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## Aug 14, 2025 | 📅 MCC Monthly Meeting

Attendees: Elizabeth Lohnes [lilykauf@gmail.com](mailto:lilykauf@gmail.com) Jim Bracciale  
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Public Attendees: Sam Hammar, Nancy Clover

Attached files:  MCC Meeting Notice 7.10.25.pdf

### Public Comment

Sam Hammar visited, representing the Creative Alliance to let us know about their mission and work, advocating for arts and culture in Melrose as a whole. On their website, [creativealliance.org](http://creativealliance.org), they have a calendar and work on connecting artists. As an umbrella organization they're able to do a lot of comprehensive design and marketing support work (e.g. Pride month). They will be working with Beebe association in promoting Hispanic Heritage Month (Oct 3). They might also be working with the Beer Garden on Oct 17. They've been doing a lot of work with the Beebe Association and the gallery they have inside. If there is anything we know of that could use that kind of energy (communications/ digital communications/ banners), let them know!

Jim asked about the business connection with events like the Summer Stroll. Sam explained that, if we were able to secure the downtown as a cultural district, there would be an economic development component to that. Jim rephrased his question to focus on how to measure the impact of the cultural events on local businesses. Sam had anecdotal evidence from a watercolor artist of how much of an impact cultural events have.

July Meeting minutes were approved.

### New Member Introduction

The group welcomed Aliah Elbaz, new student member!

### Victorian Fair: Sun Sep 7

- Sarah Bolha sent around a signup sheet before this meeting and will do so again after this meeting.

- Paul: put together a prototype wheel and has questions of what should go in each section. He will not be here for the fair, but will finish it and hand it off. Ideas: “If you had a grant, how would you use it?” “what events do you attend?” “what would you like to hear more of?”
- It would be great to have a list of grant winners for people to see to prompt ideas.
- Lauren is working on a community coloring project using the Melrose gazebo and Ell pond behind, in the colors of the Melrose Cultural Council. How large? We will be sharing the table with the Creative Alliance.
- Other takeaways: chalk, tattoos

## Community Survey Preliminary Results

- There might be too much on the table at the Victorian Fair at this point, so the survey will probably not be a focal point.
- We’ve had a good response so far (239 respondents, more than double than we had at this time last year). 85% of respondents believe we should be focussing on free outdoor events. People were also very interested in seeing public art and events that focus on community-building. We’ve seen an uptick in responses from people who went out to dinner before or after a cultural event.
- There are also written responses which the council will take a look at.
- We will continue to keep it open for a few more weeks, but the numbers will likely not change appreciably. We have enough information for us to write our guidelines.

## FY26 LCC Program Guidelines

- Updated guidelines were sent around from the Mass Cultural Council.
- The one notable restriction on grants is the purchase of alcohol with grant funds. We have also prohibited capital expenditures, individual scholarships, or multi-year repeating programs (year-over-year).
  - We would like to discuss the prohibition on capital expenditures—what if Follow Your Art came to us and wanted money toward a new kiln?
  - Something like a kiln is a depreciating asset, not really a capital expenditure. Could we ask them to allow people to use the kiln for free? (This is all hypothetical.) Yes, the Cultural Council can put parameters on grants. We can also support fundraisers for people to raise money to purchase capital expenditures or scholarships.
  - We should define capital expenditures so people can understand the restrictions.
- New guidelines also change the annual survey requirement to every three years, which frees us up.

## Prep for FY26 Funding Cycle

- It would be ideal for us to get something out by next week to let people know that the new funding cycle is starting. Jim will draft those press releases.
- We also need some graphics for Social media.
- We also need to get this out on Mailchimp.
- It would also be good to get the word out to our previous grant recipients.

## Update on Big Project

- Jim met with Lauren Grymyk about the big celebration idea. He mentioned to her that this was a requested event in the survey.
- The mayor's office is supportive of it. They are not in a position to handle logistics or cost themselves.
- The next step would be to have an exploratory conversation with a number of potential partners. Jim and Sarah will discuss with Jessi at the Melrose Symphony what something like this would cost and what fundraising would look like.
- If we can't do a large scale event, could we do a concert series?
- We can use other towns' experiences as a reference.

## Housekeeping things

- We will be double-checking our member list on SmartSimple so you might be getting an email that comes from them.
- Sign up for the Victorian Fair table

### Action items

- paulcornacchini@gmail.com will work on the suggested Spin-the-Wheel questions/categories, and pass on the wheel on to those who will be at the Victorian Fair.
- Jim Bracciale will work on getting a communications toolkit together to kick off the FY26 Funding Cycle
- Elizabeth Lohnes will look into ordering more branded T-shirts (18 or so)
- laurencstetson@gmail.com will create image to print on poster board for Victorian Fair
- Sarah Bolha will order chalk as a giveaway for the Victorian Fair.
- Jim Bracciale and Sarah Bolha will set up a couple of conversations with the MSO and others about a 2026 celebration.
- laurencstetson@gmail.com will reach out to technical industry friends to find out how much a large public concert
- Jenne Rayburn will work on finding a rising junior student member
- Elizabeth Lohnes will send approved minutes to the City of Melrose.

Meeting adjourned at 8:22pm.