



AGENDA

Fergus Falls Public Arts Commission
May 15, 2025 – 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
Council Chambers at City Hall

Agenda

1. Call to Order
 - a. Approval of Minutes (April 17, 2025)
 - b. Approval of Agenda
2. Old Business
 - a. Sculpture Walk Celebration Plans
 - b. Welcome Week
3. New Business
 - a. Future Art Projects
 - b. Preservation Support for Public Art Sculpture at PioneerCare
4. Adjourn

FERGUS FALLS PUBLIC ARTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
April 17, 2025

The Fergus Falls Public Arts Commission (PAC) met on Thursday, April 17, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 12:00 PM. Members present were Kim Embretson, Lee Smalt, Brooke Barsness, and Kim Konikow. Absent was Tom Rieschick. Staff present: Jill Hanson & Naomi Schliesman, Sculpture Walk Manager.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Kim Konikow and seconded by Lee Smalt to approve the minutes from March 20, 2025 with the addition of the two pieces of rotating art in the council chambers will be chance out by Kim Konikow before the June Council meeting.

Chair Embretson amended the agenda to include a discussion of Welcoming Week.

Sculpture Walk Update – Celebration Planning

Naomi Schliesman, Sculpture Walk Manager, presented the April Sculpture Walk report to the PAC. Chair Embretson mentioned Bill Sonmor the City Finance would like to have the artists submit invoices on their letterhead, so he has backup for their payments. Naomi explained the proposed installation date of the sculptures is Tuesday, May 20 at 9:00 AM. Naomi will be working with the City's Public Works department and a welder to install the sculptures and their plaques. There was some discussion about the locations of the sculptures and the logo to use for the plaques. Chair Embretson stated using the City logo on the plaques might help to get more support from the City Council. Kim Konikow mentioned including the name of the PAC on the plaques to make the public more aware of the group. Naomi stated that we need to include Lake Region Arts Council on the plaques because of funding they provided. We also need a QR code on the plaques. Lee Smalt mentioned the PAC should have a social media presence. Naomi was going to have a sample plaque done for the PAC to view prior to them being created. It was noted that the plaques would have rounded corners.

Naomi asked the PAC members to review the plans for the celebration. Naomi stated the celebration for the inaugural installation and will be an Opening Reception on Saturday, May 31, 2025, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Fergus Falls Senior Center. The event will include an artist talk, a walking tour of all six sculptures, and a community gathering with coffee and refreshments. Naomi stated she would like some volunteers to help with the celebration. Chair Embretson volunteered to speak at the celebration. Kim Konikow wanted to see the PAC mentioned in the information for the celebration. The PAC members volunteered to help with celebration as needed. There was some discussion about sharing notices with other art groups in the community.

Naomi asked for help with the walking map, noting it might not be done by May 31, 2025. There was some discussion about how the QR code would bring people to the City website. Lee Smalt mentioned reaching out City staff about possible access to the city website and working with Visit Fergus Falls on updates. Chair Embretson mentioned having signage to direct people to the sculptures, splash pad, and the market site. There was some discussion about the budget.

Welcoming Week

Kim Konikow mentioned she had spoken to Klara Beck about Welcoming Week. Klara had said the Fergus Falls Public Library has a request for funding that has been submitted to West Central Initiative by the Library to host a Welcoming Week event (September 12–21). If funded, the project invites members of the PAC to collaborate with the Human Rights Commission to design an interactive Declaration of Human Rights display to be on view at the Fergus Falls Public Library during Welcoming Week. A writing workshop to create a "Welcoming Credo" is also planned. Kim Konikow provide some background on Welcoming Week and the events being planned in Fergus Falls. She suggested the PAC support Welcoming Week through art. There was some discussion, and Naomi Schliesman mentioned some activities she has done on prior welcoming week programs that involved arts. The PAC can discuss it further at their next meeting.

2025 Work Plan

Chair Embretson explained the PAC needs to create plans to work on in 2025..

- Naomi Schliesman suggested creating name plaques for the other public art pieces in the community.
- Continue the rotating art in Council chambers to increase visibility.
- Lee Smalt cataloging of artwork.

- Lee Smalt mentioned building murals and 3D letters, depending on funding by sponsorship.
- Project idea: podcast of Chris Schuelke's local historical knowledge.
- Chair Embretson stated he spoke to Council member Mike Mortenson about potential art honoring local fire, police, and EMTs. Mike told Chair Embretson that he would contact some individuals to see if there was some interest in supporting this kind of art before we move forward with it because the City would need to be the host.

The next PAC meeting will be May 15, 2025, at noon. The meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM.

Chair

Preservation Support for Public Art Sculpture at PioneerCare

From Nathan Johnson <nathanj@pioneer-care.org>
Date Mon 5/12/2025 6:18 PM
To Klara Beck <Klara.Beck@fergusfallsmn.gov>

1 attachment (3 KB)
Outlook-PioneerCar;

Hi Klara,

I'm reaching out to explore Public Arts Council's potential support or guidance with preserving a public art piece on our campus.

PioneerCare is home to a Kirk Williams fountain sculpture, commissioned in 1983. Originally a centerpiece at our former site (and once part of our logo), it now resides in our open courtyard, accessible to residents and the public. Here is a [Daily Journal article](#) for reference.

We're working with Naomi Schliesman on restoration: cleaning, repairs, and sealing. Most importantly, it is necessary that we change its water source from our well-fed retention pond to a clean city water connection. The well-fed source is too harsh and is deteriorating the sculpture from when Kirk restored it in 2019.

We'd welcome any insight or support PAC can offer to help ensure the continued restoration and visibility of this meaningful public art piece.

Thanks,
Nathan



Williams' sculpture starts second life

In 1983, artist Kirk Williams was commissioned to create a fountain sculpture for Pioneer Home's garden court, a project by Pioneer Carmon Jackson and the Lundeen family as

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Our Mission:

"To promote quality of life in a Christ-like way for those we serve by providing diverse and holistic care focusing always on individual dignity and worth."

Williams' sculpture starts second life

By Johanna Armstrong

Jul 12, 2019



Johanna Armstrong | Daily Journal

A return: Artist Kirk Williams poses behind his sculpture, "Grandma and Grandpa," at PioneerCare.

By Zach Stich



Home's garden court, a project by Pioneer Home administrator Carmon Jackson and the Lundeen family as a way to honor the memory of Ione Lundeen, who passed away in 1982 and loved flowers and gardening. The sculpture and the garden were completed by 1985, with a special dedication in May of that year.

In 2011, when PioneerCare was built and Pioneer Home was torn down, the sculpture was saved and put into storage, its future uncertain.

This year, after much refurbishing (Williams, his wife and his sister had to clean off the oxidation from the whole sculpture using steel wool), the sculpture depicting an elderly couple huddled beneath an umbrella once again soaked in the sunlight and stood vigil over flowers and other foliage.

Its new surroundings are reminiscent of the old, enclosed garden at Pioneer Home. "It's like a modern interpretation of the garden at the old building," said Steve Guttormson, marketing manager for PioneerCare, although that wasn't the intention when they built the new pergola and was something that happened naturally. "With the sculpture reinstalled here at PioneerCare, this fountain and space reminds us of where we came from," Guttormson said at a reception celebrating the sculpture's reinstallation on Thursday, July 11, "both as individuals, as we honor our parents and grandparents, and as an organization, honoring our past and continuing our mission."

The original artist, Williams, was also there with his family to celebrate the return of his sculpture, titled "Grandma and Grandpa," which he made when he was 28 years old. It was the first time he'd made a sculpture that size, the first time he'd ever made a bust and the first time he'd ever tried doing cold cast bronze, a technique that uses powdered bronze and epoxy.

"I didn't know what I was doing," he admitted at the reception on Thursday. "Anyway, I finished it and Carmon Jackson was just elated, and I thought that was a good sign."

Williams was happy to receive the call from Guttormson letting him know that they had found a place for the sculpture, after being told it would be sitting in storage following Pioneer Home's demolition. He was able to take the sculpture to local metal artist Jeffrey Zachmann's studio and got to work cleaning it up and preparing it. Beneath the rust, he was relieved to see the

original sculpture had rusted off, but, together with Zachmann, Williams was able to make a new one using stainless steel.

The symbolism of the elderly couple beneath the umbrella, and its new second life at PioneerCare, was not lost on Williams. He said, "That's what this is about... . It is a symbol of the people that come here, who've had all these lives and these marriages and a lot of their lives have passed before them, and when you think about it that's what's most important in life: That protection and that closeness with the people you love."

Guttormson also commented on the symbolic nature of the sculpture, saying, "It helps visualize who we care for at Pioneer, who we're helping." The old man's umbrella, as a protection against the rain, fits what Pioneer is.

Williams' final sculpture also sits inside PioneerCare's Celebration Center and, over the years, many people have come up to him to comment on it. "It just really hits me in the heart," he said, "that I can make something and people actually come back and say, 'That was awesome.'"