



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, LMSW, Assistant City Manager *SHH*

FROM: Roosevelt Weeks, Director of Libraries *RW*

DATE: September 30, 2024

SUBJECT: **Staff response to Resolution 20240502-093 - Poet Laureate Program**

On May 2, 2024, the Austin City Council approved [Resolution No. 20240502-093](#), directing the City Manager to create a City Poet Laureate program. This resolution instructed the Austin Public Library (APL) to house and manage the program and create a Poet Laureate Committee to develop program guidelines, review applications, and recommend candidates to the Director of the APL.

In response to these directives, APL formed the Poet Laureate Committee, consisting of the following members:

- Allison Steger (APL; Committee Chair)
- KB Brookins (poet and author)
- Maria-Elena Cigarroa (APL, Librarian)
- Marianne DeLeón (Texas Book Festival, CEO)
- Kezia Frayjo (Library Commission, Member)
- Mike Henry (former Austin Poetry Slam Director)
- Sylnovia Holt-Rabb (Economic Development Department, Director)
- Katherine Lamb (Library Foundation, Programs Manager)
- Becka Oliver (Writers League of Texas, Executive Director)
- Leah Oswald (APL, Librarian)
- Celina Zisman (Arts Commission, Chair)

Prior to September 18, 2024, Patti Fowler (APL) was the Committee Chair and Bret Anthony Johnston (Michener Center for Writers, Director) and Jackie Rangel (Read Write Austin) also served on the Committee.

The Committee has been meeting monthly since June 2024 to develop the official [Poet Laureate Program guidelines](#). The inaugural Poet Laureate will serve a two-year term from April 2025 to April 2027, receive an annual salary of \$25,000, and be allocated a \$10,000 annual budget for program expenses.

On September 7, 2024, the Austin Poet Laureate Program was publicly launched at the "Austin is A Poem: The Austin Poet Laureate Program Kickoff" event. Hosted at the Central Public Library, the celebration featured performances by Amanda Johnston (Texas Poet Laureate), Aris Kian (Houston Poet Laureate), Mag Gabbert (Dallas Poet Laureate), Eddie Vega (San Antonio Poet Laureate), and other esteemed poets. KB Brookins and Mike Henry hosted the event, which was sponsored by APL and the Austin Economic Development Department.

With the Austin Poet Laureate program now formally launched, APL's Communications and Marketing teams are planning a comprehensive outreach campaign to promote the program and encourage local poets to apply for this new role.

The application portal will open on October 1, 2024, and applications will be accepted through November 30, 2024. The Committee will review applications in December 2024 and January 2025. Finalists will be invited to interview in February 2025, and the names and rankings of the final candidates will be submitted to the Director of APL. The 2025–2027 Austin Poet Laureate will be announced in April 2025 during National Poetry Month at an investiture ceremony at the APL.

If you have any questions, please contact the Interim Director Hannah Terrell at 512-974-7466 or Hannah.Terrell@austintexas.gov.

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
CMO Executive Team