

**Caroline Simmons**

Mayor

**Aaron Miller**

Program Manager of  
Arts and Culture

**David Watkins**

Ex-Officio, Board of Representatives

**Susan Nabel**

Ex-Officio, Board of Representatives

**Lynne Colatrella**

Chair

**Valerie Cooper**

Vice Chair

**Marti Etter**

Secretary

**Members**

Dennis Collins

Lou Ursone

Mike Moran

Lisa Cuscuna



**STAMFORD  
ARTS & CULTURE  
COMMISSION**

**FOSTERING THE PERFORMING, VISUAL, & CULTURAL ARTS**

November 16, 2022, Meeting Minutes

**1. Call to Order & Roll Call**

- a. Chair Colatrella called the meeting to order at 9:12 am

**2. Roll Call**

- a. Commissioners Present: Lynne Colatrella, Lisa Cuscuna, Marti Etter, Mike Moran, Dennis Collins, David Watkins, and Susan Nabel
- b. Commissioners Absent: Valerie Cooper, Lou Ursone
- c. Staff: Aaron Miller

**3. Reading and Approval of Minutes**

- a. Chair Colatrella asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September meeting. Ms Etter made a motion, and Mr. Moran seconded, the minutes were approved unanimously.

**4. Staff Report – Aaron Miller**

- a. 2023 SAC Grant Update
  - i. 27-28 applied with a variety of new applicants, max that any group can receive is \$15K
  - ii. Almost all of 2022 final reports are in with exception of 2
  - iii. Aaron will send around a doodle poll with special meeting dates for December and send to Ms. Etter so she could divide them up.

**5. Chair Report**

- a. None

**6. Committee Reports**

- a. Finance – Lynne
  - i. None
- b. Convening – Lisa & Marti
  - i. Website & Grants

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**S T A M F O R D  
A R T S & C U L T U R E  
C O M M I S S I O N**

**FOSTERING THE PERFORMING, VISUAL, & CULTURAL ARTS**

1. Ms. Cuscuna notes that the grant the commission originally applied for was not the original grant we thought. Commission received \$2.5K grant
  - a. Notes that is not a project based grant, but operational support grant and commission might have to wait till next fiscal year to apply for bigger grant
2. Ms. Colatrella notes that the commission should wait to apply for larger grants until firmer plans are set.
3. Ms. Cuscuna mentions that commission still has application out for CT Humanities, but shouldn't spend \$20,000-\$30,000 on website
4. Ms. Etter notes there is a non-profit list created by John Varamo and an intern under Mayor Martin, but that it needs updating. Recommends sending out an email requesting updated info from the non-profits.
5. Ms. Cuscuna notes that the calendar should.could be attached to the non profit info, but the \$7K should be enough to create the calendar and then manage the submissions weekly.

6. Ms. Colatrella asks Ms. Cuscuna and Ms. Etter to return to the commission with their recommendations on the best way to spend the grants.
7. Commissioners agree that there are two discussions occurring. First, is the calendar and non profit list and the second is the capability of proving this and additional information. Focus should be what can happen on city site and capability.
8. Ms. Etter notes that the document with the non-profit list already exists, and all that needs to happen is to reach out to the existing non profits for updated information so that it can be put on page.
9. Mr. Watkins notes that the City may want to put parades, sports events, and other events on the calendar
10. Ms. Colatrella notes that it would be great if commission could get someone to work a few hours a month or week who could do the website. Notes there is no bandwidth within city government to manage all this
11. Mr. Collins notes the commission could partner with Hey Stamford, and will talk to PJ Kennedy.
12. Mr. Watkins asks if any commission members have investigated what any of the other towns and cities do.
13. Mr. Moran notes that Norwalk offers \$250K for the Arts and Culture scene
14. Ms. Cuscuna notes that it may be easier to link other websites to a set page on the City website, but tougher to manage the calendar.

**c. Programming – Lou & Mike**

- i.* Ms. Colatrella notes that the City is buying a new showmobile and its currently set to arrive in September of 2023. The old showmobile's roof caved in.

**d. Diversity – Val & Dennis**

- i.* Mr. Collins notes that he and Ms. Cooper have discussed asking Carmen Hughes (DEI Officer) to come to next regular meeting to meet with commission
- ii.* Mr. Miller to extend invitation to Carmen to join commission at the January meeting and copy Mr. Collins and Ms. Cooper
- iii.* Mr. Collins mentions having upstage at the Palace with Arts and Culture, and he will reach out to Mr. Moran.

**e. New Business**

- i.* Glenbrook Community Center
  1. Ms. Colatrella notes that she had been following the process because she was interested in what was going on with the GCC, and that the proposal was squashed by the Board of Reps.

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- a. Notes that an interesting proposal could be to make the GCC into an Arts and Culture Center with offices for small business with affordable housing for artists with a renovation of the auditorium for performances
  - b. Mentions that she hasn't had a meeting on the books with the Mayor yet, but spoke to a few people on the BOR who were open to the idea.
2. Ms. Cuscuna notes that she thinks seeing art studios and arts space rather than living space at GCC would be her preference
- ii. Mr. Watkins mentions that he understands that the process was painful, controversial, and heated. Notes that Stamford needs a senior center and wouldn't want to get in front of referring this ahead of other things - would abstain
- iii. Ms. Nabel concurs with Mr. Watkins, and notes that the process was fraught with emotions and there were many who felt strongly that the affordable housing process should go forward.
  1. Mentions that everyone should be speaking from the same set of facts, and that they should be accurate especially about the cost of renovation and maintenance.

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2. Notes that many organizations were shown the building, but none wanted it because of the costs. States there may be a future vote, but currently in the Mayor's hands.
3. Would abstain from any decision or recommendation the commission makes because it could come before the Board.
- iv. Ms. Etter notes that they looked at building an arts center under 95 on East Side and that it got to the State but it was an expensive cost
- v. Ms. Cuscuna mentions that through the South End revitalization process, BLT was to provide space for arts and culture. Deal was made to support Loft Artists for 10 years, but the Zoning Board stated that if Lofts Artist could keep space then it would be provided to the city for artists.
  1. Ms. Cuscuna states she believes she has the files for the South End Revitalization Act and will send them to the commission for their review.

## **6. Adjournment**

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- a. Chair Colatrella asks for a motion to adjourn, Ms. Cuscuna makes a motion to adjourn and Mr. Collins seconds the motion. The Commission votes to unanimously adjourn.