

Amherst Cultural Council

Annual Report for 2019-2020

The cycle of the Amherst Cultural Council begins in September when the ACC learns the amount of funding that it will receive from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. For the fiscal year 2020, Amherst received \$38,300, a substantial increase from the previous year's \$29,600. In addition, there was an additional \$2,455 leftover from FY 2018.

In September, the ACC examined the local guidelines and made no changes. Four people came to the public meeting on September 12 that was held in the Jones Library. One of the chief concerns of the ACC was the low number of members and the need to attract new ones. This process has taken some time and we should soon have our full complement of nine members in addition to Cyndi Harbeson, the town liaison. In November, Julianne Applegate and Terry Rooney were appointed, but Ms. Rooney resigned for personal reasons before she was sworn into office. Since then, three others have stepped forward—Arthur Pero, Cole Graber-Mitchell, and Rachel Wang. They should receive approval from the Town Council in February. Sondra Radosh, Jennifer Lind, and Georgia Barnhill were appointed for their second terms. Martha Toro resigned and Andrea Battle has moved to South Hadley, but continues to act as treasurer and attends meetings. Finding a treasurer among the members of the ACC is a high priority. Jennifer Lind's various commitments resulted in her stepping away from acting as co-chair. Continuing members are Gina Chaplain, secretary, and Robin Thompson, the ACC representative to the Amherst Center Cultural District steering committee.

This year there were 68 applications, a few more than last year's 65. In addition, the ACC is allocating \$1600 for four cultural events known as PechaKucha. Ten applications were not funded. Some organizations made two applications (that runs counter to the ACC published guidelines), two others were withdrawn, and several did not have enough benefit to our community. Few proposals received 100 percent funding; exceptions were the Amherst Community Band that received \$600 and the Friends of the Amherst Community Theatre for free tickets for children whose families couldn't afford them (\$800). Other community organizations that received funding included the Amherst Historical Society, the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, Amherst Arts Night Plus, Amherst Cinema, Gallery A3, Amherst Public Art Commission, Amherst Survival Center, Starlight's Youth Theatre, First Congregational Church, Eric Carle Museum, the DaCamera Singers, Hampshire Shakespeare Company, and Amherst Ballet Theatre Company. Many individuals and other organizations received grants for lectures and performances in Amherst at the Senior Center, the Jones Library, and other venues in nearby towns. The ACC provides funding to the Springfield Youth Orchestra, the Porter Phelps Huntington Foundation, Arcadia Players, the Pioneer Valley Jewish Film Festival among others.

I believe that all the members of the Cultural Council find it a privilege to distribute funding to the many worthy organizations and individuals in the region. Reading the proposals gives us of a sense of the richness of the cultural life of the Pioneer Valley. Generous funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council is not, however, a given. Our state representative, Mindy Domb, has been very interested in the ACC. When she was executive director of the Amherst Survival Center, she applied to the ACC for funds to support lunch-time concerts. Her successor continues this practice. The local cultural council has a strong advocate in Representative Domb. However, each new budget cycle in the State House begins with a decrease in the allocation to the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Fortunately, our legislators are able to override the governor's inclination to decrease funding. We should all be supportive of the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Some of our local institutions, such as the Hitchcock Center, have received MCC funds for building projects, as well as for ongoing support of its mission. The MCC also supports the activities of the Cultural District, whose goals include is the creation of a master list of creative and performing artists in Amherst to facilitate communication. Also, recipients of funds for local performances and events have been encouraged to use the Town's community calendar to facilitate audience development.

I am attaching a list of the grants and an overview of funding during the past decade. Please let me know if you have questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Georgia Barnhill, Chair