

Newtown Cultural Arts Commission (NCAC) Strategy Subcommittee

Minutes of February 17, 2020 Meeting

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE NEXT NCAC STRATEGY SUBCOMMITTEE
AT ITS NEXT MEETING.

The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission (NCAC) Strategy Subcommittee held a meeting on Monday, February 17, 2020 at the Community Center.

Members present: Suzanne Lang, Andrea Spencer, Deborra Zukowski, Laura Lerman (Ex Officio)

Members absent: None

Public present: None

1. Call to Order

Deborra Zukowski called the meeting to order at 7:40 PM

2. Public Participation

None

3. Approval of Minutes

Andrea moved to accept the minutes for the November 18 meeting. Suzanne seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Communications

None

5. Old Business

The Strategy Committee is trying to document pertinent NCAC history related to strategic planning, see appendix A. This document will be updated as more information is available.

The current NCAC activities were reviewed. At this point the following has been discussed:

- Management of several galleries and showcases, of which the Library showcase is fully restricted to local artists,
- Scholarships/Grants are provided to local students/arts-related organizations,
- Organize and present the Newtown Arts Festival that is both a fundraiser for the scholarships and grants mentioned above and a venue to help promote local artists and their wares,
- Encourage and support artist-driven events,
- Provide recommendations to the Board of Selectmen for arts-related decisions, like the appointment of the Newtown Poet Laureate.

6. New Business

Plan Stakeholder Input Event

Based on the conversation from the Jan 2, 2020 NCAC meeting, the Strategy Committee discussed possible methods to gather input from the local artists and arts-related organizations, including a community-wide brainstorming event, a survey, one-on-one discussions, and a focus group.

Andrea motioned to hold a focus group, and Suzanne seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Suzanne motioned that the following questions be the basis for the focus group, and amended the questions with “beyond space”. Andrea seconded, Both the motion and amendment passed unanimously.

Questions for the focus group:

- For your current creative space, what works and what needs improvement?
- For your available performance/exhibition venues, what works and what needs improvement?
- What, beyond space, are your biggest challenges/needs?
- What, beyond space, is your one wish as an artist?

Suzanne motioned that the following artists and arts-related organization be invited to participate in the focus group. Andrea seconded, The motion passed unanimously.

Jen Guman (music venue), Jen Rogers (textile), Mike Ageis (wood), Karen Pinto (potter), Adelle (SCAN), Rhonda/Chane (Flagpole Photography), Andrea Stratford (dance), Laura Lerman (Newtown Choral Society), Terry Sagedy (theater), Kate Katcher (theater), Michelle Hiscavich (NPS Visual and Performance Arts Director), Hieudran Morgan (glass), Nancy Gould (textile), Lois (textile), Julia Provey (artist), and Rob Kaiser (sculptor)..

Suzanne motioned that the list should be augmented with sculptors. Andrea seconded, The motion passed unanimously.

The committee then discussed other logistics associated with the event including keynote speaker, space, refreshments, and date. The committee also thought a table-based activity where the participants use post-its to address the questions and the discuss as a group after each would be an informative method to use for the event.

Todos:

Andrea: Reach out to Lisa Scails to see if/when she would be available to open the focus group with a discussion relevant to local artists and arts-related organizations. The date will be set based on her availability.

Deb: Once the date is known, identify and reserve a venue for the event.

Laura: Craft an email inviting participants, and send for comment to the others involved in the NCAC Strategy Subcommittee.

Refreshments: Deb will supply coffee, tea, milk, and sweeteners, and Andrea will supply/coordinate the rest.

7. Public Participation

None

There being no other business, Andrea motioned to adjourn the meeting and Suzanne seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Appendix A

Summary of NCAC History Pertinent to Strategy Effort – DRAFT – Jan 20, 2020

“The mission of the Newtown Cultural Arts Commission is to act as an umbrella, focusing on a holistic, town-wide vision to create a community that is enlivened through the arts.”

CULTURAL ARTS ORDINANCE

Section I: Creation

There is hereby established the Newtown Cultural Arts Commission. The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission shall consist of nine (9) members.

Section II: Purpose

The purpose of the Newtown Cultural Arts Commission shall be to stimulate, facilitate, coordinate and cooperate with existing organizations for the development of the arts. It shall serve as an information center and focal point in the community for activities in the arts.

Section III: Appointment, Terms and Vacancies

The First Selectman, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, shall appoint nine (9) members. Individuals shall have a broad interest, understanding and appreciation of cultural activities. The term of office shall be for three (3) years. Initially three (3) shall be appointed until January 7, 2007; three (3) shall be appointed for two (2) years and the remaining three for three (3) years. All vacancies shall be filled for the balance of their unexpired term by the First Selectman, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen.

Section IV: Organization

The Commission shall annually elect a Chairperson, a Vice Chairperson, and Secretary.

Section V: Duties and Responsibilities

The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- a) To make an initial survey of the cultural and artistic resources of the Town of Newtown, including but not limited to, a survey of the arts by each subject deemed to be of significance by The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission in carrying out its duties.
- b) To make such additional surveys as may be deemed advisable from time to time, of private and public institutions engaged within the Town in artistic and cultural activities.
- c) Produce and update an ongoing Cultural Arts Events Calendar executed by website.
- d) To stimulate and encourage both private and public study and presentation of the performing and fine arts and public interest, support and participation
- e) To encourage and assist freedom of artistic expression essential to the arts.

- f) To stimulate cooperative and coordinated effort among cultural organizations actively engaged in a single art form.
- g) To advise and make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen on matters of cultural significance to the Town of Newtown on at least an annual basis.

Section VI: Financial and Contractual Responsibilities

The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission shall have the following financial powers and duties:

- a) To submit a proposed budget to the Board of Selectmen
- b) To enter into contracts within the limit of funds available, with individuals, organizations and institutions for services which will further the objectives of The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission.
- c) To enter into contracts within the limits of funds available with local, regional, State or Federal Associations for cooperative endeavors.
- d) All contracts and agreements must have the prior approval of the Purchasing Authority or the Board of Selectmen.
- e) To accept gifts, contributions and bequests of funds from individuals, foundations, companies, corporations and other organizations for the purpose of furthering the objectives of The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission, subject to a Resolution entitled Cultural Arts Commission Gift Fund.

Section VII: Expenditures and Employment Rights

The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission shall:

- a) Make expenditures in accordance with the Annual Budget adopted by the Town of Newtown.
- b) All monies received in the manner referred to in Section VI, line (e) will be placed in a separate Gift Fund subject to an annual audit and may be expended subject to the majority approval of The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission, subject to a Resolution entitled Cultural Arts Commission Gift Fund.
- c) Employ experts and others as may be needed, subject to personnel regulations and limits of the annual Town Budget appropriation for The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission.

Section VIII: Newtown Cultural Arts Auxiliary

The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission is hereby authorized to appoint citizens, but not limited to Newtown residents, who are known for their competency, understanding and devotion to the cultural pursuits, to The Newtown Cultural Arts Auxiliary.

The Newtown Cultural Arts Commission will define the function and duties of The Newtown Cultural Arts Auxiliary significant to the purpose of the Commission.

The purpose of The Newtown Cultural Arts Auxiliary is to assist the commission members in the execution of their duties.

Past Efforts Related to Strategy

Ad Hoc Cultural Arts Study Committee

Formed in 2003, Proposal dated June, 22, 2005

Mission: "To study Connecticut's state, municipal, and private arts organizations, where upon, at the completion of our study we will produce in writing a final proposed plan for Newtown, Connecticut."

Questionnaire used:

1. What is the status of your organization?
 - a. commission or council
 - b. non-profit
2. What is your mission statement?
3. Which disciplines of art do you promote?
4. Do you have your own facility/office space?
5. How many people were involved with the project?
 - a. was it town supported
 - b. did you have a grant writer
 - c. was a town planner involved
 - d. are you affiliated with any other organizations
6. How long did it take to officially get the commission off the ground?
7. What State and Federal funding were you able to access and use to support the Cultural Arts Commission?
8. Do you have a membership base, if so how many members? And do you charge a fee?
9. What type and how many fundraisers or events are held annually?
10. What is your annual budget?

Community Development and the Arts

In the Executive summary of the 2005-2008 Strategic Plan of the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism it is stated:

'Investments in culture build cities and towns, engage citizens, generate private investment, grow the job base, attract business and help develop tourism product.'

$$\text{Vitality} \int \text{Creativity} \int \text{Entrepreneurship} = \text{Community Development}$$

Arts Promotion

A Cultural Arts Commission could connect with the *Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism website*, where information is available to millions of people from across the country, and local citizens seeking information on places of interest, historical landmarks, and activities taking place in towns across Connecticut.

Connecting to the Town Website is essential as Newtown has much to offer: walking and biking trails, eagle watching, Labor Day Parades, Library Book Sales, classical music performances, antique shows, juried art shows, Holiday Festival, Little Theatre, SCAN, and Friends of Music programming.

A Cultural Arts Calendar and Newsletter would be an invaluable tool in informing the public of events and special activities within our Town. Another area of promotion would include an Arts Directory with services that are offered by artists in Newtown.

Cultural Arts Commission Goals

- ◆ **Promote** and enhance the **cultural development** of Newtown's community.
- ◆ **Assist** and promote **public awareness** of the **artistic, cultural, historical** events taking place by producing a Cultural Arts Events Calendar/Newsletter; an Artist Directory and connection to the Town Website.
- ◆ **Promote** and lend support for **educational and cultural art** programs, special events and activities for the **students, adults** and **senior** population of our community.
- ◆ **Encourage support and provide information for** individual artists and arts organizations.
- ◆ **Participate** in Newtown's cultural planning process by researching grants and reviewing policies and programs which affect arts and cultural development in the community.
- ◆ **Recognize** the importance of **ethnic diversity in the arts**.

2008 Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, Peer Advisor Network

Final Report: May 9, 2008

Focused on:

Commission process and definition of terms above

Calls for a “comprehensive plan for what we should accomplishment in our first year or two, and a strategic plan for long term goals.” The work identified three short-term goals and three long-term ones.

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Last page:

NCAC Meeting Notes
Peer Advisor, Judith Mortensen

April 10, 2008

- Local Artists

Definition of **Enhancing**

- Promote what already exists
- Provide opportunities for 'hidden artists'
- Bulletin Board of events
 - So events are not competing with each other
 - People may attend more functions
- Raise the Bar of the quality of the arts
 - Provide more money for sets
 - Refurbish performance spaces
 - Touring companies will want to come
 - Provide artist mentors
 - People think of Newtown as destination of arts

Definition of **Promote (existing and new)**

- Facilitate
- Create
- Initiate
- Refer to NCAC purpose in the town charter: “to stimulate, facilitate, coordinate and cooperate with existing organizations for the development of the arts. [NCAC] shall serve as an information center and focal point in the community for activities in the arts.”
- See previous notes on raising Awareness

Definition of **Diverse Cultural Opportunities**

- All Arts
- Ethnic and other cultural
- Inclusive of all abilities
- Inclusive of all age groups (children, teens...)

NCAC Relationship with Town Selectman's office.

- Approval needed
 - To apply for grants
 - For board appointments
 - Annual budget must be submitted
- Prior approval needed
 - For any contracts we may enter into (concerns liability)
- ☐ How is insurance handled for events? (Debbie)
- ☐ Do we need prior approval before booking anything? (Debbie)

**Past
Efforts**

Related to Physical Space

NCAC Proposal for NCCC.pdf, November 5, 2015

Our Vision

Arts Spaces are gathering places that foster community

As a commission dedicated to promoting the arts, the **NCAC's** services benefit over 27,000 residents of Newtown as well as residents of neighboring towns. The NCAC is a resource for area artists - supporting the growth and development of art be it visual art, performance, music, written word. The **NCAC** helps artists by awarding competitive grants, awarding scholarships by loaning equipment when possible, and by offering a network of people with expertise in a vast range of art-affiliated disciplines. Furthermore, once appropriate space is allocated, The **NCAC** would like to offer rehearsal/studio space for lease, and performance and gallery space for the presentation of fine and performing arts. The **NCAC** reaches community members in all walks of life - by bringing art to the forefront of the community, by promoting vibrant artistic spaces in town, and by fostering artistic projects among community members through affordable, accessible, multi-generational programming, events and classes.

Why We Need an Arts and Culture Destination -

- To move forward to enlighten the community and instill a better understanding and appreciation of the value of artistic expression in our lives.
- To provide programming that enriches the soul, enlivens the brain, and reaches the heart.
- To coordinate concerts and events being held simultaneously at different venues in town into a central town center location to promote a better attendance at all events

Healing Newtown

Arts festival and Healing Newtown.docx (undated)

“Programming included workshops in painting, sculpture, weaving, musical expression, writing, and the performing arts. Programs ranged from just a single session to multiple weekly sessions. It transitioned from being offered free of charge to requiring a nominal fee or donation. The intention was for all community members - young and senior alike - to be afforded the opportunity to experience the amazing benefits of engaging in artistic expression.

After the developer leased the space and Healing Newtown moved to a smaller, inefficient space we were granted an executive directorship and continued to hold classes and other events. But that space, too, was needed and we had to cease operations almost altogether. This started a collaborative effort with Parks and Recreation – we offer programming and pay them to help us provide it to the community.

A new relationship we hope will grow once a broad-based community center is reality.”

Presence on Fairfield Hills

Proposal for Fairfield Hills Draft - series of images (undated)

The Commission is tasked with serving as an information center and focal point in the community for activities in the arts. Duties and Responsibilities include (but are not limited to)

- To perform surveys of the cultural and artistic resources of the Town of Newtown
- To stimulate and encourage both private and public study and presentation of the performing and fine arts and public interest, support and participation
- To encourage and assist freedom of artistic expression essential to the arts
- To stimulate cooperative and coordinated effort among cultural organizations engaged in a single art form
- To advise and make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen on matters of cultural significance to the Town of Newtown

IV. Goals/Objectives

- Create a Cultural Arts Center for the Town of Newtown and the surrounding communities
- Establish a nexus for the fine and performing arts in historic Fairfield Hills
- Utilize the Arts Center as a drawing point to bring in related businesses and auxiliary establishments that would add to the economic development of both Fairfield Hills and the Town of Newtown.

Both Stratford and Plymouth Halls were identified as potential venues for the cultural arts.

Presence at Edmond Town Hall

ETH_art annex.pdf, circa 2017 – From Mary Fellows??

THE EDMOND TOWN HALL ART ANNEX

Vision-

To create a multi-purpose art space for Newtown and it's respective existing and future groups.

To re-purpose, the soon to be empty firehouse at 45 Main street, Newtown, Ct.

To operate in conjunction with Edmond town hall as an alternative large open space rental option which is currently lacking in the Town Hall main building.

Space usage possibilities to include:

Black Box Theatre -

To seat 100 people, that can double as rehearsal space and lecture hall
As well as Yoga, meditation and dance space.

Space to have removable riser seating and stage.

Classrooms-

2- Open 1 ½ story classrooms, that can be opened to create one large exhibit space.

1- Single level Pottery and welding space, that could also house art shows.

1- Open space lounge/conference/entertaining space that would house a small kitchen.

1 - Guest suite, for visiting artist in residence.

Photography/ Digital Art basement-

The basement would house a darkroom and screen-printing space as well as large format printer and computer for large multimedia art printing.

Set shop and storage-

The Lower level bays, ground level could house stage, light and sound storage on one side and on the other house a set shop for creating stage pieces or event decor.