The Groton Local Cultural Council (LCC) held its publicly announced meeting on Tuesday, January 12, 2024,at the Groton Public Library. In attendance were Co-Chair Judith Romatelli, the non-voting GDHS student representative Olive Coté, and members Deb Busser, Leslie Lathrop, Kathleen Phelps, and Nancy Muller, the latter remotely via ZOOM, thereby forming a quorum. Absent were member Christine Brooks and Co-Chair Harris McWade. Romatelli chaired the meeting, opening at approximately 7:00 p.m., as scheduled.

**Approval of Minutes:** Busser asked to amend the February 2024 minutes by removing language of apologies and subsequent detail. She moved the amended minutes be approved, seconded by Lathrop. The motion passed unanimously.

**Introduction of Guest:** Romatelli introduced Sharon Garde, a longstanding chair of the Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council (“A-BCC”) on which Romatelli had served when living in Acton. She was invited to share procedures, activities, and organization of the A-BCC as a model for Groton’s LCC. Brief discussion followed about such combined townships, and Romatelli said that she will reach out to Dunstable – with whom we share a school district – to explore its interest in the same arrangement. Muller offered to contact the MCC to find out who has replaced Haneko Brais as our representative.

Garde shared the “scoresheet” used by the A-BCC to evaluate and compare proposals for grants. It gives preference to new grantees over those funded in the past. It also seeks to distribute grants among beneficiaries of different age groups, as well as across various categories, such as music, history, dance, etc., keeping track of such factors when comparing proposals. Generally, it gives a higher percentage of requested money based on the number of residents of the two towns who will benefit from the proposed undertaking. Grants also must take place in Acton and/or Boxborough or run by a person from one of the two towns. If a grantee is based outside of the two towns but performers, for example, are residents, the proposal receives consideration as local to the A-BCC. Of the 34 proposals recently received, all but three were funded in part or in whole. It allows any not for profit grantee to clear a profit on a funded proposal. Garde shared the fact that of the $13,000 recently available for grants, $2,000 was from the Town of Acton and $1,400 was from the Town of Boxborough.

Discussion turned to publicity. Both towns post in August announcements of the availability of grants on their respective websites. Newspaper ads are placed. Bookmarks are produced and handed out at town fairs and local farmers’ markets. The A-BCC always takes the full 5% allotment allowed from the State for “administrative/publicity” purposes such as the reception for grantees, for example, but the local public library showings of foreign films are tapped from this allotment as well. To its reception, held late spring before the school year ends, its MCC representative, elected state representatives, and all members of Acton and Boxborough select boards are invited, as are all grantees. Half of all grantees usually attend, each of whom is given 2 minutes to tell briefly about their organization or event. Several are invited to “perform” for 5 minutes each to stimulate local interest. The event is held at a local public library and sometimes outdoors, with 30 minutes up front allowed for informal social time among all guests. Food and drink are supplied through donations solicited from local supermarkets and liquor stores. Each grantee is given a certificate, whether in attendance or not. In addition, news releases are sent to local papers with a list of all award grantees by name and award amounts. They are also listed on the websites of both towns, separate and in addition to the MCC website. While a separate meeting with the Acton and Boxborough Select Boards is not undertaken at the end of the season, a lengthy, multi-page report is sent to both each year describing the entire process, number of proposals received, awards, description of grantees, etc.

In closing, Garde said that the A-BCC does not have its own written policies or guidelines governing its process or procedures. Nor does either of its two townships have such. In terms of division of labor on the A-BCC, the secretary only composes minutes and sends them to the two towns for archiving/posting. The treasurer handles all matters involving money. The reception is orchestrated entirely by an individual other than the chairperson. The chair does “everything else.” Recruiting of new members is done by word-of-mouth and always includes a student member who does “everything but vote.” The proposals are divided equally among all members for reading and assessment, with recommendations for funding. If questions arise about proposals, this designated member is responsible for seeking answers. The A-BCC meets at least monthly September – May but not during the summer. During the months of October – December, the A-BCC meets multiple times each month and often beyond an hour as decisions are being reached for funding proposals.

Romatelli thanked Garde for her generous time, and the guest from A-BCC left at 7:50 p.m.

Discussion continued. Lathrop voiced concern about the number of Groton grantees who are not Groton-based, but Busser said many grantees are in Groton that serve a wider audience, such as the Groton Hill Music Center. Romatelli commented that we need to compose our own metric before the grant cycle opens for FY25. We also need to determine how to structure our meetings and make time commitments. Romatelli prefers the A-BCC approach of dividing up the readings of proposals. Busser suggested that two rather than one person be assigned to a group of proposals. Muller commented that every member of the Council should give a “one-pass” read of every proposal for familiarity, but she supports the idea of assigning members to a group of proposals for depth of analysis.

The meeting closed with agreement to next meet on April 9th at the Groton Public Library, in an effort to stick to the agreed upon 2nd Tuesday evening of every month. Lathrop will take minutes because Muller will be abroad. The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Muller, Secretary