "If our residents are going to fully benefit from that economically and culturally, the Council has to lead the way, by creating the right conditions for the arts to thrive."

###