

New Hampshire State Council on the Arts
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – May 8, 2023
Via Zoom

Arts Councilors Present

Chair Dr. Roger Brooks, Juliana Bergeron, Angela Brown, R.P. Hale, José Lezcano, Mary McLaughlin, William Stelling, Catherine Sununu, Cecilia Ulibarri, and Amanda Whitworth

Arts Councilors Absent

Vivian Beer, Tim Sink, Jason Tors

Staff Present

Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) Arts Division: Ginnie Lupi, Director; Cassandra Mason, Chief Grants Officer (CGO); Kayla Schweitzer, Heritage and Traditional Arts Coordinator (HTA), and Carey Johnson, Curatorial Specialist (CS)

Staff Absent

Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) Commissioner Sarah Stewart; Lisa Burk-McCoy, Creative Communities & Arts in Health Coordinator (CC/AH); Allison Hawkins, Arts Education Coordinator (AE), and Emily Killinger, Visual Arts Associate (VAA)

Guests

Deidra Montgomery and Danya Sherman, Strategic Planning Consultants

Motions (carried)

- Accept the minutes of January 9, 2023 Council meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dr. Roger Brooks called the meeting of the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts to order at 10:00 AM on May 8, 2023.

II. INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

(HTA) Kayla Schweitzer led the Council in a Land Acknowledgement. All are encouraged to visit <https://native-land.ca/> for an interactive map and to learn more about the indigenous peoples that lived/live in New Hampshire.

III. MINUTES

Chair Brooks called for a motion to accept the minutes from the January 9, 2023 meeting. Councilor Catherine Sununu moved to approve, seconded by Councilor Juliana Bergeron. The minutes from January 9, 2023 were unanimously approved.

IV. MOMENT OF SILENCE

Chair Brooks called for a moment of silence for Councilor Peter Warburton, who died on April 19, 2023.

V. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Chair Brooks read the Commissioner's Report in her absence:

The Director's job opportunity has been posted, applications have been received and will be reviewed at the end of the week. Council members are welcome to participate in the interviewing process and should let the Commissioner know this week if they wish to do so.

Commissioner Stewart connected with Joan Goshgarian regarding the Van McLeod Building and assured her that the building dedication will remain, despite the staff move, as it is a state building. She is arranging a time for Joan to meet with DAS staff to discuss the maintenance and significance of the building. The Commissioner is also discussing the move with Leanne Lavoie, and she anticipates that she will be able to give staff a timetable by the end of this week. She encouraged staff to shred paperwork and donate items in preparation for the move and suggested Councilors assist staff in this process.

The budget is with the Senate, and they have no questions regarding the Arts Council increase, though the Commissioner doesn't believe the Public TV allocation will survive.

Regarding the Historic Highway Marker controversy: NHPR has the most accurate coverage, as their reporter actually attended and recorded the Governor and Executive Council meeting where it was discussed. The program has been in place since the 1950s, and it is viewed very favorably. There are 287 markers around the state, of which the Commissioner assumes there are several that are also controversial. The markers represent what local constituents have brought to the Division of Historical Resources, and staff are responsible for fact-checking for historical relevance. Debate regarding this process and content is happening among the Executive Council members and the Governor's office, as well as within the City of Concord, who reviewed the packet and petition signed by New Hampshire residents. The Commissioner is very proud of the program, as well as the DNCR staff that administer it.

Chair Brooks concluded the reading of the Commissioner's Report. He then acknowledged the difficulty of this time for Arts Council staff and expressed his appreciation for their work.

VI. STAFF REPORTS

Director Lupi reported that Poetry Out Loud was very successful, with 24 schools participating. There were three in-person semi-finals, as well as the state final at the state house on March 17th.

Staff are in the midst of grant season for fiscal year 2024, which begins July 1. The Public Value Partnership (PVP) application process has been simplified for the 43 current PVP grantees, allowing them to submit a pared down application if they'd like to stay at their current funding level for the coming fiscal year. Those not at the \$15,000 ceiling could submit a full application to request a funding increase. Forty-one renewals were received, as well as 13 full applications. Of these full applications, two were current PVP grantees requesting increases, and 11 were either new or returning applicants. Many organizations did not apply due to their capacity limitations, as the PVP grant application is complicated. This challenge for applicants will hopefully be addressed in the near future.

Sixteen applications were received for the Youth Arts Project (YAP) grant program, and 12 applications for the Artist in Residence (AIR) program, which is back after a hiatus. AE Allison Hawkins promoted the program and the teaching artist Roster with teachers and held a virtual event on April 4 which showcased seven Roster artists.

Twenty-two applications were received for the Arts in Health (AIH) program, which is a record and an indicator of how well the program is growing. Hopefully if the budget is passed a grant coordinator specific to the AIH program can be hired to accommodate the expansion of need.

Fourteen applications were received for the first round of FY24 Artist Entrepreneurial grants, a program which is also growing significantly.

Last week a “Save the Date” was shared for the 2023 Arts Partnership Conference, October 27-28. A location will be announced soon.

Finally, official notification was received for the agency’s next grant – \$939,200 – from the National Endowment for the Arts, which will support state fiscal year 2024 activities. The grant amount is approximately \$112,000 more than NHSCA received for fiscal year 2023.

CGO Cassie Mason reported that she facilitated an Artist Entrepreneurial Grant workshop for Queerlective at Kimball Jenkins. Several participants from the workshop went on to apply for grants in this round, which is exciting. Cassie also met with a group from At Eagle Pond, a new nonprofit in Wilmot that is preserving Donald Hall and Jane Kenyon’s home with the goal to program artist residencies.

In addition to receiving notification of our new NEA grant, Cassie closed two of the Division’s previous NEA grants (CARES Act and FY22). The grant with ARPA funds included will remain open while final reports are collected, at least through October.

The new grants/operations database contract was approved. Cassie and CS Carey Johnson met with the AkoyaGo implementation team and they are projecting the new system to be up and running by July. Carey also finished the extensive preliminary work for the new NHSCA website for the Department of Information Technology.

Cassie and Carey have also been working on Percent for Art projects. They met with the artist and the committee at the National Guard Readiness Center in Pembroke about an installation projected for June. The contract was approved and meetings with the artist have just started for the project at the Department of Transportation’s Road Toll in Hooksett. Finally, several artists have been preliminarily chosen and are finalizing their artwork proposals for the Department of Environmental Services’ Dam Bureau in Concord. Those contracts will hopefully go out in the next three to four weeks.

HTA Kayla Schweitzer reported that the Letter of Intent (LOI) for Arts Conservation grants was due May 5, and 12 LOIs were received. Of these 12, three were unfortunately ineligible due to being privately owned rather than publicly owned (public ownership is required for Moose Plate Funding); the rest were approved or are pending review/approval. The full application is due June 23. As a reminder, Traditional Arts Apprenticeship grant applications are due June 30, and Folklife & Traditional Arts Project grant applications are due July 7.

Kayla continues to serve as the State Arts Council’s designee on the NH Commission on Native American Affairs. She also continues to work on the NH Folklife website migration process.

Kayla attended the Franco-American Centre’s Traditional Sugaring Off event in March, which was supported in part by a FY23 Folklife & Traditional Arts Project Grant.

In partnership with the Monadnock Folklore Society, NHSCA will be supporting NH artists performing and presenting at the KwackFest on July 1, which is a celebration of what would have been Bob McQuillen’s 100th birthday. Bob was a contra dance musician and a big part of the traditional music and dance community in NH. He was a recipient of a 2002 National Heritage Fellowship awarded by the National Endowment for the Arts, which is the United States government’s highest honor in the folk and traditional arts. NHSCA will also be paying to have Bob McQuillen’s 16th notebook transcribed from hand-written tunes to digital. This notebook consists of tunes Bob wrote in honor of each of the 234 towns in New Hampshire (plus a few more). This is an important part of New Hampshire’s living cultural heritage and will continue to inspire and benefit future generations to come.

Finally, Kayla encouraged Councilors to remember the Mt. Kearsarge Indian Museum's upcoming 22nd Annual Powwow; MKIM received a fiscal year 2023 Traditional Arts Project grant to help support the artists at the Powwow.

Director Lupi added an update on the Van McLeod building: all of the work required from the flood has been completed, and staff are now able to get into the building to begin the packing/moving process.

VII. 2023 GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARDS

Councilor Juliana Bergeron gave an update on the Governor's Arts Awards, which will take place on October 23, 2023 at Studio Lab in Derry. Like 2021, the event will be live streamed on NHSCA's YouTube and Facebook channels. The primary issue is fundraising, which is what the committee is concentrating on currently. A little over \$9,000 has been raised so far of approximately \$67,000 needed, with four (potential) additional \$3,000 sponsorships on the horizon. The second priority at present is selecting the recipients of the awards, so the committee can proceed accordingly. The committee hopes to sponsor "watch parties" in each of the Executive Council districts, so if anyone has a suggestion for a location, please let Councilor Bergeron know. Chair Brooks encouraged all Councilors to contribute, for the goal of 100% Council participation. Checks should be made out to the Park Street Foundation and mailed to Park Street Foundation, 20 Park Street, Concord, NH 03301.

VIII. STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

Deidra Montgomery and Danya Sherman presented an update on the Strategic Plan process. Deidra reminded Councilors of the frameworks (SOAR, Real-Time Strategic Planning) being used for the process, as well as how they gathered their information (staff retreat, focus groups, interviews, community survey). Once the information was gathered, Deidra and Danya analyzed the findings and workshopped with staff to define the Division's core functions and develop a "Strategy Screen", as well as "Big Questions". The first full draft of the Strategic Plan is in process, and once it's completed they will be integrating public feedback into the final draft, expected in July.

Danya then reviewed the draft plan via slides with Councilors, including Mission, Core Functions, Opportunities, Big Questions, and Strategies. Chair Brooks raised the question of whether the Strategic Plan brought any "Aha!" moments to light, the answer to which Deidra opened up to staff. Director Lupi responded that there were no real surprises, however it became clear that we need to improve the accessibility of our grants and services. She pointed out that this is an ongoing challenge for State Arts agencies, and as such, we need to work on our relationships, especially among diverse populations. Councilor José Lezcano agreed with Director Lupi, and added that when he served on a Traditional Arts panel several years ago, he noticed repeat applicants from a previous panel he had participated in. He observed that many diverse populations in New Hampshire are most likely unaware of the grant opportunities available, and perhaps the Council could be more aggressive in terms of outreach. He went on to note that in his recent efforts to help the Keene Chamber Orchestra obtain a grant, the grant writing process appeared to be somewhat opaque, perhaps out of necessity. Councilor Lezcano observed that from this experience, it appeared staff are not allowed to help applicants with the process, which may be a further obstacle for applicants. Director Lupi clarified that the New Hampshire State Arts Agency is one of the few SAAs that offers technical assistance, almost up until the deadline. She added that she has been continuously surprised during her tenure at how few applicants take advantage of the help. Deidra added that this apparent communications issue ties into the goals of the Strategic Plan. Chair Brooks proposed increasing travel budgets to aid in outreach to New American populations, as well as oral applications with translation or transcription assistance available.

IX. COUNCILOR ROUND ROBIN

Chair Brooks asked each Councilor to tell the Council how they've been faring and to provide updates on what they've been doing. Councilors reported on a wide range of in-person and virtual arts activities.

X. ADJOURN

Chair Brooks adjourned the meeting at 11:14 AM. Councilor José Lezcano moved to approve and Councilor Catherine Sununu seconded.

Next Council Meetings:

July 10, 2023 – September 11, 2023 – November 13, 2023