

Amherst Cultural Council
Meeting Minutes
March 25, 2021
Via Zoom 6:00 pm – 7:50

Council members attended: Georgia Barnhill, Robin Thompson, Rachel Wang, Julianne Applegate, Jenny Lind, Arthur Pero, Cole Graber-Mitchell, Matt Holloway, Leah Neuburger; Nandi Chivende, Sidney Mager and Town Liaison, Cyndi Harbeson

Meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm:

1. Minutes from the February 25 meeting were approved by roll-call vote with a wording change - Disability to Accessibility in item #5. Corrected minutes sent to Cyndi 3/26/21.
2. GoFundMe update: Matt has shared the ACC GoFundMe page with family and neighbors and the funds are rolling in. To date (3/26/21) \$480 has been raised. This has been bolstered by this week's article in the Bulletin and Gigi's reaching out to Paul Bockelman and Mindy Domb who responded quickly. The press release is posted on the news page on the town website, Channel 22, and commented on Representative Mindy Domb's Facebook page. Going forward, press releases should be routed through the Town. Links to our GoFundMe page were included.
3. Archiving news articles: Jenny will send Bulletin article from February 19 highlighting our youth members to Cyndi. Subsequent articles will be sent to Cyndi for archiving.
4. Grant evaluation form discussion: The Council provided some feedback to Rachel and Julianne who set up and maintained the grantee evaluation form and expressed that the spreadsheet tool was an important new step in gaining insight into the Council's overall evaluation of grantees. Some tweaking for next year will include adding a true header format and refining criteria after we refine the guidelines for cycle. We discussed the lower number ranking system (0-3 or 0-5) and using "0" to indicate that an important criterion was not met. General agreement was that 0-3 works well. Average numbers were not adversely affected by missing evaluations. Julianne reported that updating the form wasn't difficult and Rachel and Julianne will work together next cycle to update and maintain the evaluation form. Rachel will create a master form with this year's results that will include number averages, notes, amounts awarded and reasons for grant declines.
5. Application Guideline discussion: The Council shifted into discussing next cycle's guidelines and updating them which usually happens late summer/early fall. Matt suggested adding a guideline that asks grantees to anticipate their project's accessibility needs and to add a budget line in their proposal which the Council can consider when awarding funds. A press release adding this important guideline change and emphasize our willingness to add or match accessibility funding and assist grantees with finding

accessibility services will be helpful in communicating to everyone the council's endeavors - keeping in mind we need to balance exploring what's possible and not stifling the creativity of artists.

6. Outreach discussion: As planned from last meeting the Council discussed the possibility of combining efforts with the Amherst Center Cultural District's June 25th/July 11 (rain date) public event. Although initially this sounded like an opportunity to showcase some of our grantees, it was agreed that it would be better to simply provide a presence at the event to provide information about what we do and our grantees' projects.
7. Accessibility update and discussion: Matt provided an update on the subcommittee's latest activities. Matt resent the accessibility/social media survey to new grantees that asked them to self-identify their needs. 21 responded and their responses varied between having a good idea of what they need to needing help identifying what's possible to some just checking in. Respondents were divvied between subcommittee members and will be helped according to a case management style process. Members will contact their grantees and introduce them to the appropriate service providers. Provider can bill the town through Robin to be paid. The challenge remains that most grantees don't have solid project dates because of COVID. Hopefully next year this won't be the case. We need to keep in mind to explore what's possible.

Matt also reported his exciting correspondence with Elizabeth Axel of Art Beyond Sight, an organization that provides training to artists and art professionals on how to visually describe works of art and whose descriptions may be accessed by QR codes. ABS is willing to provide some visual descriptions or training to our grantees. Elisabeth asked if she could share the Council's endeavors to access leaders at the National Endowment for the Arts and the Ford Foundation. "We are producing a webinar for grant makers and believe they'd be keen on your initiative as a "best practice"." Robin also reported on a conversation with someone from Amherst Cinema who is also a member of the Northampton Arts Council who was interested in learning more. The council voted unanimously to do so. The subcommittee will invite Mina Kim to our next meeting to spread the word to the MCC.

8. Town Website accessibility discussion: Cyndi met with Brianna Sunryd who reported that she's not sure yet if the town site will allow the council to link to GoFundMe. Brianna has been trying for a number of years to get the town to purchase software for about \$2000 that will evaluate and fix accessibility problems on the town website. The town is hoping to put the cost of the software in the upcoming budget. She asked for our help in identifying:
 1. Examples of what's not accessible on the site.
 2. Advocate with the Town Council to put it in the budget and fund it.We discussed further about the difference between digital access and ADA access which has not kept up with the times. Many questions were raised and discussed. How has accessibility and open meeting law changed since COVID? Can our

meetings be close captioned? Could/should the ACC raise money for town website to become [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG) compliant? Mindy Domb would likely be a great person to ally with and Paul Bockelman too. What other equity issues should be taken into account here? Do we need to provide language translations? Rachel offered to help here. The MCC's site is not accessible, and Robin offered to reach out to Mina Kim. The council will continue to invite Disability Access Advisory Committee (DAAC) to our meetings. Can we provide outreach to artists with disabilities and offer to help them write a grant to fund their projects? It was a lively and exciting conversation.

9. New Business: Julianne reported on a community theater project starting in the Mill District located across from The Harp. Development will be modelled on the Amherst Cinema model. There is a new Art Gallery there now too.
10. Next meeting will possibly be Tuesday, April 20, but an email confirmation will be sent out. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Jenny Lind, Secretary, Amherst Cultural Council