

Newbury Cultural Council Meeting Minutes September 25, 2023 at 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. ET

Council Members Present:

Robin Lawson, Chair
Bart Bracken, Treasurer
Jeanne Anderson, Secretary (by phone)
Marguerite “Minnie” Flanagan
Margaret Russell
Lloyd Hamovit

- **Call to order:** 5:35 p.m.
- **Approval of June 12, 2023 meeting minutes:** Voted to approve.
- **Update on handoff to new officers and Email and town website access:**

Robin Lawson (chair), Bart Bracken (treasurer) and Jeanne Anderson (secretary) assumed the officer roles of Newbury Cultural Council (NCC) on July 1, 2023.

Jeanne Anderson was notified of the extension of her appointment by the Board of Selectmen from July 1, 2023 through January 31, 2024. Jeanne acquired access from the Town of Newbury’s IT office to post meetings and agendas on the town website at the end of June. She met with the former cultural council co-chair and secretary (Michelle Ouellette) in July to discuss the role. She also contacted and spoke with the town clerk (Gretchen Girard) to clarify posting of council agendas. A request for posting a meeting and agenda notice must be sent to the town clerk’s office 48 business hours prior to any scheduled meeting. This will be time stamped by the town clerk’s office and posted on the municipal bulletin board. An additional agenda must be added to the council sub-section of the town website by either the town clerk’s office or the council officers (typically the secretary). The town clerk is happy to post such an agenda, but relies on the council to alert them if needed.

The request for proposals for FY 2024 with an October 17th deadline was added to the town website, posted at the Newbury Town Library and advertised in the Newburyport Daily News in mid-September.

Robin and Bart recently met (September 19th) with the Town of Newbury new IT manager (Jon Temple) to discuss access to the council e-mail and website. A new town e-mail will be established for the cultural council to replace the existing Gmail account. It will help smooth communications, provide more security and data storage as well as assist with meeting state standards for document retention. This will also make future officer transitions more seamless.

Bart has obtained access to the existing Gmail account and will be able to forward communications received on that address to the new email address (once established). This is expected to happen in the coming weeks. Access to the cultural council email and town website for Robin has been delayed by the personnel transition in the IT office for the Town of Newbury, but is expected to be resolved soon.

Robin reviewed MA Open Meeting guidance with town personnel over the summer. She noted that the NCC can establish rules and guidelines governing public comment at NCC meetings. No further discussion of this item was completed at this time.

- **FY23 grant modifications:**

None needing review or votes at this meeting

It is anticipated the PlumFest cancellation caused by Hurricane Lee on 9/16/2023 will result in a rollover of the grant funds to 2024, and that the organizers will apply for a grant next year.

- **Treasurer update:**

Bart met with the former cultural council treasurer and co-chair (Amy Thurlow) over the summer to discuss the treasurer's role. He also intends to complete a Massachusetts Cultural Council training session on September 28th. Robin and Bart also conferred with the town's financial accountant(s) in anticipation of submitting the council's year-end financial statement (by September 30th). That filing will determine the amount of carryover funds that can be applied to FY2024 grants in addition to the state funding budgeted at \$5600.

A financial allocation via council discretionary monies originally intended as pay (\$651) for Historic New England docents who worked on Newbury Town Day did not fit LCC accounting rules. Such an allocation from an LCC must be for administrative purposes only. Town of Newbury funds for Newbury Town Day, however, were sufficient to cover the expense. The Newbury Town Day Steering Committee was able to cover their 2023 expenses. In addition, several activities at Newbury Town Day were fund-raisers to benefit the Newbury Food Pantry, totaling \$1160, and sales of the community cookbook have raised \$2000 for the pantry to date. As such, the Newbury Town Day co-chairs contacted the Georgetown and Salisbury Cultural Councils and advised them that their grant support would not be needed in FY2023 and could be rolled over to their respective FY2024 future grants.

To date, seven FY 23 NCC grantees have submitted their requests for reimbursement and been paid, leaving ten grantees that have yet to file. Bart will send reminders out to unpaid grantees in October to submit their paperwork.

- **Newbury Cultural Council survey**

An annual NCC survey by council members was conducted at both the pancake breakfast (Byfield Community Arts Center) and at the welcome desk (Spencer Peirce Little Farm) during Newbury Town Day. Fifty-one surveys were collected. They reflect a good cross representation of Newbury citizens of all ages and all neighborhoods. The intended survey to be conducted at Plum Fest (Plum Island) on September 16, 2023 was not completed given the cancellation of the festival due to Hurricane Lee. Bart Bracken will compile the results in hand and share them with the council at a future meeting.

The council approved a motion to remove the existing 2020 resident survey from the Newbury Cultural Council sub-section of the town website and post more current survey results once the data is assembled and reviewed.

- **Newbury Town Day:**

The second annual Newbury Town Day was successfully held Saturday, August 26th, 2023 with most activities based at Spencer Peirce Little Farm, as well as Plum Island, the Byfield Community Arts Center, the Central Street Fields and the Morgan Street offices of the Newbury police and fire station. The Newbury Town Day Steering Committee felt the day accomplished all of its goals in trying to bring the far-flung neighborhoods and people of Newbury together. There were hundreds of attendees thanks to broad publicity and the enthusiasm of volunteers, successful fund-raisers, full support from town select board members, local businesses, town police department and many volunteers.

Robin Lawson (Newbury Town Day co-chair) reported on the variety of events that included: open artists' studios, a Pink House themed art show and Pink House themed discounts and participation by Plum Island businesses, a vintage baseball triple header and brass band (Jay Daly and the Barbeque Brass), an international miniature aerobatics competition of radio-controlled airplanes, pancake breakfast and a dunk tank auction supporting the Newbury Food Pantry as well as tours of Historic New England homes, burial grounds and the 1877 school house on the Newbury Lower Green amongst others. Evening activities at Central Street Fields included a performance by Greta's Electric Tree, closing ceremonies attended by State Senator Bruce Tarr, and a showing of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. Batman's arch villain *The Riddler* was also seen throughout town during the day, but ultimately apprehended by the Newbury police and a local boy (!).

The events were well covered by the Newburyport Daily News before and after the event. After founding the event in 2022, Robin Lawson and Heidi Fram intend to hand off the co-chair roles heading into the planning phase of the third annual Newbury Town Day (tentatively scheduled for August 17, 2024).

- **Additional business:** none
- **Adjourn:** 6:25 p.m.
- **Reminder of next meeting:** Monday, November 13th, 2023 5:30 p.m. ET
Newbury Town Hall, 12 Kent Way, second floor meeting room