

CITY OF COOS BAY CITY COUNCIL

Agenda Staff Report

MEETING DATE	AGENDA ITEM NUMBER
July 21, 2026	5.b

TO: Mayor Benetti, Council President DiNovo, and City Councilors

FROM: Nichole Rutherford, City Manager

THROUGH: Nichole Rutherford, City Manager

ISSUE: Consideration to Begin Negotiations for Transfer Ownership of Building and Permanent Art Collection to Coos Art Museum

SUMMARY:

The Coos Art Museum (CAM) Board of Directors has submitted a Letter of Intent supporting their interest to negotiate a transfer of ownership of both the building and the permanent art collection. Staff is recommending Council authorization for the city manager to begin negotiations to arrive at an equitable agreement for both parties, followed by working with legal counsel to prepare appropriate documents for property transfer.

ACTION REQUESTED:

If it pleases Council, authorize the city manager to negotiate the terms of the ownership transfer and work with legal counsel to prepare the appropriate documents for the transfer.

BACKGROUND:

The Coos Art Museum was established in 1966 and has grown to become Oregon's third-oldest art museum. During its early years, the Museum operated from several locations before relocating to its current home at 235 Anderson Avenue in 1984. The building, constructed in 1936 as the United States Post Office for Coos Bay, is one of the community's most recognizable Art Deco structures and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In the early 1980s, following relocation of postal operations, community leaders recognized the opportunity to preserve the historic building while establishing a permanent home for the Coos Art Museum. Coos Bay voters subsequently approved General Obligation Bonds authorizing the Coos Bay Urban Renewal Agency to acquire and rehabilitate the former post office for this public purpose. The investment preserved an important historic landmark, strengthened downtown Coos Bay, and established a lasting cultural institution for the community.

Since 1984, the City and Coos Art Museum have maintained a successful public-private partnership. The City has owned the museum building and, since 1993, the Museum's permanent art collection, while Coos Art Museum has operated the facility, curated exhibitions, provided educational programming, cared for the collection, and served as the region's primary visual arts institution. This collaborative model has successfully served the community for more than four decades.

Over that time, both the City and the Museum have invested substantially in preserving and improving the facility. The City has funded major capital improvements and maintained ownership responsibility for the building, while the Museum has contributed significant private fundraising and financial resources toward maintenance, repairs, exhibitions, and building improvements. Despite these investments, the nearly ninety-year-old building continues to require significant capital investment, including accessibility improvements, building system upgrades, and deferred maintenance.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

City Council Meeting July 21, 2026

The CAM Letter of Intent identifies an initial transitional support amount of \$50,000 annually for the first five years following transfer of ownership which may be revised during negotiations.

ATTACHMENT(S):

- CAM Letter of Intent.pdf