



MINUTES OF MEETING
Middletown Commission on the Arts
PLANNING AND PROJECTS COMMITTEE
July 18, 2023
5:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting by WebEx

PLANNING AND PROJECTS COMMITTEE
Minutes of Meeting

In attendance: Anthony Pandolfe (Chair), David Wolfram
Commissioners in attendance: Sari Rosenblatt, Gary Wallace
Committee Members Absent: Dominique Thornton
Also in Attendance: Staff: Kisha Michael, Arts Coordinator; Julia Faraci, Admin Sec'y

1. **Call to order:** Meeting started at 5:04 p.m.
2. **Public session:** No members of the public present.
3. **Approval of Agenda:** Wolfram moved to approve, Wallace seconded. No discussion, approved unanimously
4. **Approval of Minutes** from May 16, 2023: Wolfram moved to approve, Rosenblatt seconded. No discussion, approved unanimously.
5. **Remarks from the Chair:** Welcome to new Arts Commissioner Wallace.

Arts Coordinator presented snapshot of activities coordinated by this Committee, which include Music Ambassador (Music Committee); Open Air Market, Arts Advocacy Award, and Poet Laureate. This "heavily loaded" committee oversees projects which stem from the Mission of the Arts Commission. Some, like the Open Air Market and Arts Advocacy, have been going on for decades while involvement in Poet Laureate and PRIDE are in their infancy. Pandolfe noted that the Year At A Glance document can be used as a Standard Operating Procedure, a living document that can be transferred to future Commissions.

6. **Old Business:**

A. **Year at a Glance:**

i. **Middletown PRIDE 2024**

The Arts Coordinator thanked the Committee for their work. The PRIDE event had been discussed at the Regular Meeting. Michael asked members of the Planning and Projects Committee for their feedback. Wolfram noted that the attendees were happy with the makeup booth and the haiku table, and mentioned that the booth needed more signage that wasn't affected by the wind. Rosenblatt suggested MCA giveaways like goodie bags or wearables; she added that paper or pads might be good for the haiku poets who wanted to take their work home. Michael is reviewing catalogs for small art supplies to be used as marketing tools, proposing asking art teachers for ideas for a wish list; she suggested supplying postcards to bring in a literacy component.

Pandolfe asked staff for ideas about set up. Faraci noted that the volunteers could have been more organized. Wolfram noted that there was a time lag for the marchers who were also booth volunteers. Michael noted the strong commitment needed from volunteers: MCA Commissioners to staff the booth and constituents to march. Pandolfe proposed drawing up a task list and arranging a meeting for volunteers to coordinate before PRIDE.



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ii. **Poet Laureate / Artist Laureate**

The Arts Coordinator revisited the description of the Poet Laureate position from the City website. She noted that we have a “magical tool” that we can use to use to connect with our citizens, and asked how best to reach our youth and address early literacy. She suggested that in order to do the Poet Laureate program justice, the Library should be involved, because “it is writing, it is reading, it is literacy and programming.” Faraci reviewed her research on Poets Laureate programs statewide, which vary greatly from town to town in terms of administration (by libraries or town arts councils), level of community involvement and poet accomplishments (attached: Connecticut Poets Laureate Research)

Pandolfe asked whether the Commission should discuss having both a Poet Laureate and an Artist Laureate, or whether a shift should be made to an Artist Laureate, which would encompass all disciplines. He explained that in the past, a Poet Laureate has been difficult to find, so the Commission has been weighing broadening the description. Rosenblatt suggested that the Laureate position rotate among different disciplines.

Wolfram noted the history of the Poet Laureate position currently in place. Proposing continuing with the tradition of Poet Laureate for this first term, he suggested rotating nominations from different disciplines in the future. Faraci noted that Hartford has Laureates in three disciplines – City Poet, City Troubadour, and City Flow Artist.

Asked about the selection process and review criteria, Pandolfe referred to his Artist Laureate Position description draft (attached: Artist Laureate Position description draft 05-23-2023). He stated that the P&P Committee would have to recommend any changes to the Poet Laureate to the Commission. Wolfram stressed the importance of a solid plan, with Rosenblatt agreeing that the Laureate have a smooth relaunch.

The Arts Coordinator concluded the discussion by charging the Committee to take the supporting documents to the Regular Meeting, after (A) refine the current Poet Laureate Position Description and make it great (B) refine the structure of the position, still in its infancy, and clarify what the Poet Laureate is to do (C) in the future, the Laureate may evolve to different media, because it will have created a better footprint.

iii. **Music Ambassador –**

The Arts Coordinator noted that the Music Ambassador position has a “good solid footprint”; there have been 6 Ambassadors chosen by the Music Committee since 2014. Original compositions of the Ambassador are used for City Office phone “on hold” music. The Committee members were asked to review the Music Ambassador page on the City website so they can brainstorm at the August meeting; the Arts Coordinator stressed that honoring the Music Ambassador deserves the attention.

iv. **Wadsworth Mansion Open Air Market (August 27th) –**

- a. **Booth update** – Michael commented that the Open Air Market booth has long functioned like a “well-tuned machine” as a platform for Commissioners to talk about the MCA’s mission and to disseminate information about arts organizations, as well as an opportunity to distribute MCA giveaways. The mask making activity for kids in past years was changed, after Covid, to a craft bag giveaway. The Arts Office proposed a suggestion



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box at the booth, and is looking at moving to more practical giveaways, like pens, pencils, mini notebooks, postcards – items that encourage kids to write. Commissioner commitment to staffing the booth is critical; Pandolfe suggested a signup list.

- v. **Arts Advocacy – Staff Report** – The Arts Office is producing a Proclamation honoring Anne-Marie Cannata McEwen. Middlesex Music Academy was asked for information so their Proclamation can be written. The Arts Advocacy Award event is scheduled for Thursday, September 28. Planning of the Award event will be tabled to the August meeting.
- vi. **Potential New Projects**
 - a. **Youth In Government** – The Committee agreed that this work should be assigned to the Nominating Committee.
 - b. **Inspiration Grant** – The Arts Coordinator asked that this item be held until the old business on Grant Guidelines is complete. Grant Guidelines are reviewed every year and need their own discussion, and new Commissioners need a year to go through the grant process.

7. New Business

A. Other sponsorships in 2024

A suggestion to spread out MCA sponsorships, specifically to the Juneteenth event, was brought up in the June Regular Meeting. Tabled until August; Pandolfe stressed the importance of discussing the sponsorship of this event.

8. Other

A. Future Meeting Dates for Planning & Projects

Pandolfe will follow up for the August 15th meeting.

9. Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Attachments: [P&PYearAtAGlance](#); [Connecticut Poets Laureate Research; Artist Laureate Position description draft 05-23-2023](#)

Respectfully submitted,

Julia O'Halloran Faraci
Admin. Secretary III,
Arts & Culture Office

cc: Mayor's Office