



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
ARTS COUNCIL
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

Somerville Arts Council Board Meeting Minutes
City Hall Annex conference room, 1st floor
50 Evergreen Ave., Somerville MA 02145

Wednesday, December 10, 2025 | 6:30 pm

In attendance: Heather Balchunas, Joe Burgio, Ada Ren-Mitchell, Gregory Jenkins, Emily Beattie, Sarah Beckmann, Christine Hayes, Yorgos Efthymiadis, Rachel Strutt, Antonio Escobar, Iaritz Menjivar

1. Approve Agenda (5 min) Approved
2. Voting on LCC grant allocations
 - a. This year the total funding added up correctly!
 - b. Questions and concerns about equity: same people applying to different categories, people directly awarded and also a subawardee on another project, people who apply every year for a fellowship with the same work (and not new)
 - c. One way to address these concerns — the board could carefully review the applications across multiple categories to flag any potential issues
 - d. Another concern is outreach to different communities and people who feel intimidated by the grant application process — Would changing the name of the grant help make it feel less intimidating? Possibly calling it “grants for individual artists” like how the MCC does it, could help disambiguate the word “fellowship” for people unfamiliar with it
3. Panel Process Impressions
 - a. Went really well this year, even with new people recruited through the new process
4. Impressions Feedback on Panel Recruitment
 - a. Some panelists are new (unfamiliar names) to the panel chairs, panel chairs had a great experience with them
 - b. Nice way to bring new people to the fold
 - c. All panelists had some background in the genre, even if they are new at it
 - d. Some panels had too many applicants, saying no to them,

- e. Some potential panelists were difficult to recruit because they were planning to apply again
 - f. It can be helpful to change the term “panelist” and the language around what the work is about. Maybe provide more direction on how to be a panelist (it’s okay to rate low scores)
 - g. About 50% of panelists chose to accept a stipend, it was a lot of extra paperwork for SAC staff
 - h. Suggestion: provide printed forms for people to sign up
 - i. Panel recruitment is always a challenge. It’s also difficult when people drop out last minute.
 - j. It helps a lot to help potential panelists see themselves in the role when sending them a cold email.
 - k. What about AI-produced art? Ask applicants to disclose their use of AI in their process
 - l. Widespread lack of support materials in many applications
 - m. Continue to use ArtBeat as first outreach for potential panelists.
5. Added item: How to continue connecting with grantees?
- a. Ask them at the celebration gala event
 - b. Might be better to work with project winners to check in rather than fellowships
 - c. Take advantage of the SAC website, to showcase LCC grantees and project events. This also helps with grantees’ outreach!
 - d. Guide to the process and how they get their money, language and tagline for their promotional materials. Board could help with gentle nudges.
 - e. Potentially create a template for people to use for creating flyers with all the acknowledgements on there
 - f. Potentially create a spreadsheet to keep track of grantees’ event dates
 - g. Potentially engage the panelists in the connection because of their involvement in the process
 - h. **For board members:** Remind panelists of the gala event and date!
6. Armory Updates
- a. RFP coming out tomorrow, for prospective tenants
 - b. There will be open houses for people to explore the space
 - c. Existing tenants have to reapply
7. Year in Review
- a. Gratitude for the SAC staff!
 - b. Gratitude for the SAC board members
8. Community Check-in