

# Arts Commission Applicant

**KATHLEEN D BENJAMIN**

**Application Date: 07/20/21**

**Reside in Santa Monica: no**

**If yes, number of years: 53**

**Work in Santa Monica: yes**

**If yes, number of years: 47 years**

## INTERESTS AND EXPERIENCE

### **Current or prior service on city boards/commissions:**

I have not served directly on a city boards or commissions. However I do believe that during my time as a resident and business owner in Santa Monica I have personally influenced many boards by my activism and powerful support for: Arts Commission, Commission on the Status of Women, Senior Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission.

I was nominated by the community to be a member of the Belmar History and Art Advisory Board. I had the opportunity to work with Dr Jefferson, April Banks, City Staff, the California Coastal Commission, The Arts Commission, 2 fellow board members, and the Sports community. There was high level community engagement, excavating stories and memories of the past, listening to community members young and old while staying united on the mission with all participants that ultimately influenced the artist and the art. The Belmar History + Art (BH+A) project commemorates the history of the African American residents and business owners of the historic Belmar and surrounding neighborhoods. The evolution of this project commissioned through its Percent for Art Program and made possible by Santa Monica Cultural Affairs and the City of Santa Monica's Public Works Department is a great example of collaboration for the highest and best outcome for all The Resurrection in 4 Stanzas (is a permanent art sculpture) historical panels and the Belmar park all combine to be educational, inspirational, and a civic commemorative justice project. Creating an amazing open space that benefits the entire community.

I was able to demonstrate leadership, creativity and innovative activities that unified the community. As President of the Santa Monica Area Interfaith Council I arranged interfaith blessing to unify to bless those who were displaced including the Tongva people creating a sense of peace, healing and forgiveness.

I also participated in history gathering, massive community engagement, ongoing collaboration. Have deep ties to this community I was able to introduce the community to the historian and the artist while bringing awareness to the project. It was an honor and very familiar activity for me to lead in collaborative efforts and to connect people and resources for the Belmar History and Art Project.

I have worked with the PTA, WRAAP, Will Rogers African American Parents, Irma Lyons and Mary Anna Novack at Will Rogers Elementary School for 5 years on fundraising for specials events, basic school up

keep, paint etc, a nutritional program that brought the first salad bar to a title one school. I've worked to create cultural art awards for :MLK day at Will Rogers, JAMS, Cinco De Mayo, and Juneteenth celebration. I have worked with School liaisons at JAMS and Rogers on numerous projects.

Irma Lyons was a principal at Rogers and later died from cancer. A number of teachers' community members and I created a legacy project to honor her by building a school in Ethiopia with a non-Profit called imagine 1 day. We raised the funds and worked with the local community and government to build this school that is still in operation today.

I co-founded the Love and Unity Festival. A city event. The first festival was held on Saturday March 10, 2007. This event was sponsored by the City of Santa Monica, Santa Monica College HRC and several other organizations. This event focused on creating unity and awareness around the cultures in our city through sharing traditions, food, music and City resources.

I worked with Robin Gee of City TV, City staff and groups of interns from Santa Monica College to create the present advertising pamphlet, map and street signs for Woodlawn. The stained glass windows are highlighted. They are also hidden treasures. I have had the honor of being the MC for several Memorial Day services at Woodlawn.

**Community activities:**

Santa Monica College Advisory Board: General and Executive

Santa Monica Foundation

VAP Commercial kitchen

Black History Month City of Santa Monica

Juneteenth Celebration City of Santa Monica and Calvary Baptist Church

Vice President of Santa Monica Area Interfaith Council

League of Woman Voters Santa Monica

American Red Cross- Fundraising (Ventura)

Self Realization Fellowship Pacific Palisades

The Santa Monica Conservancy

St Josephs Center Venice

**Qualifications, experience, education, and technical or professional requirements:**

I have always had an interest in art and never had the time to pursue it beyond my work. For 3 decades as a renowned chef, personal chef and business owner of a company that provided full service catering, chef staffing and special events for the rich and famous I was a culinary artist. I have experienced and created amazing art for Richard Myer, David Orgel, Bobbie Leonard, Brain De Paulma, Steven Spielberg, Rod Stewart, Lisette Ackenberg Burt Bacharach, Jean Houston and many others. They also shared their art collections with me.

My travels to Florence, Venice, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Paris, New York, London, Hong Kong is were I educated myself. I continue to educate myself through memberships with museums, art collections worldwide and my travels.

My most resent lessons were with Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union who own George Washington's land and home and they are also in charge of the property on the other side of the Potomac. Their goal is to maintain the atmosphere of the past. The Freedman Cemetery and Memorial in Alexandria is where African American soldiers were buried during and after the Civil War. I am a lifelong learner.

**Areas of demonstrated expertise:**

I have advanced experience in strategic planning and project management for corporate, private events and retreats throughout California, Washington DC, Virginia and Maryland and Oregon as well as assisting in planning for campaigns, city council and a variety of boards.

I was honored to be involved in the Belmar History and Arts Project as a member of the Advisory Board Committee. We had an amazing plan and an even more amazing timeline. We were creative, deliberate and mindful during community engagement, while gathering history and data as well as ensuring that the community felt heard. We developed policy for choosing future specialists. We worked directly with the community and the artist to influence the art.

I have been involved in fund raising for the last 3 years with the American Red Cross Pacific Coast. We raised thousands of dollars for Shelter of Hope, Sound the Alarm, assisting military families and training programs. I also received an award for my efforts.

I am excellent at setting financial goals and reaching them through great planning and outreach. I have demonstrated this through project with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Boys and Girls Club, Santa Monica Rotary, imagine 1 day, Los Angeles Hawks and other projects.

I am an expert at Community Engagement. My ability to connect and collaborate throughout the community for mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources is what I do best. My history and involvement allow me the luxury of connection. I have long ties and relationships in this community and I value each one.

**Goals:**

It is my goal to ensure that the art and art programs of our city represent our eclectic community and to share and enrich all lives through many expressions of art. I look forward to a continued collaborative relationship with the present City Council, other Boards and Commission, Santa Monica Unified School District, and Santa Monica College so that together we can through private and public partnerships have beautiful art in public buildings and spaces.

**Vision:**

**Personal Qualities:**

While working with the City on the Love and Unity Festival later to be called the Unity Resource Festival I was able to lead the city in creating cultural awareness through education, sharing traditions and music. I was able to expand and innovate through collaborating with additional organization like The Census Bureau and the LA Marathon.

In Ventura I have been able to raise 7 figures for the American Red Cross while also creating lifelong partnerships with vendors in the community and supporting our troops returning home.

Innovation and creativity is what makes projects work. I have done this with ideas and leadership with The League of Women Voters on drives and getting people educated and interested in different issue throughout the years. I have been able to create and fund scholarships for students through the school district and for local college students as the President of the Santa Monica College Advisory Board and have given other award of recognition through the Rotary Club and networking business groups.

As Vice President of the Santa Monica Area Interfaith Council I have been innovative in creating events and ways to bring different cultures and religions together.

**Working with fellow commissioners:**

I see myself working with fellow commissioners in a collaborative focused way that allows us to expand our reach and our efforts through daring and clear communication and our willingness to listen, respect each other and to do our part.

**Will you be able to commit the necessary time to perform your duties if appointed to the board?**

yes

**How did you learn about the vacancy in this board or commission? (select all that apply)**

Word of Mouth- Council or Board/Commission member, City Staff, neighborhood groups, etc.

**BUSINESS INFORMATION**

Occupation: Licensed Spiritual Practitioner

Business name: Licensed Spiritual Practitioner

Business address: 2015-17th Street Apt B

Santa Monica, Ca 90404

Business phone: (310)991-1561