

New Hampshire State Council on the Arts
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – May 19, 2021
Zoom

Arts Councilors Present

Chair Dr. Roger Brooks, Vivian Beer, Angela Brown, Sara Germain, R.P. Hale, José Lezcano, Mary McLaughlin, Tim Sink, Catherine Sununu, Jason Tors, Cecilia Ulibarri, Leah Woods

Arts Councilors Absent

William Stelling, Peter Warburton

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); Lisa Burk-McCoy, Creative Communities & Arts in Health Coordinator (CC/AH); Carey Johnson, Curatorial Specialist (CS); and Emily Killinger, Visual Arts Associate (VAA)

Staff Absent

Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) Commissioner Sarah Stewart

Guest

Kelly Barsdate, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

Motions (carried)

- Accept the minutes of January 19, 2021 Council meeting
- Approve Artist Emergency grant recommendations
- Approve Artist Entrepreneurial grant recommendations

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dr. Roger Brooks called the meeting of the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts to order at 10:01 AM on May 19, 2021.

II. MINUTES

Chair Brooks called for a motion to accept the minutes from the January 19, 2021 meeting. Councilor Catherine Sununu moved to approve, seconded by Councilor Mary McLaughlin. The minutes from January 19, 2021 were unanimously approved.

III. INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

(HTA) Kayla Schweitzer led the Council in a Land Acknowledgement. All were 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.

IV. APPROVAL OF FY21 ARTIST EMERGENCY GRANTS, Round 2

The Council received 24 applications, despite funds being allocated for 100 grants. Director Lupi proposed an artist survey to be conducted approximately one month after the (\$300) unemployment insurance add-on has expired. Catherine Sununu mentioned the low number of housing assistance applicants and posited a possible connection between the two low numbers.

Chair Brooks called for a motion to approve the Artist Emergency Grant and Artist Entrepreneurial Grant recommendations. The Council unanimously approved.

- Moved: Councilor R.P. Hale
- Second: Councilor Sara McLaughlin
- Nays: None
- Recusals: None

V. APPROVAL OF FY22 ARTIST ENTREPRENEURIAL GRANTS, Round 1

There were four applications to approve (see above).

VI. STAFF REPORTS

Director Lupi reported that the state budget process is currently in the Senate. The Arts Council budget appears to be safe. She expressed uncertainty regarding the status of the Film Bureau, and the Save Our Granite Stages Fund. The Governor had discussed the possibility of businesses that received Main Street Program and NERF program funding having to give back some money, because their losses were less than expected. The federal government had communicated that they may not require CARES act money to be given back. However, the Governor stated that if the \$50 million were returned, it could be used to assist live venues that didn't qualify for the federal shuttered venue operator grant program. Director Lupi asked for clarification from Governor's office and received word that they would get back to her with more information. Many of the state's performing arts venues gathered yesterday for a Zoom press conference to discuss reopening processes. The press conference received strong coverage, in front page headlines across three newspapers and stories on WMUR and Town Square Media. Chair Brooks praised Director Lupi for assembling the performing arts advocacy coalition and thanked her for her efforts. Director Lupi received notification from the National Endowment for the Arts that the Council would receive \$758,900 in funds from American Rescue Plan. These funds will be appended to the current federal partnership grant, possibly to be distributed to operating grantees in FY22. She also received notification about the federal FY21 grant from the Arts Endowment which will fund state FY22 activities (\$770,592, an increase). The Council is currently in the middle of a grant cycle in terms of deadlines, which Cassandra will speak to later. Three of the four [Creative Campfire](#) sessions with Amanda Whitworth have taken place. A reminder will be sent out to join for the fourth session.

CGO Cassandra Mason reported that 416 applications have been processed for 336 grants in FY21 (three times as much as a regular year). NHSCA will soon be operating in three NEA grant years: FY20 grants have been extended, FY21 is just ending and FY22 is beginning. The Council will be contracting with someone for help with administrative work. The application period is open for the Arts Education position. Hopefully the position will be filled by the beginning of the fiscal year, July 1. Percent for Art installations were completed at the Merrimack County Superior Court and Milford District Court recently (Gordon Carlisle).

VAA Emily Killinger presented an update on the 2021 Poetry Out Loud program, with a slideshow of highlights. The slides included student Deborah Umwiza of Laconia Christian Academy, speaking on what poetry means to her; and Poetry Out Loud participating teacher Gordon Lang of Kingswood Regional High School speaking on the impact of the program on students.

CC/AH Lisa Burk-McCoy reported that the Arts and Health grant program received 12 applications: eight in the Health and Healing track and four in the Public Health track. There are four new applicants. Burk-McCoy discussed the partnership grant with the NH Veterans Home to bring an artist in to work with residents. The Creative Communities program launched the Arts Commission Peer Exchange in March, to come together in conversation to discuss how to navigate programming during the pandemic and to share strategies. Meeting bi-monthly, it includes sixteen participating community commissions. Additionally, the Upper Valley Arts Alliance is dissolving. Burk-McCoy offered to host a meeting for stakeholders to discuss the distribution of assets and establish need for a new council to take its place. Likewise, the North Country Council ran a series

of focus groups which recommended creation of a regional arts council for the North Country. Burk-McCoy also toured the Colonial Theatre in Laconia and shared several photos.

HTA Kayla Schweitzer provided an update on the Arts Conservation (Mooseplate) grant program: eight letters of intent were received, each asking for the maximum request of \$20,000. Deadlines for the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship and Project grant categories are approaching. Schweitzer noted that the pilot program in state parks for traditional arts programming will be revisited.

VII. GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARDS DISCUSSION

Councilors Bill Stelling, Mary McLaughlin and Cathy Sununu are committee members, in addition to Chair Brooks. Chair Brooks underscored the goal of 100% participation for the Council and noted that he had heard from 10 of the 14 Councilors so far. Councilor McLaughlin spoke about the revised structure of the event: as a hybrid live-streamed production, the committee has been working with Events United/Studio Lab and Trigger House to produce a professional, creative experience. There will be a small in-person attendance. Councilor Sununu pointed out that the event will be put together similarly to a television production, with the goal of reaching a broader audience. Sununu anticipates that the involvement of Trigger House will help with social media outreach as well. Councilor McLaughlin stated that the committee received 37 award nominations and selected winners of the seven main awards and five Silver Lining Resilience awards. Production of videos profiling the winners of the seven awards is underway. Due to the nature of the production, the event will cost almost three times as much as regular live production, and more funds are needed. Director Lupi reminded the Council to keep an eye out for businesses or individuals who might like to participate at the \$1,000 or \$3,000 levels. Councilors were asked to let Chair Brooks know what they can contribute, and Director Lupi will disseminate the materials created by Trigger House for the event.

VIII. EQUITY IN GRANT MAKING DISCUSSION—with Kelly Barsdate, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

Chair Brooks provided background on guest Kelly Barsdate, Chief Program and Planning Officer of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), who has been with the organization since 1991. Director Lupi praised Barsdate as an extraordinary resource and explained that as such, she has been invited to discuss equity in grant-making.

Barsdate explained that she supervises NASAA's research services and leads technical assistance services to advise people across country as they assess and develop new programs. She underscored the need for the public sector to serve everyone, to ensure every community receives the benefits of the Arts. Barsdate explained that this ethos underlies why agencies across the nation are invested in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) work more than ever. Barsdate stressed that every state is different, and every state has a different set of possibilities and constraints. As such, Barsdate aimed to highlight both national trends, as well as state-specific projects.

In terms of national trends, Barsdate summarized that nearly every state Arts Council is currently accelerating their DEI work. Although the work is different, the two most common priorities are COVID-19 recovery and DEI, which intersect and inform each other. Often this work consists of data assessment: who's applying, who's receiving funds. This data helps diagnose how systems can be rewired to help access funding easier. Barsdate provided examples from Rhode Island, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Utah, Arizona, South Dakota and Connecticut, which are all adjusting or creating programs to more fully reach BIPOC and other underserved communities.

Barsdate summarized two takeaways: 1. There is a lot happening in the DEI space across the country, and 2. There is no single right way to go about DEI work. Each state finds a strategy that works for its own communities, conditions, and capacity. Some Arts Councils have adopted committees/ task forces, while

some view it as the responsibility of the existing Council. Barsdate explained that Councilors can lead by including the question of DEI as an aspect of every decision made. Councilors are advised to examine who will benefit, and how can it be as inclusive and equitable as possible. Additionally, Councilors can act as Goodwill Ambassadors for DEI work by taking up education roles about the work of the Arts Council and showing up in community conversations as visible champions for arts activity.

Barsdate's presentation was followed by a brief discussion, moderated by Chair Brooks. Director Lupi pointed out that NHSCA was the first state agency to have a [DEI policy statement](#), and now other agencies are following suit.

Councilor McLaughlin gave an example of local DEI work in terms of the North Country: she stated that several years ago there were applications for funding from the North Country that were disregarded, because it was thought the applicant organizations were too new or unsustainable. However, after noticing how underrepresented the North Country was, the Council now looks at supporting this area more. Barsdate noted this was a good example of course-correction.

Director Lupi explained that the quick turnaround grant program created by the Council due to the pandemic attracted groups that had never connected with us before. She stated that other, easier ways for organizations to receive funding are needed, and that bureaucratic requirements can be a significant barrier to newer, smaller organizations.

Chair Brooks pointed out that the Council can do better at recognizing the new, diverse populations in our state, while Councilor Tim Sink wondered whether the annual Concord Multicultural Festival has ever applied for funding. HTA Kayla Schweitzer is on the Multicultural Festival committee, and she explained that while the Council historically pays for the emcee and traditional arts demonstrations, the festival has not yet been able to apply for a grant.

CC/AH Lisa Burk-McCoy told the Council about meeting with Maryland Arts Council staff to discuss how they've worked to make grant making more equitable. Utilizing a revised aesthetic perspective framework, the Maryland process took several years. Burk-McCoy noted that equity should not be considered a question on an application, but instead it needs to be embedded in every question and step of the process. Barsdate agreed, underscoring the fact that the National Endowment for the Arts has to base funding decisions on artistic merit and excellence and those concepts aren't neutral or equitable. State Arts agencies need to recognize that expertise and mastery manifest in many different ways, and part of excellence includes authentic community ties to the work, elevating work that originated from members of the community.

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 have been doing. Councilors reported on a wide range of in-person and virtual arts activities.

X. ADJOURN

Chair Brooks adjourned the meeting at 12:13 PM.

Remaining 2021 Council Meeting Dates (start time will be 9:30 AM, unless otherwise indicated): Wednesday, July 21, Wednesday, September 15, Wednesday, November 17 (locations TBA).