

Watertown Cultural Council Minutes

August 13, 2025

7:00-8:30pm, Watertown City Hall 3rd floor Meeting Room

Present: Nick Haddad, Morgan Henderson, Elektra Newman, Trisha O'Connell, Phyllis Perrone, Lois Pond, Angela Tramontano, Nerida White, Rebekah Zincavage

Absent: Lawrence Kessenich, Greg Papasian, Meg Ramsdell, Sally Young

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm with a quorum present

1. New Member Introductions

- Lois welcomed five new members to the council
- Nerida, Rebekah, Elektra, and Trisha introduced themselves to the council
- Current members introduced themselves and their role on the council

2. Minutes

- The June 2025 minutes were approved: Morgan approved, Phyllis seconded, all in favor

3. FlashVote Survey

- Angela went over the comments for this year's FlashVote survey and compared to last year's results
 - This year there was a higher percentage of comments about artist and community spaces than last year
 - Questions relating to WCC priorities and types of events were similar to last year's questions
- Members discussed whether there were other ways to get this info, such as surveys at the arts Market and other events
- Rebekah and Trisha stated that there has been an increased effort to get more residents to sign up for FlashVote surveys
- Lois stated that this is the best we have for our needs
- Members discussed the comments about artist spaces. Nerida explained how her previous town used old buildings for artist/community spaces. Since this was a common theme in this year's survey comments, Lois will pass the information on to the cultural district.

4. FY26 Priorities

- Members discussed changes to the WCC priorities for FY26.

- Based on member suggestions and input about the priorities section, Lois will:
 - Make access statement the first one
 - Change statement about Watertown history to “explore and honor social and cultural assets and histories of Watertown through community events”
 - Change education statement section referring to artists and students to “support educational programs for individuals of all ages”
 - Move the ‘promote community-wide’ statement next to the ‘support collaboration’ statement
 - Take out ‘and finally’ from the council guidelines section
- Trisha stated that being more specific is better. Nick suggested that a statement about having a venue should be added. Lois stated that it is already covered in the section stating that specific applications are more likely to be successful.
- Lois will send a draft to members to confirm all changes have been made

5. FY 2026 WCC committees

- Three committees are listed in the handbook: Evaluation, Communication, Officers
- Nick discussed his role on the previous WCC grants committee and suggested that it be reinstated.
 - Currently all members use a document created by the previous committee along with a spreadsheet to keep track of their own grant decisions
 - Nick and Trisha agreed to be part of the new grants education committee and will create a new rubric and a document for members
- Communication committee
 - Greg currently maintains the WCC Instagram account
 - Phyllis volunteered to oversee the WCC website
 - Lois is a voting member on the cultural district committee and Sally is the PAC liaison. They do not need to be part of this committee.
- Oversight Committee
 - Consists of the council officers and is responsible for setting each meeting’s agenda
- FY26 committee members:
 - Grants education: Nick and Trisha

- Communication: Greg and Phyllis
- Oversight: Lois, Morgan, and Angela

6. Public Arts Committee Liaison

- Sally Young's term as PAC liaison ends in November
- Motion to approve Sally as PAC liaison for next year: Rebekah approved, Phyllis seconded, all in favor. Sally will continue as PAC liaison for FY26

7. Finance

- Morgan explained that while last year there was money in two accounts, this year it will be combined
- WCC already received the \$17,000 allotted by the city
- Approximately \$16,400 will be allotted to the council from MCC and should arrive in early September
- Account will also have carry over funds from any grants not picked up
- Money from the city will be set aside for the grantee event, Gorky mural, and other administrative needs
- Morgan will meet with John (former WCC treasurer) later this summer to go over the council's account

8. WCC handbook

- Morgan went over the current WCC handbook and members made suggestions on what to revise
- Lois recommended that 'interpretive sciences' be removed, Morgan will crosscheck with the MCC handbook to determine where that phrase came from
- Based on other member suggestions and input, Morgan will:
 - add social media accounts and change the website to the one with the cultural district
 - state that 5% of city funds will be set aside for administrative needs (ie grantee event)
 - remove vice-chair from the Rules section
 - change time when WCC liaison will contact grantees from Dec to January
 - change number of months with meetings from 9 to most
 - add 10 hours for grantee liaison to time members spend on council needs

- add new committee information and members
 - add the statement from Liz Helfer about how the three committees are connected: Cultural district (marketing), WCC (funding), and PAC (implementation)
 - remove 311 information and add FlashVote survey information
 - Committee members will create a mission statement that will be added to the handbook. Nick and Trisha will provide information about training for grant review.
 - Lois, Morgan, and Angela will determine whether there is additional information need about their role which can be placed in the appendix
 - Lois and Morgan will create photo guidelines, especially concerning children in social media photos
 - Morgan will send a draft before the next meeting for further discussion
9. The next meeting is on September 10, 2025, 7:00-8:30pm, in the city hall 3rd floor meeting room
10. With no other discussion items, Lois proposed to adjourn the meeting. Rebekah approved, Morgan seconded, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:32pm.

Respectfully submitted,

-Angela Tramontano, secretary