



DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING
Middletown Commission on the Arts
Executive Committee
Monday, July 24, 2023
11:30 a.m.
Middletown CT
Virtual by WebEx

Executive Committee
Minutes of Meeting

Present: Lee Godburn (Chair), Dominique Thornton (Secretary)

Absent: Pamela Steele (Vice Chair)

Also in Attendance: Staff: Kisha Michael, Arts Coordinator; Julia Faraci, Admin Sec'y

1. **Call to order:** Meeting started at 11:37 a.m. _
2. **Public Session:** No members of the public present
3. **Assign Secretary:** Julia Faraci, Admin Sec'y (Staff) was assigned to take minutes
4. **Approval of Agenda:** Thornton moved to approve minutes.
5. **Old Business – unfinished business, staff report**
 - A. **Regular Meeting agenda – New Business**

Michael reported the agenda will include the new slate of officers, Committee assignments, and discussion of whether the August meeting will be cancelled as it has been traditionally. Godburn recommended that Committee assignments take place after the meeting, to give new Commissioners a chance to get acquainted with the Commission. He noted the option for the Commission Chair to choose Committee members.
 - B. **Regular Meeting agenda – Old Business**

Michael will ask Committee Chairs to report on the status and functions of the Committees to provide background for the new Commissioners. Godburn suggested these reports should be added to the agenda.
 - C. **Regular Meeting – Remarks from the Chair**

Michael asked Godburn to ask the new Commissioners to introduce themselves to the Commission at the next meeting during his Remarks from the Chair. She will send him information about the new Commissioners.
 - D. **FOIA – Scheduling training**

Assistant General Counsel Christopher Forte offered to present a FOIA workshop to the Commissioners. In the interest of convenience, the Arts Coordinator will try to schedule the training on the day of the September Regular Meeting, however there is a conflict with the availability of the meeting room. Options include rescheduling Regular Meeting from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m, and holding the training before the meeting at 7:00 p.m.; **or** changing the venue to the Senior Center and having the training at 6:00 p.m. followed immediately afterward by the Regular Meeting; will be discussed at the July Regular Meeting.
 - E. **ByLaws packet**

The Commission bylaws packet has been updated to be more workable. Several copies have been distributed. The Arts Office staff plans to fine tune the language, correcting grammar and bringing the document up-to-date. The Arts Coordinator asked for review by the Executive Committee.



F. Grants Guidelines

The Arts staff has formatted the Grants Guidelines into a document easily referenced by grants applicants and the Arts Coordinator. As an Administrator, Michael can easily forward the text of the Guidelines, with appropriate highlights, to respond to questions from applicants. She asked if, in the process of correcting grammar and clarifying language, the Executive Committee should be consulted about changes. Godburn and Thornton agreed that such changes did not require approval by the Executive Committee. The Arts Coordinator emphasized that the intent of the revisions was not to change policy, and that any policy changes must be approved by the MCA.

Discussion ensued on the clarifying the rules concerning the frequency that applicants can apply for grants in a fiscal year. For a Project Grant (PSG), applicants can apply twice a year. If a project and its final report is completed in time, an applicant can apply for a project grant in the following grant cycle. However, a General Operating (GOS) grant applicant can receive only one grant a year; therefore, a current GOS recipient cannot apply for PSG in the same fiscal year, and a PSG recipient cannot receive GOS funding in the same year. Michael intends to add verbiage to the GOS application for clarification (not change) on this point, and bring to the Commission for approval.

G. Letters of support for Grantees

Michael asked that "Letter of Support upon request" be added to the requirements for grant applicant businesses that are new to the City and grant processes, or from out of town. The Executive Committee agreed that this requirement would be appropriate.

H. Grants Workshop

Michael plans to go live with signups for the August Grants Q&A when changes to the Grant Guidelines are finalized.

I. Grant Matches

Michael expressed appreciation to Thornton for her work on Ordinance 44-11, which makes grantees receiving \$2,999.00 or less exempt from the 1:1 match. Michael asked what the MCA is looking for when asking for an individual applicant to provide their tax return, and whether the requirement is too intrusive. Thornton responded that the requirement is for the individual to demonstrate that they do earn income, that they don't owe taxes, and to prove financial worthiness.

Michael emphasized that the use of grant funds should intentionally further arts and culture in the City. She proposed a "starving artist" grant to "enhance" the artist's "ability to be an artist", for instance, setting up a studio, rather than spearheading an arts event. Such a grant would not require a match, but would require receipts for supplies and other allowable expenses. Noting the Commission's responsibility to "guide" the grantee, Michael asked whether the Commission could designate how the funds were spent if the grant amount were lowered.

Godburn suggested that a smaller grant amount than \$3000.00 would allow the City to "take a shot" on an upcoming artist, observing that some artists might find paperwork



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overwhelming. Thornton noted that with less money involved, the MCA would experience less “trepidation” about funding an individual. Godburn suggested that a new Committee should be set up to consider this type of grant as an “inspiration” grant; the Arts Coordinator noted that Planning and Projects Committee was asked not to consider new types of grants until the revision of Grant Guidelines was completed. Godburn suggested that funds be set aside at the beginning of the year. Thornton emphasized that the grant must benefit the community, not just the artist. Both Thornton and Godburn expressed the view that the MCA should hold space for “undiscovered” artists.

The Executive Committee recommended that the amount not requiring a 1:1 match should be lowered from \$2999.00 or less, to \$1500.00; this decrease will enable the Commission to require less stringent controls, as long as the purpose of the grant is agreed upon.

6. New Business

A. Connecticut Ballet

The Connecticut Ballet, having missed the grant deadline, applied for and received an emergency grant of \$1200.00 to present a program at Wadsworth Mansion on Sunday, July 16th. Because of weather conditions, they had to cancel the performance and were unable to reschedule. Citing expenses they claimed to have incurred to present the program, they wrote to ask the Arts Coordinator if they could keep the grant funds.

The grants contract states that the final report must be submitted on the completion of the project, and that unspent funds must be returned. The Arts Coordinator was advised to tell the Director of Connecticut Ballet that as a municipality, the Arts Office/MCA must follow the ByLaws.

The Executive Committee noted that the expenses incurred (advertising, marketing, etc.) should be noted in Connecticut Ballet’s final report, and unspent funds should be returned.

7. Adjournment: Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Julia O’Halloran Faraci
Admin. Secretary III,
Arts & Culture Office

CC: Mayor’s Office