

Wakefield Cultural Council

Wednesday, January 27, 2021 at 7:00 pm

Meeting Location: Virtually Through Zoom setup and posted by Town of Wakefield

Members Present: Caroline Lieber, Kathleen Cain, Sarah Guerin, Andy Levine and Colleen Getty

Members Apologies: Jamie Hale

Agenda Item #1: Approve Meeting Minutes from last meeting

Discussion: Caroline had attached the minutes to the email about today's meeting. Most had read them when they were first distributed and there were no corrections.

Action: Minutes were approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #2: Term Limits review and Discussion of general WCC topics

Discussion: Caroline informed the group that she has one more year left in her current term and has already served a 3-year term prior to the current term. MCC requires that members serve no more than two consecutive 3-year terms before they are required to take one year off from serving. If they want to reapply after their 1-year hiatus, they are able to. She is currently Chair and would prefer a transition while she serves her last year to make for smoother transitions and so she is available as an active member to answer questions and help the new Chair. So, members were asked to consider taking on the Chair position in the coming months.

- Colleen agreed that a transition of that sort would make the most sense and that her term also coincides with Caroline's and has only one year left of her two consecutive terms.
- Andy informed the group that he has decided to serve out this last year of his first 3-year term and not renew. All members of the meeting expressed their hope that Andy would reconsider. He pointed out that he had hoped the WCC would do more than just decide grants. While that is our most important task in terms of mandate, we had a quick discussion of some of the opportunities for our WCC to do more in order to promote the arts, connect area artists and support art initiatives.
- Colleen brought up an earlier floated idea of asking the Town of Wakefield to allow us to change our name from Wakefield Cultural Council to Wakefield Arts Council to better distinguish our group from other similarly named groups (Ex: Albion Cultural Exchange) so that our role in the community is more clear to the general public as well as residents considering joining our council.
- Andy suggested we draft a press release at some point to explain what the council does and to encourage residents to apply to welcome new members to the council.

Action: The group agreed to work to schedule another meeting sometime in March 2021 to discuss 1) New Chair, 2) WCC Name Change, 3) Ways to recruit more members & 4) WCC Local Art Initiatives more fully so we could focus on discussing the grant applications which usually takes a solid (if not longer) two hours.

Agenda Item #1: WCC Grant Application Review

Discussion: Caroline informed the group that we had \$11,172 total to grant, but asked if we wanted to hold anything back for "Administrative Costs" which is allowed. We decided that there was likely to be no in-person meeting for Grant Awardees in the spring as there usually is and since we have transitioned to email letters in the recent years there was no postage costs or supplies needed to mail letters. Colleen suggested that instead of leaving it at \$0, we might want something in the bank in case there is a cost in the future so we agreed to keep the \$172 back

for unexpected administrative costs and award the remaining \$11,000 to applicants. The group wanted the maximum amount of money to go to initiatives.

To start off the discussion Caroline asked Sarah if she had any “hard ‘Nos’” on her list. Sarah had listed: Chainsaw (Dr. “The Machine” Jesse Green, To Life (John Porcino), and Feminist Documentary (Annie Laurie Medonis) as three that did not have any area partners or specific venue or plan for following through with their project. The rest of the group had also either had a “No” listed for those same three or were doubtful of what the project was promising.

This meeting was unusual because we had 11 less applicants this year than last year and with the three outright eliminations off the top, that meant that we were able to fund almost every other applicant for their full request and decided to give three more than they asked for, understanding the difficulties many arts organizations and artists are facing right now, we funded three for the full budgets: Greenwood School, North Suburban Family Network and Discovery Museum. So, when normally we would have far more request than revenue—this meeting did not require very deep discussion about the majority of the applications because we did not have to decide where we would trim money from the amounts requested since we had enough grant money to cover the costs for almost all grant applicants. The only applicant that we all agreed to fund but were unsure of the merits of the budget was for Denise Doucette’s Senior DVD project. We all liked the project and agreed that it was valuable, but the amount of money being requested for song rights and purchasing DVD equipment when there are means to air programming through our local cable access television channel and so many other digital options, meant that we only partially funded her project at a little less than half her requested amount.

Some time was utilized in going over how a meeting usually runs during “normal” times for the benefit of our new member Kathleen. We explained that applicants having a local partnership and venue is very important to the council—and a letter of support from those partners is seen very favorably. While the date and time of the project is good to also have decided, we are more flexible about that as long as a general time is indicated to take place when it is required by the grant terms. There was short discussion about possibly letting the applicants who have no venue plan or partner indicated to offer them a partial grant knowing that if they do not secure those details and are not able to run their program the funds will be rolled into next year’s granting funds, but we decided against that since the terms are clear in the application and it’s not our job to try to help applicants match up with a local venue or partner.

There was short discussion about some of the projects and whether they would be able to happen if there were still so many restrictions due to the pandemic. As a group we decided we couldn’t predict the future and would have to just base decisions on an optimistic view of hoping applicants could follow through with their plans—again, knowing that if they couldn’t then they would not ask for reimbursement and therefore the funds would be rolled forward to the next year’s granting cycle.

There was discussion about a few applicants from the past year or two who had to change course. One was Greenwood School who decided to run a series called We The People to replace a previous program that could not take place due to restrictions. Also, the Boys & Girls Club’s mural project was unable to move forward because no building owners would allow a mural to be created on their building and they had to, instead, paint wicker furniture and showcase them in public buildings as a replacement: library, Town Hall, etc. Any grantees that

were awarded grants last year were allowed to have an additional year to complete their projects without losing the funding commitment due to the pandemic.

Diana Kennedy was present from the public and was interested in joining the council and so we were able to answer some questions she had and offer her an idea of what we do, but also what we hope to do in the future in terms of more council initiatives, etc. We invited her to join us for the follow up meeting where we will discuss those topics. We also discussed asking the town to try to seek applicants so that our total membership is 7 people at minimum. The absolute minimum to operate is 5 people and we don't want to be so close to that and would prefer a buffer. We have asked the town in the past but Caroline was going to touch base once more with them to indicate our desire to increase membership. We can have as many as 22 people and as few as 5, so we would prefer a few more especially since two are required to leave the council at the end of next year and we only have six current members with one unable to attend the meeting—bringing our total to vote back to the minimum required five.

Action: Caroline will contact the town to ask about how many seats they currently have listed for us.

Colleen will draft and send out the three denials letters asap, before February 12th.

Caroline and Sarah will split the approval letters to draft and send out after the denial letters.

Andy will send everybody the spreadsheet of grant award amounts we all decided on.

A doodle survey will be sent closer to March to pick a date to meet again in March.

Next Meeting: Unscheduled currently, but one will be planned for March.

Minutes Prepared By: Colleen Getty