

**Chester Cultural Council**  
**Chester, MA**

Tuesday, November 18, 2025

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance**

Chair: Muriel Hall

Members: Carol Hepworth, Karen Marchetto, Melissa McAuliffe, Charles Schoonmaker and Kim Fox

*Previous meeting minutes were reviewed and approved.*

- **Introduction of New Members:** Karen Marchetto and Charles Schoonmaker

Karen Marchetto and Charles Schoonmaker were welcomed to the Council. Muriel noted that the Council now has a full board. Muriel advised them of the importance of completing Ethics Training.

Charles said his training was previously completed through the Historical Society and is not currently due for renewal.

- **Ethics Certification & Recusal**

Discussion was held regarding Charles's recusal from voting on applications submitted by both the Historical Society and the Chester Theater.

It was decided that he can participate in discussion but will recuse himself from voting on funding decisions related to those applications.

- **FY25 Grantee Reporting Status**

All FY25 grantee reports have been received since the last meeting.

- **FY26 Local Guidelines and Priorities**

Local guidelines and priorities for FY26 remain unchanged from the previous year and will continue to guide application review.

- **FY26 Grant Funding Overview**

From Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC): \$5,700

Chester Cultural Council Current Funds (CCC): \$1,914

Total Available Funding: \$7,500

Total Requested: \$20,045

Number of Applications: 22

- **Application Discussion**

The Council reviewed and discussed the following applications:

**Becket Arts Center:** Discussion focused on proximity to Chester and the extent of benefit to Chester residents.

**Snowflake Festival:** Discussed the past success of the event. Prior years included music; funding was not available for it during the last. Discussion included feasibility of local or volunteer musicians.

**Chester Theatre Company (CTC):** Recognized for its long-standing impact, high attendance, resident ticket discounts, and 36 years of operation.

**New England Sax Quartet:** Proposed 1–2-hour performance; no location or date specified. May be better suited as part of a larger project.

**Steve Cormier:** Previously presented at the library and other neighboring towns. Considered a strong project, especially since the library missed the application deadline.

**Hilltown Studio Tour:** Has been operating for many years and received CCC funding multiple times.

**Tini Totti:** Proposed library performances for children. Would require a large portion of CCC funding for two performances.

**Gateway MASS MoCA:** Previously funded. Provides high school students exposure to art, requesting a small portion of overall project costs.

**Gateway Guest Artist Series:** Proposed in-school daytime programming exposing students to various music genres.

**Hilltown Health & Community Center (HCHC):** Youth-focused, science-based programming that would diversify funded offerings.

**Hilltown Families:** Online-only programming. Educational and accessible to all ages. Confirmed nonprofit status.

**Hilltown Village:** Low funding request. Multi-session children's programming across several hilltowns.

**Bluesky Wellness:** Proposed classes at COA, library, or Main Street location. Open to participants ages 16+.

**Jazz Bones:** Proposed train station performance on 9/26/26. No duration listed and not confirmed that the Chester Foundation has agreed to the performance.

**North Hall:** 16 years of hilltown performances. Free and accessible to all ages. Receives funding from multiple sources.

**Paint & Zen:** Project dates indicate the event may have already begun; locations unclear.

**Sevenars:** 58th anniversary season in Worthington featuring a wide range of performances. Gets funding from multiple sources.

**Chester Foundation – Chester on Track:** Long-standing Chester event with strong attendance and varied attractions.

**Littleville Fair:** Reported record attendance and significant improvements to events and fairgrounds.

**Hilltown Community Garden:** Children-focused programming located near the Huntington Library.

**Chester Granite Saw:** Previously funded. Seeking weatherproof interpretive signage; continued progress noted.

**Liston's:** Hosts concerts but is a for-profit entity. Council noted preference for funding nonprofit organizations.

- **Voting & Motions**

Funding awards were determined following discussion and voting.

- Becket Arts Center – Denied. Project did not meet local criteria and limited funds available to award over 20 projects applied.
- Chester Historical Society – Approved for \$650.00 funding
- Chester Theatre Company – Approved for \$1,250.00 funding

- New England Sax/Wind Quartet – Declined for not meeting local criteria.
- Good Golly, Missed Trolley – Approved for \$200.00 funding
- Chester Hilltown Studio Tour – Declined due to limited funds available to award over 20 projects.
- Tiny Tutti - Declined due not meeting local criteria and to limited funds available to award over 20 projects.
- Mass Moca Field Trip – Approved for \$250.00
- Guest Artist Series – Approved for \$500
- Build Your World – Approved \$500
- Hilltown Families Suggests – Approved \$350
- Creative Movement for Hilltown Families - Declined due to not meeting local criteria and limited funds available to award over 20 projects.
- Water Coloring Painting - Declined due to limited funds available to award over 20 projects.
- Music by the Jazz Bones - Declined due to not meeting local criteria and limited funds available to award over 20 projects.
- North Halls Arts Festival – Approved \$400.00
- Paint & Zen - Declined due to limited funds available to award over 20 projects.
- Sevenars 58<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season – Approved \$650
- Chester on Track – Approved \$500
- Littleville Fair – Approved \$1,250
- The Community Garden at the Huntington Public Library – Approved \$500
- Chester Granite Saw Interpretive Signage – Approved \$500
- Liston’s Thursday Night Live Music Series - Declined due to not meeting local criteria

Charles Schoonmaker made a motion to approve the grant awards as voted. Carol Hepworth seconded, and the motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at **8:51 PM**.

Submitted by,



Kim Fox

1/20/26

Date



Muriel Hall, Chair

1/20/26


Date



Member

1/20/26

Date



Member

1/20/26

Date