

May 20 NCC Meeting Minutes

In person: Paula Gannon, Anne Marie Stein, Emily O'Neill, Julie Fox, Dinah Bodkin, Susan Friedman, Cheryl Weber, Clara Chan
On Zoom: Chris Pitts, Jeff Davis

1. Approval of minutes from April meeting

Commented [1]: I assume this happened-- I was late.

2. NCD update:

- Lu has resigned, and Paula will be away for the next couple weeks.
- Flyers for summer events were supplied.
- Family Fun Fest was a big success, as shown on NCD's social media.
- Next big event is the Pancake Breakfast— please volunteer if available.
- Since the pandemic, very hard to get any volunteers, much needed for enormous events run by NCD with only 2 full time employees. The slow down in volunteerism has happened elsewhere as well, for example Cambridge. Similar difficulty for Newton Community Pride which held the Linda Plaut Festival of the Arts, which was a big success last weekend regardless. How can we increase volunteerism? Currently, NCD uses Signup Genius, specifying clearly what you need to do and when and where. If there were more funds to support arts and culture in Newton, we could pay staff to help run big cultural events.

Commented [2]: when I arrived, Paula was finishing talking about Lu's resignation and her being on leave the next couple of weeks. Did I miss anything noteworthy before that?

3. Treasurer's Report:

- Contracts: still need 9 grantees to sign. Have paid out \$45K+, still have \$9K+ to pay out. Those 9 grantees may need to be called.

4. Continuing Create Newton discussion from last meeting:

- Too soon for NCA and NCP to join this time but they will join our meeting in Jun— in the spirit of the Art Summit suggested in Create Newton?
- Governance mission is not the place to start. Organizational structure discussion should be later. Figure out the vision/goals first, starting with what's easy/doable.
- In Spring 2023 there was a meeting with many of the main players to talk about having an Art Summit: planned for either a half-day event or a full-day event. But no one followed up to make it happen.
- Can we hire someone to facilitate it, assigning different tasks to the different players?
- What is Create Newton aiming for? It's a bunch of tasks to do but what is the end result that is being aimed for?
- Conflicting views: Newton can remain a beautiful bedroom community— just needs more cultural events and exhibits. Vs. Newton has changed— who are we now and what are our resources, and what is our vision for what we can do with it, concretely?
- Need evaluation. How do we evaluate the impact of all these groups that are working on enhancing the culture of Newton? NCC does a community survey. Need to have metrics though.

- A goal: use cultural events to bring Newton together— metrics: number of people, diversity of audience, ...but does that mean large audiences are the goal? Different segments of Newton population turn out for different types of events, e.g., for Newton Family Singers, Indian classical performance, Klezmer music at the Festival of the Arts, ... If we want to support young artists doing groundbreaking work, there won't be a lot of audience— so maybe the metric of audience size doesn't work for everything we hope to support.
- NCC has a mission— “to contribute to the cultural vitality of Newton by funding excellence in creative, cultural and humanistic projects of Newton cultural organizations, artists, and humanists that benefit and enrich our community.” For example, we applied for an NEA grant (\$50K) to re-grant to other organizations. They are the proven producers of culture in Newton adhering to our standards. We just need more money to give away to support this goal, the impact would be enormous. But \$9K+ of our granted money hasn't been claimed yet. Do we need a better way to distribute the grant money?

5. Adjudication process and form: All council members should still read every grant application. Presenter presents their deep dives after using the adjudication form to score each application assigned to them. Everyone votes 1-5 or so after each grant application is presented, and we use the aggregate score from these votes for final ranking. All council members are welcome to suggest how to further streamline the adjudication form.

6. Community survey: How do we get responses from those who don't already come to events? We are not allowed to offer incentives. We should give a survey to the grantees as well. There should be a comment box on the NCC webpage. All council members are welcome to suggest modifications to the survey questions used last year.

7. Meeting adjourned. We will finalize the community survey questions and discuss Grantee Reception at our next meeting, on Monday June 24 from 6pm to 7:30pm.