

Arts and Cultural Commission

Minutes of the meeting

April 20

Conference Room A, City Hall, Portsmouth NH

Meeting called to order at 1 PM

Attending: Linnea Grim, co-chair, Emma Stratton, co-chair, Ken Goldman, vice-chair, Jeffrey Cooper, secretary, City Councilor Kate Cook, Karen Rosania, Genevieve Aichele, Hope Puzzo, Eli Kaynor, Theresa MacDowell, Demi Dubois, Sarah Illingworth, Sean Clancy representing City staff

Absent: Margherita Giacobbi

Guest: Erin Dubois representing Portsmouth Symphony Orchestra

Minutes for the March 6 meeting were approved unanimously with one abstention

Demi Dubois presented for 3S ArtSpace, the organization she represents on the Commission

Demi has an extensive history of supporting the arts, having been chair of the Melrose (MA) Cultural Council for 5 years, helping to organize an open studio tour of 16 artist studios, an outdoor market, and a gallery walk. Demi is joining the Resources and Collaborations workgroup.

3S ArtSpace combines a music and speaker's venue which can accommodate up to 450 people, an art gallery and a restaurant, making it a cultural destination. A strength of that organization is their diversity of their offerings, their accessibility and affordability in pricing, and their flexibility in how they use their facility. The current exhibit is Sam Modder, with floor to ceiling artwork taking advantage of the height of the gallery space. During the summer months, **outdoor** shows at 3S are by suggested donation, not all shows, just the ones for the Loading Dock outdoor series.

Upcoming events of interest are Portsmouth Music and Art Academy performance May 16, Portsmouth High School Fine Arts May 22, and June 4 reception awarding the NH Charitable Fund artist grant recipients.

Workgroups

Collaboration and Resources plans to meet May 1 to welcome Margherita Giacobbi, Demi Dubois and Sarah Illingsworth as new members, and to discuss the upcoming feasibility study for artist live/work spaces. Portsmouth Housing Authority has kept in touch with this workgroup

regarding artist live/work space at the Sherburne School, which is in their planning stages for Phase 2.

Communications and Community Engagement

Theresa MacDowell reported on several projects on the workgroup docket

1. A list of places where art classes are offered, including home studios
2. List of low cost/no cost cultural events
3. Video series Fall for the Arts in which people respond to the question How have the arts changed your life? Members of ACC have either been interviewed or will be interviewed over the summer months.
4. Updating biographies and photos of new members of the Commission
5. Website updates to direct people to Chamber of Commerce events for the 250th celebrations
6. Calls for non-Commission members to participate in the workgroups
7. Another press release about the work of the Commission

Hope Puzzo reported that the Chamber of Commerce is using AI to consolidate a list of all cultural events in a central calendar, to launch in July.

Education and Advocacy

This workgroup is in a discovery phase to understand the issues surrounding arts and cultural education locally, and plans to interview teachers in the local school system.

Poetry Month

A poetry reading event took place at Reedmor Books, 67 State Street, Portsmouth on April 19, 2026.

Poetry is now posted in multiple public places and businesses. The poems are posted along with the Poet Laureate logo and the Arts and Cultural Commission logo and a QR code which tells all the locations where poems are posted. Poets participating are from as far away as Manchester and Alton. Poet Laureate plans to repeat the event next year, with a publication of the poems.

New poetry is exhibited at the Thomas Bailey Aldrich House at Strawberry Banke

The Portsmouth City Council is to discuss at the April 20 meeting approval of a resolution presented by Councilors Cook and Tabor to allow Prescott Part Arts Festival to fundraise for a new covered stage with improved siting, (subsequently approved) This is alongside implementation of Phase 1 of the PPAF Master Plan as revised for flood mitigation, focusing on the Shaw Building and the Players Ring building.

Motion passed unanimously

The Arts and Cultural Commission supports the initiative as presented by Councilors Cook and Tabor regarding upgrades to Prescott Park

2026 Master Plan

A public input session is scheduled for April 22, 6 to 8 PM. ACC members are encouraged to attend. A general theme that is emerging is creating neighborhood centers, not focusing on downtown.

Meeting adjourned at 2:25 PM