

Montague Cultural Council — Meeting Minutes

Date: August 5, 2026, 10:35 AM – 11:55 AM

Attendees: Jon-Marc Seimon (Chair & Treasurer), Klon Koehler, Julie Kumble (co-chair), Kate Martineau (Secretary)

1. Call to Order / Welcome

- Jon-Marc opened the meeting and welcomed Klon as an incoming member (appointment pending Select Board approval).
- Reviewed general commitment: ~5 hrs/month average, with a heavy spike each fall during grant application season (Sept–Oct) and review season (Oct– Jan)
- Funding: ~\$22–23K last year, split 50/50 between Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) and the Town of Montague. Jon-Marc has written to Town Administrator Walter Ramsey to confirm town funding continues this year (not a line item in the budget; comes from discretionary funds).
- Council needs 5 members minimum to legally function — actively recruiting.

2. New Member Onboarding Notes

- Klon needs to send Jon-Marc a short bio for the town appointment process; Select Board approval + swearing-in with the Town Clerk to follow.
- Mandatory MA ethics training (~1 hr, on-demand) required for all members.
- New member orientation webinar: August 18 (recorded, can be done anytime).

3. Approval of Minutes

- Prior meeting's minutes approved unanimously (Kate makes motion, Julie seconded. Unanimous).

4. Membership Recruitment

- **Galen Huckins** — no response yet.
- **Christina Trinchero** — confirmed yes; writes for the Montague Reporter; bio needed to move forward with appointment.
- **Belinda** (last name TBD, via Jon-Marc's wife's reading group, Turners Falls) — expressed strong interest; following up.
- **Nick Perry** (Sadie's Bikes) — possible, not his busy season in fall.
- **Kai** (Waterway Arts) — declined/unavailable at this time.
- Julie to ask contacts via Suzanne Lomanto's network and Kate at a social event the next day.
- Discussed inviting a young/student member (one-year term suggested rather than three); Kate emailed high school art/music directors for recommendations. Will email Monte about his kids.
- Target council size: 6 (7 considered but seen as unwieldy for decision-making); need to lock in Christina and Belinda first.
- Skateboard park/graffiti/outsider art floated as an underrepresented cultural area worth engaging — possible commissioned event or performance piece; idea to be revisited.

5. Treasurer's Report (Jon-Marc)

- First report as treasurer; former treasurer Ben Letcher left detailed (if Windows-formatted/dated) instructions — **Jon-Marc to meet with him directly for a walkthrough.**
- Three outstanding grantee reports missing: Community Band, Wes Brown, and Paw Paw Collective — follow-up needed; Julie still working out access to the shared council Outlook/email account and needs help from the town with credentials. **Paw Paw Collective follow-up: Kate** volunteered to take this on while Julie works on Outlook access.
- Suzanne Lomanto (River Culture) now formally serves as an advisor to the Cultural Council for admin questions; Angie Amidon and Angelica (town accountant) also resources.
- **Aug 28 deadline for annual guidelines submission — in progress; contingent on finalizing the member list first.**

6. Fall Grant Season Prep

- Applications open September 1; deadline structure and criteria largely following past years' framework (some outdated boilerplate language removed from website/materials).
- ~74 applications last year; ~30 funded from ~\$22–23K pool — ongoing tension between funding fewer projects generously vs. spreading funds thinly.
- Criteria include community impact/reach and preference for Montague-based applicants or those with a concrete plan to perform in Montague (not just an offer).
- Publicity plan:
 - **Julie: designing/updating graphic** for grant announcement.
 - Graphic to go to Suzanne for inclusion in her weekly River Culture emails and possible printed flyers via the town.
 - Ad in the Montague Reporter (targeting ~quarter-page); **Klon to contact reporter Mike Jackson** re: possible story.
 - **Kate to ask local radio (Monte) for a mention.**
 - **Flyer distribution** locations identified: libraries, post offices, Looky Here (**Julie**), Unnameable Books, skateboard park, Waterway Arts, the Shea kiosk, Brick House (Latino community outreach via Stacy), Heartwings (former Catholic Social Ministries), Kazimierski Social Club (Klon has a contact there), Common Hall, St. Stans, Element

7. Reinvigorating the Council

- Discussed need for stronger social media presence (Facebook now but no one has login info; no one currently handles Instagram/TikTok — another reason to recruit a younger member).
- General theme: shift from "we should" to individual ownership/commitment for action items ("euphemistic we" vs. real accountability).
- Klon shared a past cautionary example (2022 attempted Pumpkin Festival reboot that fell through due to lack of volunteer follow-through).
- Trello board proposed by Jon-Marc and declined as unnecessary overhead for now.
- **Kate (secretary) will circulate minutes with action items highlighted after each meeting.**

8. Update: Potential Alliance with Gill, MA

- Feedback from town contact Fern Smith: process would require reaching out to Mass Cultural Council first, then Walter, then town accountant/Suzanne, before engaging Gill.
- Consensus: table this idea for now given the council is still rebuilding capacity.
- Julie motions that we not merge at this time. Kate seconds. Unanimous
- Noted Antenna Farm as an active, valued grantee.

9. New Business

- Porchfest inquiry from a Turners Falls resident — Julie connected them to existing Montague Center Porchfest info; no further response. Agreed to flag that grant applications open in September as a possible funding path (no guarantees).
- Kate to update MCC form and our website with new members

10. Next Meeting

- Tentatively set for Tuesday, September 22, 5:30 PM (pending confirmation once Christina and Belinda are onboarded).
- Jon-Marc will be away Oct 1–19; financial report due October 8; grant applications open October 15 for review.
- Will use a scheduling poll (not Doodle) once new members are confirmed to finalize date/time.

Adjournment

11:55 AM (Kate motioned to end. Klon seconded. All in favor!)