City of Needles, California
Request for City Council Action

☐ CITY COUNCIL ☒ NPUA ☐ HACN ☒ Regular ☐ Special

Meeting Date: January 13, 2026

Title: Public Art Mural(s) to Be painted on Electrical Utility Boxes

Background: City Councilmembers have previously discussed the opportunity to improve the appearance of electrical utility boxes located within public rights-of-way as part of broader efforts to enhance the City's visual environment and improve the overall public realm. Public art treatments on utility infrastructure have been utilized by other jurisdictions as a practical streetscape enhancement and an effective vandalism deterrence strategy.

Staff has reviewed several potential approaches to implementing an electrical box art program. These approaches include volunteer-based efforts supported by City-provided materials as well as professionally commissioned artwork delivered by local or regional artists. Implementation models vary depending on project scope, artist engagement, and administrative oversight. By way of comparison, the City of Bullhead City recently partnered with the River Valley Artists Guild to complete artwork on 23 electrical utility boxes through a $25,000 donation, demonstrating a larger-scale implementation using an external artist organization.

In consideration of City Council goals related to community pride and place-making, preparation for the Route 66 Centennial, enhancement of the visitor experience, and improvements to key corridors and public spaces, staff has identified a limited pilot approach as an appropriate initial step. Broadway has been identified as a suitable location due to its visibility, pedestrian activity, and role as a primary Route

66 corridor. The year 2026 marks the kickoff of the Route 66 100th Anniversary, making targeted improvements along this corridor particularly timely. A pilot-scale effort would allow the City to evaluate durability, maintenance requirements, public response, and overall effectiveness prior to considering expansion to other areas of the City.

As part of this evaluation, staff has received an unsolicited proposal outlining one potential approach to implementing public art treatments on electrical utility boxes. The proposal is included with this report for City Council consideration as an option. The attached proposal outlines a pilot scope involving eight (8) electrical utility boxes and provides information related to project scope, schedule, and cost structure. The proposal is provided to support City Council discussion and to allow the City Council the ability to take action on this item, modify the proposed scope, or provide alternative direction as deemed appropriate.

The proposed pilot locations include eight electrical utility boxes situated along Broadway and nearby high-visibility corridors, including, but not limited to intersections at Highway 95, G Street, J Street, K Street, River Road, and Pashard Street. Photographs and location references for the proposed boxes are included in the supporting materials.

Fiscal Impact: The attached proposal identifies a total project cost of $7,900 for the painting of eight (8) electrical utility boxes, including artistic services, materials, travel, and mobilization. If approved, funding for this pilot effort would be appropriated from the Electric Department's Annual Adopted Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Budget. Approval of this item would not require a budget amendment.

Recommended Action: Provide Staff Direction

Submitted By: Patrick Martinez, City Manager

City Manager Approval: Patrick J Martinez Date: 1/8/2026

Other Department Approval (when required): Mark C. DeMay, CGFM Date: 01/08/2026