

Minutes NCC meeting March 25, 2024

In person: Anne Marie Stein, Cheryl Weber, Chris Pitts, Emily O'Neil, Glenda Fishman, Lisa Rucinski (staff)

On Zoom: Clara Chan, Livia Aber, Sam Belisle

Guest: Gloria Gavis (on Zoom and then in person)

1. Glenda's Treasurer report: as of 3/20, we had received 42 grantee contracts, and there were 9 outstanding...
2. Cultural Development report: Lisa handed out flyers for upcoming NCD events, and encouraged NCC to have a table at Family Fun Fest at City Hall, May 18-19 (performances for kids, finishing touches on mural boards).
3. Anne Marie: we should all look at Create Newton and figure out what we want NCC to be, how we want to further the agenda in Create Newton.
Have a standing exec committee meeting a week before each NCC meeting, to design the agenda for the NCC meeting— everyone should feel free to let us know if they want to put anything on the agenda.
4. Glenda: Let's streamline the adjudication process. We spend a huge amount of time on a huge number of applicants just to give out small amounts of money, although in some cases that small amount is meaningful. How can we streamline this process?
Categorize the applications and decide each year which disciplines will be granted?
Give more \$\$ to fewer grantees?
We all have different grading standards— that's not fair.
Anne Marie: consider putting together an ad hoc group to offer a new way to adjudicate?
Chris: consider reducing the number of questions we use to score the applications, consider everyone scoring every application. Vast majority of applications are for music so just prescribing only theater or dance one year doesn't seem reasonable.
Emily: Pride uses similar score sheets but doesn't have nearly as many applications to choose from.
Sam: maybe have 3 people look at each application.
Cheryl: consider size of budgets of grant applicants
Anne Marie: consider the importance of our grants to each applicant (Clara agrees)
Emily: what does the community think of how many grants should be funded
Sam: decide what is our goal? Is it to support Newton artists, or to bring outside artists into Newton (e.g. with a residency program)?
Clara: for adjudication everyone could just score 1-10 right after each grant is presented.
5. Chris & Emily: report on their meeting with the mayor.
Goal: engage the mayor in coming up with answers.
We need more money. How do we get more money?
"Create Newton" was a good start but need to make something meaningful happen.
Why invest further in arts and culture?
Philanthropic support is not enough. (only 5% of US giving total goes to arts & culture)
[Fortunately Newton's main philanthropic Village Bank is a municipal bank so can't be eaten up by BofA or another such commercial bank]

Adopt % for Arts (businesses donate to arts&cultures and get something back for it like murals etc– as in Cambridge– got the ball rolling there)

Include a question for Voluntary donation on property tax form?

Asked mayor to think of other ideas.

Compared Newton to Somerville and Cambridge– if we matched their percentage of commitment to arts&culture it would be over \$1M rather than \$200K as it is now. Newton has a half billion \$\$ budget...

-Economic impact: would be significant.

-Mayor said the city can not promote other organizations on their website because it's fundraising for private sector. But other cities in MA do it...

-NCD does promote the Newton Arts Calendar. But that's not enough, it should list all the organizations that promote arts and culture in Newton.

6. Anne Marie: let's return to the "Create Newton" document.

NCD, NCC, NCA, Newton Pride too compartmented– maybe NCC could take an advisory role?

Gloria: about Pride– for 35 yrs, quietly, mission has been to build community through free and accessible arts and culture programming. Nonprofit with budget of around \$200K for our programming and staffing. Gloria chaired the Create Newton project, a 6-8 month process, resulting in the document which is the city's official statement on arts&culture development.

Priority#1 was to merge NCD, NCC, NCA, Newton Pride.

NCA and Newton Pride were not able to merge. Newton Pride tried to do as much of Create Newton as it could itself. Would like to have help from NCC and the city to make more happen.

Emily: It seems the city expected the non-profits to move it forward, without the city.

Gloria: That is not feasible, we need city help for a lot of the steps to be implemented. Can't be done without the city.

Anne Marie: There are some items we could implement with collaboration, such as giving \$10K of our money from the city to a Poet Laureate– but how would that person be chosen?

Emily: another idea from Create Newton that seemed doable was an Arts Summit.

Anne Marie: but we need to understand what Create Newton is saying.

Chris: it doesn't matter who does it, someone just has to get everyone into the room.

Anne Marie: but we'd still need to decide where that money would go. We need to read and discuss Create Newton.

Cheryl: Isn't the function of LCC's to give out grants? How does MCC see our function?

Anne Marie: that doesn't have to be our only function.

Chris: MCC believes we are all advocates for the arts.

Emily: whatever we do has to be sustainable.

Anne Marie: from being on the staff of the MCC, seems the goal was the distribution of funding and allowing everyone who wished to participate. We should build on Create Newton.

Chris: last slide to the mayor was "what would we do with \$1M?"

Emily: Mayor Fuller said it should not be the NCC who would decide.

Chris: Mayor Fuller said some of the \$\$ would go to Paula's office.

Liv: More clarity about what our purpose is, more clarity about how to adjudicate fairly, having more voices on each grant would be more fair...

Clara: Not sure what else we could have the authority/power to do. (Emily agrees that needs to be figured out.)

Sam: We could and should do more than just handing out money.

6. Eileen Herman-Haase's Ballroom Line Dance Workshop grant application wants an extension from Dec. 2024 to Jan. or Feb. 2025 – unanimously approved– Glenda said it's ok, Lisa thinks Paula needs to weigh in.