

Arts Commission Applicant

Jeff H Swimmer

Application Date: 05/10/21

Reside in Santa Monica: yes

If yes, number of years: 20

Work in Santa Monica: no

If yes, number of years:

INTERESTS AND EXPERIENCE

Current or prior service on city boards/commissions:

Chair, Santa Monica Arts Foundation - current

Member, Santa Monica Arts Commission - current

Community activities:

Open Up Schools, AYSO, PTSA (Franklin, Lincoln, SaMo High), Santa Monica Synagogue Board, long-time volunteer at Turning Point shelter (SM).

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

I'm a Santa Monica native.

In my term on the Santa Monica Arts Commission, I have been actively involved in debating the many issues that have come before us regarding public art, arts financing and governance, and arts non-profits in the area.

In addition to my service on the City boards mentioned above, I have also served on the boards of the International Documentary Association, Cause Cinema, the Santa Monica Synagogue, and several small local non-profits.

In terms of education, I received a B.A. from U.C. Berkeley, and a Masters from Northwestern University in Broadcast Journalism.

I am a thrice-published author, veteran documentary film producer and director, and full-time Professor in Documentary in the Dodge College of Film and Media Arts, Chapman University (since 2008).

Areas of demonstrated expertise:

1. I chair the Santa Monica Arts Foundation, and am involved in strategic planning with regards to our budget, and how to integrate arts creation and performance spaces with private sector owned real estate.

2. For 12 years I have trained hundreds of young people in the craft of making and distributing documentary films, and in finding work in media arts. My student's films have twice won Student Oscar nominations, and countless other awards.
3. In addition to my Arts Foundation work, I have long been an active financial supporter and participant in many local arts and dance-related non-profits.
4. With the SM Arts Foundation, fundraising is key to support the Arts Leadership Awards, and I've played a key role in this.
5. For decades I've been heavily involved in SM schools, sports leagues, music and arts organizations, either directly or through the 4 children I have raised in Santa Monica.
6. Most of this work has been done through my time on the Arts Commission and Foundation.
7. I've not had a role in any park design.
8. I've informally advised arts, service and sports group in which I've been involved on ideas for programming.
9. I'm an avid user of city recreation facilities, but have not been involve with them professionally.

Goals:

I would very much like to make the Arts Commission better integrated with City policies regarding the future of the arts in Santa Monica, and to put arts businesses at the center of rebuilding re-branding efforts for our beleaguered city.

Vision:

Santa Monica is, as everyone knows, in multiple challenging situations at the moment in the wake of the pandemic and the May 2020 riots. The Arts, I believe, can play a vital role in revitalizing our town, and I want to be at the forefront of debates about what and how we can re-build with artistic goals and values at their center.

Personal Qualities:

I believe I'm genial, relaxed and eager to hear all viewpoints on issues we're debating. I'm also a strong believer in the idea that the arts shouldn't be seen as "charity," but should be viewed as a key part of the economic engine that can help get the city back on its feet.

For example, the Arts Commission was tasked with advising on the very contention issue of who should take over managing the artist studios at the SM Airport. Debates were fraught and emotional, and I believe I added both a measure of cool-headedness, and displayed a knack for finding overlapping goals among competing entities, in order to help defuse a fraught dialogue.

Working with fellow commissioners:

I'm known to be very collegial, and also to speak my mind about issues that come before the Commission even if they are not always the prevailing points of view. I think I bring unique and fresh insights to our debates, and don't take anything for granted.

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: Professor, Documentary

Business name: Chapman University

Business address: One University Drive

Orange, CA 92866

Business phone: