



MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 22, 2021

PRESENT: Cody Grabbe, Robert Diken, Helen Xie Geary, Mark Harris, Carolyn Hamming, Deb Kmetz, Judy Yin-Chi Lee, Samuel McDonald, Lynne Mueller, Jack Myer, Nora Pagel, Steve Reuter, Grace Shackney, John Sharp, Nancy Goldberg, Catherine LaMoreaux, Adam Fensterheim, Mickey Waring, Charu Bakshi, Robyn Russo.

WELCOME:

Co-Chairs Bob Diken and Judy Lee opened the meeting at 7:04 p.m. with a welcome to all. Bob acknowledged the Sunshine Law open meeting practice.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 25, 2021 MEETING:

Bob Diken asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the January 25<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mark Harris so moved. Grace Shackney added a correction to the minutes to include Charu Bakshi's name as being present at that meeting. Carolyn Hamming moved to accept the minutes with that correction. The motion was passed by all present.

FINANCIAL/BUSINESS REPORT:

- **Budget** - Nancy Goldberg reported that expenses, so far, include the creation of the banners for the Windows of Understanding art exhibition at the Metuchen Library. She is waiting for final billing amount. She reported that we have asked the Borough for \$8,500, the same amount we received last year.
- **Friends of the Metuchen Arts Council (FOMAC)** – Bob Diken reported the following:
  - FOMAC's 501c3 certification came through allowing us to receive tax-deductible contributions.
  - The committee is now looking to fill out the board of trustees and create membership and sponsorship opportunities. Any suggestions for board members should be referred to Bob, Lynne Mueller or Kat Davis.
  - There will be an ad and an article in the Metuchen Mirror announcing the formation of FOMAC.
  - A website at [www.friendsofmac.com](http://www.friendsofmac.com), Facebook page and email address have been created. Grace Shackney suggested changing the website address to “.org” to signify the non-profit status of the organization. Bob agreed to look into making that change.
- **2021 Middlesex County Grant** – Grace reported that we received confirmation of our grant in the amount of \$5,000 for a Jazz Fest program later in the fall. She is working with Lynne Mueller on the details. We are looking to have the event be part of the Central Jersey Jazz Festival which includes events in Somerville, New Brunswick and Flemington. Potential dates are September 18<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup>.

2021 PROGRAM PLANNING:

Bob shared a programing worksheet and asked each event coordinator to fill in potential date, location and a budget amount in order to facilitate appropriations from the Arts Council budget. He would like the sheet completed by our next meeting.

- Program discussion:
  - **Girl Scout Gold Award Project** – Bob reported that he was contacted about helping a high school age girl scout from Edison achieve her Gold Star award by creating a “junior arts council” with local students that would advise and suggest programing and creative involvement for high school age audiences. Judy Lee announced that Sam McDonald has agreed to be the lead in this project.
  - Nora Pagel mentioned the possibility of a Tic Tock project. She will come to the next meeting with more details.
  - **The Papillon Project** – Bob described and discussed the possibility of the Arts Council's participation with an African American photography exhibition, panel discussions and book signings at Papillon store in downtown Metuchen. Our involvement would be that of promotion and providing moneys toward a small travel stipend for the photographers coming in from New York. Bob will keep us up to date on the plans going forward.

- **NJSO Parks Concert** – Judy Lee reported that this concert, which was postponed from June 2020, is still being discussed by the NJ Symphony and the Metuchen’s mayor’s office for this spring. Judy is promoting the involvement of the Arts Council should the plans go forward.
- **Windows of Understanding Community Conversation Series** – Grace announced that the second conversation, co-sponsored with the Metuchen Human Relations Commission, will take place this Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. This Conversation will be concerned with the topics of Public Health and Trauma & Recovery. The featured organizations are The Metuchen First Aid Squad and Women Helping Women. The art that was commissioned do depict the mission of these agencies will be discussed. The Conversation takes place on the Metuchen Human Relations Commissions’ Facebook page.
- **Westerhoff Gallery** – Charu Bakshi reported that the Westerhoff Gallery’s Return of Love exhibit is up and running on Facebook. She encouraged everyone to like and share the posts. In addition to Artcycle in the fall, coming up are an exhibit of Billy Seccombe portraits, and *Metamorphosis*- a solo show by Bill Westerhoff
- 

MDA UPDATES:

- Public Art – Charu reported that the MDA Public Art Committee is looking to develop ways we can work together on public project in downtown district.
- Lynne Mueller reported that the MDA received \$150,000 in economic recovery funds for downtown businesses. An annual report is almost ready for publication. Three new businesses are opening (a pastry shop, an Italian ice store and a plant store). Angie’s Café has been closed but is planning a re-launch.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Steve Reuter asked if there was any updates about the Forum Theatre. Bob Diken indicated that there were none at this time. The Borough is waiting for a final feasibility report from the consultant.
- **MAX Classes** – Kat Davis announced that, currently, there is one teacher conducting several sections of theatre classes. Another teacher, Imma Barrera, is interested in teaching a photography class in the spring. The field is open to other teaching artists who would like to join.
- **Dragonfly Arts** – Catherine LaMoreaux said the company plans to produce a program outdoors in the summer at the DuCret School in Plainfield and bring a performance to Metuchen. Four short plays have not yet been selected.
- **Summer Concerts** – Cody Grabbe and Judy Lee are looking to re-engage with the Westerhoff faculty to create a series of summer concerts in green spaces around town.
- **The Rotunda Gallery** – Robyn Russo and Bob Diken agreed to meet about budget items for the gallery in Borough Hall.
- Judy Lee expressed her thanks to the Council members who have taken the time to connect with her as part of her introduction as co-chair of the Arts Council.

All business being completed, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

**The next Arts Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 15, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.**

Submitted by:

Grace Shackney, Secretary  
Metuchen Arts Council