

Amherst Cultural Council

Annual Report for 2016

The Amherst Cultural Council (ACC) receives funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. The amount of funding received by the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) is part of the budgetary process of the Commonwealth's Legislature. For the year 2016-2017, Amherst received \$23,500. To that figure, the ACC added unexpended funds from previous years so the total of funds granted was \$30,694.

In September, the ACC held its community meeting to solicit comments and questions from the public. Six people attended. They were referred to new guidelines that were posted on the Amherst section of the MCC website. The MCC inaugurated a new electronic application process in the fall application cycle and changed guidelines for applications from schools. The many questions were answered satisfactorily.

The ACC received 69 applications (as opposed to 80 in the prior year). The Council does not know if fewer applications were completed because of the electronic submission process or if applicants were pessimistic about state funding of the program. The ACC eliminated eleven of the proposals for various reasons. Among those that were not approved were applications that had little or no benefit to residents of the Town of Amherst.

Most grants were under \$500 and represented half of the requested amount. The \$30,694 was spread throughout many organizations. There were several grants of \$1,000 or \$1,200. These went to the following organizations or individuals acting on behalf of groups: Amherst Public Art Commission, Hampshire College's Gallery project on Unfree Labor in the Age of Mass Incarceration, the Connecticut River Mural Integrated Curriculum at the Amherst-Pelham Regional High School, the Hampshire Shakespeare Company for performances at the Interdisciplinary Center for Renaissance Studies (UMass), and Amherst Regional Middle School for a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presented by Shakespeare & Company to all eighth graders. Other Amherst residents and organizations supported include Therese Brady Donahue's Puppet Theatre, Amherst Arts Night Plus, programs at the Jones Library and the Senior Center, performances attended by students at the Fort River School, Amherst Leisure Services Community Theater, Amherst Ballet Theater Company, and Gallery A3.

Funds were also granted to organizations situated elsewhere in the Pioneer Valley that presented programs of interest to residents of Amherst. Various musical organizations such as the Springfield Symphony Youth Orchestra, the Pioneer Valley Symphony, the Hampshire Young People's Chorus, and Arcadia Players all received funding.

The ACC wishes that there were additional proposals relating to the visual arts for both children and adults. We will try to bring more artists to the meeting in September. Noted at the meeting in February was the absence of performing art/exhibition space in Town. If the firehouse on North Pleasant Street can be converted to that use, the Town and its cultural life would benefit handsomely.

Two long-term members of the ACC are retiring from their leadership positions. Ellen Kosmer and Honoré David have come to the end of their terms. They have led the ACC well and their wise counsel and knowledge of the community will be missed. Carl Erickson resigned from the Council last fall, having served less than a year. Jennifer Lind and Georgia Barnhill will succeed Ellen Kosmer and Honoré David. Andrea Battle will remain as treasurer. Continuing members of the Council are Lynda Faye, Sondra Radosh, Martha Toro, in addition to the two co-chairs and treasurer. Mia Cabana of the Jones Library is our liaison with the Town. We anticipate that there will be several applicants for membership on the ACC.

Respectfully submitted,

Georgia Barnhill, Secretary