The Groton Local Cultural Council (LCC) held its publicly announced meeting on Tuesday, September 12, 2023,at the Groton Town Hall in the first floor meeting room. Present in person were members Deb Busser, Leslie Lathrop, Co-Chair Harris McWade, Nancy Muller, and Kathleen Phelps. Christine Brooks was absent. Also present as a guest was Groton Town Clerk, Dawn Dunbar. (Co-Chair Judith Romatelli joined the meeting late at 7:20 p.m.)

McWade opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. The first agenda item was approval of minutes of past meetings, two of which were prepared by the previous chairperson, Dave Zeiler. Busser noted that current members who were not members during the previous year could not approve minutes for the earlier meetings. Muller suggested that the minutes for December 2022 and April 2023 meetings be “accepted into record” rather than technically approved. Phelps made such a motion, seconded by McWade, for which the vote was unanimous. McWade then made the motion, seconded by Busser, that minutes for the meetings of May, June, and August 2023 be approved. Those present voted unanimously for such approval. All five sets of minutes will be sent electronically by Muller expeditiously to IT for posting on the Town’s website and to the Town Clerk for archived records.

Dunbar distributed a handout she had prepared “Open Meeting Law Overview, August 2023” and shared highlights of each slide stipulating specific requirements of the Open Meeting Law, MGL c 30A, Section 18-25. It represents excerpts of the Town of Groton’s Committee Handbook 2023. She noted that the Groton Select Board has also recently approved Standards of Conduct for attendees to public meetings. Dunbar clarified that since the Groton LCC has not filled all possible 11 member seats, a quorum for business to be conducted consists of the presence of at least four of the current seven members. She stressed that all conversations should take place in a publicly posted meeting, as “serial deliberations” should be avoided. Exemptions are conversations for purposes of establishing a meeting agenda and correspondence regarding notification/attendance at a posted meeting. Agendas stating the date, time, and ADA accessible location must be posted at least 48 hours prior to the meeting, exclusive of weekends plus holidays. A sample agenda was in the distributed slide set. Arising matters, however, may be amended to the posted agenda. Guests may speak, but at the discretion of the presiding Council Chair. Minutes must list those present, all votes taken, and all motions approved by the public body within three meetings or 30 days, whichever is later. When draft minutes are distributed by email, Dunbar recommended use of bcc to prevent violating the Open Meeting Law. Upon leaving, she reminded the group that the Groton LCC has a mailbox in the mail room at Town Hall. Phelps was aware of this and will continue to check it as Treasurer. Dunbar exited the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

The next agenda item was to close out grants from the FY23 cycle. Phelps said there remain several grantees outstanding who have not submitted documentation for reimbursement. She has distributed $7,276 thus far. Grantees have until yearend to expend funds for reimbursement. She will accrue for any such outstanding amounts yet to be reimbursed when she submits her Report for FY23 to the Town. Muller pointed out that the December 2022 minutes, just ‘received into record,’ tallied individual grants and cited a FY23 grant approval total of $11,176.

Phelps stated that for FY24, the Groton LCC will be receiving $7,900. On October 17th, a report to the State must be submitted that reflects what amount, if any, is withheld for administrative purposes and publicity by the Council. We are allowed to withhold up to 5%, or $395. Muller made the motion, seconded by Busser, that the full permitted allowance of $395 be withheld for such purposes in FY24. Following a brief discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

Muller offered to follow-up with the Editor of *The Groton Herald* to inquire about the possibility of it publishing soon the remaining letters regarding FY23 grantees that she submitted in early July covering her interviews with the Nashoba Valley Artists Guild and The Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School through the Sizer Foundation. Romatelli offered to draft a news release about the current cycle for FY24 grant opportunities and send it to *The Groton Herald*, *Nashoba Valley Living*, and the Dunstable-Groton magazine in hopes of securing free public notices. Muller opened the “contact” link on the Massachusetts Cultural Council landing page for Groton’s LCC, finding a FaceBook page that needs updating. Lathrop offered to update the FaceBook page including the public notice to be drafted by Romatelli. Phelps will give Lathrop the means of logging in administratively.

Next on the agenda was the decision of pre-funding grantees instead of reimbursing them for expenses incurred. McWade needs to first speak with Groton’s Municipal Fiscal Officer to ascertain the logistics and feasibility of making such a change. Muller said this change is recommended by the State, as many grantees – whether individuals or small organizations – lack the working capital to outlay funds in advance of a project. McWade noted pre-funding is also administratively more efficient for the Council Treasurer. This item will thus be moved to the October meeting agenda, it was decided.

McWade briefly summarized changes made to the language of Groton’s LCC Guidelines to be in alignment with updated Guidelines provided by the State. Muller noted that the submission on August 31st to the State can now be viewed at <https://massculturalcouncil.org/local-council/groton>. She added that the September 12th recording of the Massachusetts Cultural Council’s review of its newest Guidelines and the process step by step for applying online for a grant will be available on its YouTube channel by the end of the week.

In the interest of time, it was decided to move remaining items on the agenda – procedures for reviewing applications, how to divide grant applications among the Groton LCC members (if to be so divided), and verification of all personal profiles on the Town website – to the meeting agenda for the October meeting date. At 8:25 p.m., Lathrop moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by McWade.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Muller, Secretary

September 13, 2023