CONVENE MEETING
Chair Zamora-Appel convened a “Strategic Planning Session” of the Governing Board of McLean Community Center on July 15, 2021, at 6:20 p.m. This meeting was open to the public attending in-person at the McLean Community Center or virtually on ZOOM.

ADOPT AGENDA No changes were requested to the proposed Agenda; it was adopted by acclamation.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Chair Zamora-Appel invited those from the public who would like to comment to observe these guidelines: 3 minutes each is allotted for up to five individuals who wish to speak. Additional speakers beyond this 15-minute “Public Comment” segment may contribute their remarks via e-mail to: holly.novak@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Christopher Henzel: *Mr. Henzel also submitted these remarks via e-mail.

Good evening. My name is Christopher Henzel. I am a resident of the McLean Community Center’s tax district (1306 Forest Wood Drive, McLean, VA). I respectfully request that the members of the Community Center’s Governing Board make clear whether they will permit the use of additional taxpayer funds to expose small children to Drag Queen performances. First, the background: According to the Community Center’s website, I printed out the section a few hours ago, on June 26 the Center paid three drag performers to put on two performances for small children. Judging from video of the event, the children’s ages appear to range from about 4 years to 8. The Center says it paid each drag queen $300. One of the persons paid to perform for the children calls himself “Majic Dyke.” Again for the record, that is “Majic Dyke”. Is “Dyke” the sort of language small children should be exposed to? I don’t think so, and I suspect most Fairfax County taxpayers would share my view. Another performer that the Center paid calls himself “Kamina Sutra”, an allusion to the famous Indian erotic text, the Kama Sutra. “Kamina Sutra” performed a suggestive dance in front of the children during the first performance at the Center that day, but did not do so in the second performance. There is video of the dance; I would be happy to forward the video to board members if they wish. Again, I think most Fairfax County taxpayers would agree with me that it violates common sense to expose small children to this.

To be clear, the issue here is: first: the involvement of small children; and second: the use of taxpayer funds.
The issue is not what drag queens do for adults, and with private funding. The Community Center's website makes clear that the Center intends to continue using more taxpayer money to fund more performances like this. And if so, how much? Thank you.

Chair Zamora-Appel thanked the gentleman for his comments and said: "We will take that into consideration. Thank you."

Mr. Henzel continued: May I ask when you will take it into consideration?

Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: We will discuss it. All our meetings are open, but tonight's agenda is not about that. Thank you for your comments.

Mr. Henzel asked: Will it be placed on the agenda at another meeting?

Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: We shall discuss it as a board... and we will make it public.

Question by Mr. Henzel: Will you let the public know when you're going to discuss it as a Board?

Response by Chair Zamora-Appel: Of course. All agendas are publicly displayed on our website and other ways.

Comment by Mr. Henzel: Good. I'll look forward to attending that. Thank you.

Jeffrey Shapiro: I don't want to jump to the head of the line but I'm happy to go next. The previous speaker gave a great quick summary of the factual aspects of this. What we have here... First of all, this is one of those ideas that - whomever thought this was a good idea really should be fired. This is just ridiculous. Getting into the specifics: the idea that we should expose children to sexual pathologies like this is just bad parenting and pretty depraved... and not really part of the richness of our community, as I've understood it to-date. So, I think it's a very bad idea. But I also want to address Executive Director Singh's defense of it that I saw in an e-mail. Because, for one thing, he says: This is all part of making One Fairfax equitable, welcoming, supporting... and a welcoming space for all McLean citizens... 'We treasure our LGTBQ community, like many rich aspects of the McLean community.' But we don't have a 'history' of drag queen library story hour in this county. And there is a significant segment of the community, of which I'm one, who don't like the idea. And you didn't create a 'safe space' for us? You violated our safe space. So, really, by your own description: if you're trying to be celebratory - this was a provocative act, in my opinion. An attempt to normalize this behavior and say that "It's so normal that little kids can be exposed to it." That's a moral statement and I think Executive Director Singh had to know that this was a provocation. And then in his e-mail, he's upset and feels 'unsafe' when people criticized him. First of all, the performer didn't express any physical safety; and I assume he's talking about his emotional safety - but I'm not sure. But the point is, it basically said: 'You were the bullies, not me.' But actually, if you commit a provocative act and then someone is provoked [ZOOM connection was temporarily frozen]... Before you offer an activity, then you should really consult the community and reflect and celebrate the feelings and morality of the community which you serve. This was an act intended to move the community in a direction which a lot of the community doesn't want to go. And it was a provocative act. And I hope, before you engage in additional provocative acts, that you will consult the public and then decide if it's really a good idea. Because in this case, it was sprung without any real notice. And some people noticed. But there was not widespread notice.

Chair Zamora-Appel informed Mr. Shapiro that his time was up. If he would like to submit more feedback on that, we welcome that. There are a few e-mails that we can provide to you. And as she mentioned earlier, any agenda item that we have in the future will be publicly known. So, you are welcome to come back at a later date.

Comment by Mr. Shapiro: OK- I appreciate that. I do intend to continue the dialogue because I think this is unacceptable.

There were no further public comments.

WELCOME REMARKS
Chair Zamora-Appel thanked the staff for helping in this next phase of what the McLean Community Center is going to go through.

Change is difficult. I have dealt with a lot of change in my career. I always see that as an opportunity. MCC has provided
programming in the past 20-30 years that has grown as the community has changed. Now we’re entering a new phase and with our new Executive Director at the helm. This is the right time to do strategic planning - to see where we can go, from where we are and have been... to where we can be. All comments tonight from staff and Board members are welcome. I have no doubt that we will have a good working product at the end of this session. But if we don’t get to finalize it tonight, there is opportunity for other meetings. With all these changes coming, not just for those present right now, but if you want to talk to your community to receive any comments and ideas about programming — please bring it back to us. We don’t make these decisions ourselves – it is the community’s program.

APPROACH POINTS  Exec. Director Singh invited Ms. Novak to give remarks about how to approach collaborative discussion format. A quotation from a podcast at Univ. of Maryland about “Executive Leadership – the Power of Perspective” focuses on the value of listening to one another actively, and intentionally trying to understand different perspectives being expressed.

“What can we learn from each other? We look with our eyes, but we see with our minds. We hear with our ears. But we listen with our minds. What the mind does not know, the eyes do not see and the ears do not listen. Collaboration is about broadening perspective. I see things now that I didn’t see before.”

Tonight, if you have a different perspective or thought than the person speaking — that’s good. It can be woven-in to our common conversation. That’s what collaboration is about. Last year in all the ZOOM meetings, I noticed that the board had very little dialogue - an unfortunate fact of the electronic environment. Now that we are in-person and together, I look forward to the nature of better conversations. You all are so talented - with substantive backgrounds and subject-matter expertise among MCC staff and board members. I want to see us make the most of that!

GENERAL CONCEPTS – MCC PROGRAM LEADS  *PowerPoint presentation

Opening remarks by Executive Director Singh: I have been pushing MCC staff to look at what they are doing... how we can work together across departments and formalize the process. MCC staff ‘curate’ their programs. We arrived at ways we could talk to each other. MCC staff has great ideas! We have established “common ground” and will ‘pick up pebbles and eventually move the mountain’ to get where we need to go.

Strategic planning process: (expected to be a 4-month process; staff has been working on it since mid-May). The board just came into the process in the last week: contributing long-form responses and creating a ranked-choice. The last complex piece will involve a consulting firm coming in to hold public meetings, town halls, surveys... making sure we get the public’s input. From there, we will craft a strategic plan going forward. We are also doing deep-dive analytics into our tax district How many of the 18K households is MCC touching right now? For those who have never set foot in here – How do we find out why they have not attended? All such analysis is going on; by the time the consultants start, hopefully we will have that data ready for them. Looking at every idea staff had for programs based on community input + all submissions from the board, we found eleven ‘anchors’:

* Branding/visibility came up repeatedly from board and staff. We have three brands: OFC, MCC, and The Alden Theatre.
* Recovery – the struggle of everyone who came to MCC through hybrid programs... and now want to maintain it. FCPS is providing all after-school clubs as hybrid There is expectation of us and new competition - because other organizations are offering everything hybrid. How does MCC logistically position ourselves for that recovery?
* Nurturing: getting people comfortable to be indoors without masks; dealing with emotional trauma about not having seen their family or friends.
* Fun - we are trying to bring fun into our programming! Not just heavy stuff; but come to MCC to laugh and share a meal.
* Innovation – board and staff kept pushing to create a “lab” for new ideas, new experiences, new participants. Figure out what works. What do we need to rotate every three years? What to do once and never again because it didn’t work out?
* Intersectional Programming – not just picking one item to focus on, but how sustainability addresses creativity. Commit to bringing in artists to talk about how being sustainable also supports creativity, innovation and technology.
* Capacity building & Operations – Having many amazing ideas, how do we actually make it happen with staff, building
facilities, staff hours. What do we need to build-up? What do we need to re-orient?

**Regional destination** — people want MCC to be a draw for people to come. Not just for people who live here, but as a way to get people outside of McLean to visit. Lisa Mariam moved here because she couldn’t get into MCC registration system because she wasn’t a resident and classes filled-up quickly! She decided to move here specifically to take advantage of MCC Programs! How do we keep that momentum going?

**Responsiveness** — staff and board are on-track with this. But by the time we have a great idea and then get to the budget process and eventually to execution of the program, it might be two years later; it may be ‘old news’ at that point. We are trying to figure out how to work with the county structure while finding ways to be responsive to community current interests at the same time.

**Facilities** — OFC; partnerships with Dolley Madison Library and amphitheater. Figure out how to make OFC be more of a ‘draw’ in downtown McLean. Cognizant of OFC 10-year lease don’t let that facility slip away from us.

**Building/Engaging community** — in COVID-19, the communities that thrilled were ones that had strong connections and were able to maintain through ZOOM; within their pods. How do we continue that small, locally-focused approach? How do we stay engaged with people? Program staff have great ideas about commissions and partnerships with local organizations to move forward this goal.

**Diversity/Equity/Inclusion/Access** — this came up in all staff and board surveys: providing free programming for all generations; inter-generational connections. Adjusting open hours at OFC (opening it up for longer hours).

**Environmental Justice/Sustainability** — in looking forward, make sure there is a healthy environment for our community and our children in the future.

None of these programs can happen in an isolated silo; they all overlap. MCC is touching all these important anchors of the community. How do we move forward from there together?

Sarah Schallern Treff next gave a high-level presentation; then Mike Fisher explained how MCC staff is drilling-down from those high-level anchors. PIO Sabrina Anwah explained how to connect the themes and find a way to get the word out about what we’re doing.

Comments by Sarah Schallern Treff: With the anchor points in mind, and with data we have been collecting for years from our audiences—we aimed for the bigger picture: developing a 3-year matrix of types of programming; columns organizing the information: Programmer Program type; Anchor; Program title; Age range — to make sure we have a balanced performance season; Season for Fall, Winter, Summer 2024; Budget; Venue. It will be a great help to formalize this and then go into our budgeting having an idea of the long-range view.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: This helps other program departments know what is happening and coordinate related thematic programming. Up until now, we have programmed independently in five unusual years: relocation to satellite locations; renovation construction; moving back into MCC after construction; COVID-19 shutdowns; now coming out of the pandemic. MCC staff hasn’t had a chance to put everything in-sync; this will help us all work in that direction.

**Q & A/ COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS:**

Do we begin to add McLean Central Park amphitheater into this? Or are we just looking at MCC’s current facilities?

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Right now, we are only focusing on facilities we actually have. Even if it does go forward, the amphitheater will take at least 3-5 years, there is an 18-month finalization of the plan, then build-out. It wouldn’t fit into our 3-year matrix. By contrast, this matrix is leading toward MCC’s upcoming 50th anniversary — how we can build to something big and fantastic for the whole community!

“Environmental justice” is deeply tied to diversity and inclusion. Why choose “environmental justice” and not go for a broader scope—when inclusion, diversity and intersectionality are addressed in a different anchor/pillar?

Clarification by Mr. Singh: Commissions will be a way to fill that bridge of ‘social justice and the performing arts.’ We hope to offer five commissions per year. Sarah Schallern Treff will commission local and international artists working in environmental justice and the arts as a way to bring arts here and do work in the community — leading classes or workshops. If there are other ways to express it through correct terminology, we are happy to do so.

Clarification by Ms. Schallern Treff: Some touring artists have environmental justice themes, such as performing on instruments made of recycled material. We can get very creative about how to present that on stage and in other types of programs.

Are you tracking events that take place in-person vs. online?

Clarification by Ms. Schallern Treff: We are mostly moving to in-person right now — with comprehensive procedures for safety...
in the theater. A few programs will be offered online. Danielle Van Hook has programmed “Garba 360” which is an Indian cultural celebration. Danielle is taking a holiday from each season and designing virtual programming – as being more accessible for everyone… leading up to a performance outdoors.

Clarification by Mr. Singh: That also ties in with “environmental justice” because usually the dances are done around planting, harvest… very connected to agricultural cycles in India. We are trying to find ways to connect the themes explicitly.

What is staff’s view about retaining virtual content for future electronic distribution?
It was successful this past year, including expanding MCC’s footprint beyond Northern Virginia. Are there such plans, going forward?

Clarification by Mr. Singh: We are hoping to build a capacity in Alden Theater for live-streaming. We don’t have the capacity now – we must run the cable. But we are hoping to head in that direction.

In my neighborhood, a lot of kids participate in dancing classes and competitions.

Why aren’t they doing some of these events at MCC? I think about bringing in community performers, as well as professional performers.

Clarification by Ms. Schallern Treff: MCC does it already. We have a vibrant dance program at MCC that offers two recitals: in December and year-end in July. MCC dance classes also appear on the McLean Day stage. We offer opportunities for training and performing for the community. There is also programming for adults; the youth dance instructor also teaches ballroom dancing with Jeff Virchow.

What are some of the lessons learned through COVID-19 and things you want to maintain or expand upon? With the success of drive-thru drama and commissioning of special plays, are you thinking about such things?

Ms. Schallern Treff responded by mentioning overall themes MCC staff is focusing on:

“Recovery; re-emerge; rediscover; reinvigorate; reconnect” Everyone has been hibernating for over a year and it’s time to come back together. We want to help our community do that. Diversity/inclusion; intersectional and inter-departmental programming – much diversity; celebrating cultures; and sensory programs. We are excited to be working with other MCC departments; ideas in recent meetings are exciting!. We are also looking at pieces of art/dance that are trauma-informed and created with mental health trauma centers which can also promote healing in a different way.

“Greater access to the arts for all abilities and identities, economic means” The Alden has ADA-accessible seating and listening devices. We are excited to offer more: 1. next summer, we will offer sign language interpreters at summer concerts; 2. better ticket refund policy; 3. improving ‘one-on-one relationships’ directly with patrons: looking at personal economic means to see if we can help people out with ticket cost. We will promote a policy on MCC website that cost is never a barrier for people. If someone needs assistance to attend a performance, they can receive it.

“Celebrating our multi-faceted community through heritage awareness months/weeks” Each individual is more than their job. We have such a ‘driven’ population here that sometimes, other interests, identities and facets of peoples’ personalities get lost. We would like to be able to draw that out. And not all serious! The end of the month is “national tiger day!”

Bringing fun to the community is something we love to do!

“Increasing social media presence” In every artist contract, we will get the artist to record a custom video clip to go on MCC’s social media and their social media, which will increase our audience. We can archive a personal message from the artist; we hope to expand this capability according to what Fairfax County will permit.

“Expand existing successful performing arts programs” We have some very successful programs; Spring Show – only local kids can audition for it; professional staff produces it. They cast about 25% of those who audition; many kids get left out. Why doesn’t MCC offer more productions – based on this keen interest? We gleaned that information from e-mails, citizen comments, audience surveys, and upcoming listening sessions.

“Continuing to find opportunities in challenges” Like the drive-thru model: We say “Yes” when circumstances say “No.” To find a work-around, Danielle Van Hook came up with the wonderfully creative idea of drive-thru drama. The public is free to give us their ideas as well, and we will see what we can implement. The drive-thru drama model is inspiring MCC staff to try new and different things.

Comment by Mr. Singh: As a functional point, I’m asking staff to build into their schedules for creative projects. Sometimes in the drudgery of their schedule, they don’t have creative time. I’ve directed them to keep 10-20% of their time and budget for creative ideas that we wouldn’t be able to develop unless we had such time.
“Cultivating a regional reputation through commissions, partnerships and innovation” The Alden has a reputation of excellence and incredible innovation in drive-thru drama. We are known to present wonderful. People are very excited to see performances in this intimate theater; commissions would further that reputation. If we commission a piece to premier here, every time it is performed again, “Originally commissioned by The Alden / McLean Community Center” will be on all publicity materials; such visibility can go nationwide, international and regional.

Question: Have you considered commissions from student writers? McLean H.S. has “Sketch Fest” where professional judges evaluate students’ works. A lot of local student works are incredible.

Clarification by Ms. Schallern Treff: We do have programs in mind to cultivate youth and young adults in McLean -- to commission and help them thrive by providing mentors. In doing commissions, we want to partner with schools and faith communities, and be innovative in types of things we are commissioning; for example, a dance piece that is sensitive for those with sensory issues.

‘PROCESS’ QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS DISCUSSION:

Question: How are we including the board’s comments? Have our comments been already provided to staff to incorporate? Or is now the time to give our comments? I want to make sure we are making this as productive as possible. What is the goal?

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: After the staff’s short presentation, the next half of tonight’s discussion is looking at your ranked choice order based on all your comments and see if anything needs to be re-adjusted or if the ordering is fine. Many of your suggestions align very closely with what the staff has built. It will be very easy to fold them into what we’re programming. What we want from you is to say: Which ones get done in Year 1? Which ones move to Year 2? Which ones move to Year 3? Between the staff and board, it is a very robust list – and we haven’t even started asking the community yet. We should get our lists merged; and then the community requests list will come in and we’ll understand the overlap.

Question: Are we going to review the board’s comments as well as the ranked-choice list? Because there is some good information in that.

Response from Executive Director Singh: Yes.

Comment from Chair Zamora-Appel: I think this also includes the community feedback; because we had the Public Hearing on FY23 programs that was widely disseminated and a lot of comments came through on that meeting in April/May 2021.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: We will engage consultants and hope to get at least 2% of the McLean population (1,000 – 1,200 respondents). It depends on whether people actually respond (given ‘survey fatigue’ right now after COVID-19). We will do our best – the consultants are open to visiting PTA’s and schools, to faith-based organizations, to Giant Food to find respondents in-person. We are trying to find ways to obtain good data on this next piece.

More ideas expressed by Board members & issues to explore...

Opinion expressed: It would be good for the board to also have an ‘innovation’ process. We’ve all had ideas; sometimes only funneling them through individual meetings with Daniel. Otherwise, we will come with new ideas and not have a way to take them from an idea…to a process, through to the end. I suggest we follow a similar process to have 10-20% of our time in the board’s communications for ‘innovation.’

Question: We are seeing activities quietly going on at Clemyjontri Park— talking about a black box theater; amphitheater; opening up CapitalOne with two theaters. Do we have any sense of bringing this together for the community and taking advantage of those facilities, as well as The Alden? Is there any thinking about coordination?

Response by Executive Director Singh: We are hoping the consultants can help us figure out how to work within the changing environment – with CapitalOne and Clemyjontri We want to see where we can collaborate as much as possible. And then if it’s an instance of competition, how does MCC differentiate ourselves as a small, intimate theater; accessible outdoor space? How do we program in a way that’s different than a 1,500-seat theater at CapitalOne? If the Clemyjontri facility goes forward by MPA it would be a visual-arts focused performance space. MCC is open to partnering with them there. Since MPA will have a gallery here, Sabrina Anwah suggests reciprocally, MCC having dedicated space at Clemyjontri Park – to continue ongoing partnership with MPA. We are looking at all the ways we can collaborate.

Opinion expressed: I’m very enthused and positive about your desire to work with the different organizations – not seeing them as ‘competition’ but rather seeing them as a way to work together. No one has mentioned First Stage Theater which
was established seven years ago at Tysons; we might want to collaborate with them as well. And no one has mentioned support for community theater.

Opinion expressed: in taking this to the next stage, is to group these points by your framework of anchors (recovery; re-emerging). Then we will have a vision of what each of those terms mean.

Clarification by Ms. Schaller Treff and Mr. Fisher: This is a big overview; in a future meeting, we can give more detail. We used the major concepts to sort; we are still building the matrix. Some sub-anchors were important to commit to and understand. We’ve tried to filter under the sub-anchors the existing programs that we already do, and upcoming programs we hope to do. This is not an exhaustive list; many programs fit neatly under multiple anchors. “Potential future programs,” and “Things we’ve done in the past” are noted.

Clarification by Ms. Schaller Treff: Starting with staff education and opportunities for difficult discussions among colleagues. “Safe space” – this is the idea of taking it a step further and making a place where people can be “brave,” make mistakes, and ask questions that they may not feel comfortable otherwise: ‘controversy with civility.’ Being respectful and kind to differing opinions and hopefully to understand each other. The thought is to have anti-racism or other trainings; podcast group discussions; informal staff discussions. So we can model “civil discourse/civil disagreement” to the community and create programs that encourage such. Also, just get to know each other better; the better relationships MCC staff has, the better programming we will do for our community.

* Data collection, reinvigorating our population and community engagement.: advisory panels for performance and large events.
* Innovative programming on ‘emergent topics’ – unique programming in contemporary issues. We are most excited about “emergent topics” or current events/issues. We are trying to restructure how we budget to leave ourselves some money to do things quickly. Normally in our budgets, we are planning right down to line items of $ for equipment and $ for services. Now, we are leaving a few question marks – to give us the flexibility to respond more rapidly to emerging topics or trends within the community.
* Diversity/Equity/Inclusion/Access: We are committed to One Fairfax and the tenets put forth. We are trying to adapt what MCC offers to ensure that we are pushing One Fairfax forward as a community center for the county, and for our constituents. Accessibility is another big part: a lot of new ideas we are looking at aim to increase accessibility for all populations. Comment by Executive Director Singh: We are also trying to hire staff that are representative of different communities. That hasn’t been a focus in the past, but we’re trying to reach out to the teaching staff who are from those communities.
* Intersections/Environmental Justice/More than: We are not just the sum total of the labels that are applied to us.
* Sharing and uplifting underrepresented populations: Bringing together our community; connecting; and technology. After the last 24 months, technology is such an integral part of connecting.
* The Center of it All: As the “center of it all” we’ve been using that tagline for many years. We want to remain the center of it all and continue to build the community that is around us. A lovely aspect of MCC is that we are literally in your backyard. High-quality programming is right here! You don’t need to go into DC to enjoy a lot of robust offerings of events, activities and classes.
* Nurturing: We are trying to nurture the local population and see them thrive.
* Food and alcohol: We need to get more alcohol at our events! We are researching options to see how we can do that more effectively and more frequently.
* Facilities: Regarding the lease on OFC, there is a timeframe limitation. It would be nice to have more concrete and stronger protection/expectation of duration for that. We are monitoring it and working with Fairfax County to try to understand their plans – and doing our best to make sure that MCC presence in OFC are part of those plans.
* Synergies to proximal outdoor environments:
Comments by Executive Director Singh: Regarding the amphitheater, we’ve talked about ways that people are looking for outdoor entertainment. Having that would be really an asset for us. Jennifer Garrett’s team installed exterior lighting on MCC building: right now, there is red, white, blue lighting on the building exterior (celebrating July 4th); breast cancer awareness month; St. Patrick’s Day. We will also investigate projection mapping so that it doesn’t intrude on neighbors but still creates an environment. I’m also investigating whether that can be flexible to offer projection mapping in downtown McLean.

*Future milestones marking significant impact in the community: We hope the next renovation of The Alden can have ADA-accessible renovation of the backstage area. It’s a major renovation that will require load-bearing pillars to be torn down. 50th Anniversary of MCC helps us look forward and consider how we can connect all these pieces. What can we look back to? Which youth members can we bring back who went through our programs? Shivani Saboo was here when she was 6 years old; and now she’s a board member! How do we tell those stories and explain what MCC has done for the community? We are focusing on connecting those themes in a thoughtful way rather than letting milestone dates fly by us.

*Capacity-building: In envisioning a lot of new programs and new opportunities, we must build up our capacity to be able to do that. It is also building-up capacity within our community: through volunteer programs, CERT program, interns.

Operational capacity – making sure that our policies and SOP’s are up-to-date. We are evaluating them on a regular basis.

*MCC as a regional destination: High-quality programming is what will bring people here. EV charging stations—such things fit under “environmental justice,” but is also something that could potentially put MCC on the map and make us a regional destination.

*Community engagement: MCC staff has a lot of ideas; the board has a lot of great ideas… and those are starting to come together through this process. Community engagement is another important aspect. We have various touchpoints: feedback cycles.

*Responsiveness: Emphasizing our ‘emerging topics’ program and MCC’s ability to respond more rapidly to whatever trend is appearing in the community or topic that we feel needs to be addressed in the community: speaker series, open houses, film screenings, book clubs.

Question: In terms of connectivity to other parts of Fairfax County, is there a coordinated plan by MCC staff to connect with libraries; schools? Or to connect with principals? The library offers book clubs. Why do we do the same thing?

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: We partner with the library for the book club such as Hispanic heritage month. So, the book club will be led by the library; but MCC might offer a performance after that which will be connected. We are trying to work with partnerships and not duplicate as much as possible.

Comment by Mike Fisher: And we’ve been reaching out and connecting to the community already. Aaron Greene has been doing many ‘teacher appreciation’ efforts at the end of the school year and summer. Not only in front of PTA’s and principals, but to reach out to the teachers as well – to communicate with them and see how we might collaborate. Back in 2007, OFC sent staff to Longfellow to support their after-school program. Partnerships like that are always a possibility.

Opinions expressed: I think that’s something that we as the board can also help with. Many of us are parents of kids or participants in MCC programs and we can help with that. The AAUW meets at MCC and offers book clubs as well. We should coordinate with them as well.

PIO Sabrina Anwah gave the following remarks about MCC’s public communication planning.

Media relations: This week, we sent responses to a reporter for Fairfax Times. We also get requests for information from various local outlets. Branding: all MCC publications and other products of MCC have the same look and feel, so that when people look at our things, there is immediate recognition — “That’s McLean Community Center.” Public relations: trying to maintain MCC’s positive reputation in the community. The PIO office supports marketing for the various division such as e-newsletters; The Alden to 5,700; weekly e-newsletters to 5,000; OFC — 1,800 subscribers; stakeholders (community organizations; HOA’s; schools - 300+ recipients; MCC class program rosters (3,000 people). Publications: seasonal Program Guide is sent to 18,000 households in Small District 1A-Dranesville. It has won awards from VRPS; we will enter some of our publications into Virginia Recreation and Parks Society this year. Social media management:
Upcoming, Kyle Corwin plans to ‘package’ posts for board members so you can share those posts with others to help us promote events. We also take photos or hire photographers to produce videos. We have a play list on Fairfax Co. YouTube channel: on our website, scroll down to see some delightful program videos. In returning to in-person programming, a goal for this year is to get new videos created.

PIO GOALS: In 2019, Ms. Anwah attended a conference which had a theme: “Everyone will now be in the business of well-being.” Going forward, that is truly more important in the light of COVID-19. We are trying to reposition ourselves to reengage with the public...doing that by:
1. reinvigorating communication efforts that were hurt by COVID-19 restrictions and letting people know what we’re doing to address COVID-19 fears and sanitation concerns.
2. Handle emergency communications, if necessary.
3. Engage professional services to perform marketing research.
4. Listening sessions are planned for the fall. Reingold is a Fairfax Co. communications consultant; they will speak to us next week about engaging three groups: people who come to MCC; people who don’t come; community stakeholders.
5. Work with Program Managers to increase and improve marketing efforts.
6. Increase social media advertising and pilot a Fairfax County effort by using a software program that Kyle has used previously called “Mish Guru” which will allow takeovers by performing artists, ArtsFairfax and other stakeholders.
7. Increase the variety of outlets that we use to advertise.
8. Re-engage with community stakeholders, including schools, faith-based organizations, youth and charitable organizations.
9. Share more ‘county’ news and ‘community’ news. We already share AAUW, Safe Community Coalition and some other organizations.
10. Establish an “Open House” for local media representatives -to have them come in and see what’s coming up in The Alden Theatre and MCC, and participate in community events.
11. We want to reignite branding efforts – we have put out an RFP for redesign of MCC’s website. We have a company in mind that would bring up-to-date and make more vibrant the look and feel of our website. We will also be able to integrate it into the registration program (ACTIVE) and the ticketing program (Audience View). We also want to engage a brand management company to help evaluate our branding and make recommendations on how we may be able to improve.
12. Enhance branding of social media messaging. Kyle Corwin is coming up with a style guide for social media messaging; and include on a consistent basis Fairfax County branding with the official county seal.
13. To respond to the needs of diverse and under-served members of our community. Expand outreach to people of differing abilities, LGTBQ, ESL and ethnic minority communities. We have done some of that, but we want to be more focused and intentional in our desire to make sure we are serving everybody in the community. We want to diversify advertising purchases to include targeting those communities. We want to expand outreach to and relationship with diverse community representatives and increase messaging that MCC is welcoming to all members of the community.

How can the MCC Governing Board help? Make us aware of community communications outlets. How do you hear about the things you decide to participate in? What are you looking for? Talk about MCC to others by word-of-mouth recommendations. Attend MCC events and bring a friend or two. Find sponsors for McLean Day and other events. Volunteers are always needed at our events. Comment: That was awesome, Sabrina. Thank you!

Comments by Executive Director Singh: The “Alpha Blockers” are a Grammy-nominated teenage band who come into a community and work with local youth to write music. We are hoping to bring them here in November for a week-long residency. Then they will return for Juneteenth 2022— with efforts happening across departments. We are shifting the way we do it. We’re centering the African-American staff who are thought leaders in this topic and having them program it and lead the way for us; and we will be the support staff for them. This video is a preview of what it might look like.

RANK ORDERING & PRIORITIZATION OF GOVERNING BOARD PREFERENCES

Comments by Executive Director Singh: It may seem like we’re rushing, but this is just the beginning of the strategic planning process. With the consultant proposal now underway, there is a solid chunk of time for the consultant to work with the
board to continue this conversation. We wanted to lay this groundwork so that when they came in, we wouldn’t be paying them $2,000 an hour to do some of this work. This is just a stepping stone. Ms. Schallern Treff is going to share the ranked choices and what we gleaned from your long form comments into an Excel sheet. We will talk through it; and then we have a second link ready if you want to rank it again. Or, we can physically rank it on the screen while we have all of you here and to figure out how to move everything forward. Our goal is to see where things are now based on how board members voted. Then we have a new survey with the same order; and we can re-order it based on in-person conversations. As this is just the starting point, the consultant will work with you and the community to make sure we are lining up all those three interest groups [Board; community/public; staff], to make sure we move forward from there.

Opinions expressed: I had a hard time ranking because I felt some terms were ‘nested’ within other things and not mutually-exclusive. The example of “Earth Day every day” is sustainability. So that’s why it’s listed at the bottom.

Opinions expressed: You must look at the universe of environmental social/governmental issues. It’s very difficult because these are all issues that will build into another issue. So, to rank those particular initiatives within one framework doesn’t necessarily work. Thank you for doing this; but you need to make the priorities broader.

Opinions expressed: The way I looked at this is: “What is within our power? Earth Day is the overall umbrella and that’s why I ranked it last. But if we embed sustainability in our programming... if we have these facilities available... if there are educational programs that are available, all of this will turn MCC into the model and Earth Day will be happening every day.

Opinions expressed: Excellent point. What normally happens is: you take material issues to the community center and then you design a survey on those particular issues. ‘Materiality’ is dynamic; but they are definitely germane issues to a community center. We may want to make it a little bit broader if we are going to expose this to the public. But this is a great first target.

Question: But how would be broaden it? First, consider the universe of environmental social/governmental issues. This is a very narrowed-down universe. 1. You need to ask questions like: “On a scale of 1-5 what are the most important environmental issues in your world: Energy efficiency? Plastics prevention? Climate change?” 2. And then you need to make sure that those elements are applicable to a community center. What is applicable to any other organization may not be applicable to a community center. Diversity and inclusion are major issues in almost every industry right now, and almost anything you talk about. Climate is also – but how we couch that is a bit different.

Opinion expressed: It may be that we should just review the results but not aim to actually try to re-write them today. We either need another meeting or do it electronically where we expect most of the board to respond. This is good – it’s a dry-run with the consultant and eventually with the public. We may ask them to do this kind of work as well.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: We can work with all of you to develop the survey. We just needed to have something to start the conversation.

Opinion expressed: It seems to be three buckets: a clear ‘safe place for all’; ‘innovation’ and then a group of four with similar priority level; and then others. But some are either sub-sets or parallels of other things. So, we’ll just work on improving it.

Opinions expressed: It’s hard to help people understand. If you say “climate change” or “diversity and inclusion” – what does that mean to people? It’s a challenge. You must clearly identify what rolls up into that universe of ‘environmental/governmental/social issues.”

Questions: How can “fun” be third from last?? Define what you mean/define terms: What does “fun” mean? I thought of “fun” as a given.

Question: I don’t know: that podcast on anti-racism - Would you have called it “fun”?

Clarification by Ms. Schallern Treff: No. I would have called the discussions ‘enjoyable.’

Opinion expressed: Yes – the collaboration, talking together, meeting new people. It was fantastic! That podcast was amazing. But ‘fun’... maybe not.

Opinions expressed: I like that we’re addressing it this way because we know that one of the most important things is engaging our stakeholders. And that many people who will come and comment into MCC’s sessions are not reflective of the entire community. They are not reflective of McLean at all. The ability for us to gather feedback from a greater majority of people
in McLean will inform: diversity/inclusion; environmental sustainability; fun… will inform everything. While the ‘squeaky wheel gets the grease’ – they are very often not reflective of the view of our community. The ability for us to gather the view of our entire community is really important. These surveys will allow us to do that.

Opinion expressed: When we think about ‘engagement’
I think we have a very formal structure: these board meetings where members of the public join us and make spoken statements. But many of us may choose not to. For every time we do, maybe we should have a survey approach or another comment forum. As an organization that desires to be inclusive, we should also realize that people comment in different ways, as well. I’ve seen this in the letter-writing approach about McLean Central Park – when I reached out to people, some would write long e-mails while others would jump-in and work on the letter directly. I liked to make that possible as we were developing this letter.

Opinion expressed: I think that’s because I didn’t really know what it was. It’s a definitional issue.
Opinions expressed: It’s the idea of developing new ideas and someone on the staff to inspire not just their own department, but all entire departments. It’s more about the process than the organization. Some of these options felt like: Are these do-able in the next 6 months to a year? Or are these structural/organizational changes to the way the board does business… or the way the board and staff do business? Maybe a way think about this is: What is do-able now – with a matrix bucket that way. And then let’s look at: 1. We’re just going to focus on what we can do on these topics in the next 12-24 months vs. 2. These are things that should be ongoing, part of our culture and process. I think this was frankly biased by the fact that several of us have been working on this topic right now.

Opinions expressed That’s an important thing to think about: You are supposed to try your best to incorporate ‘business as usual’ in doing this process. Not considering COVID-19 is a huge challenge.  

Question: Do you mean that we pretend like COVID-19 never happened?

Opinions expressed: In a way, yes. You address issues that are important to your community. Address COVID-19 issue under categories like “safety”… or “resiliency” You try to identify who you are without all the extraneous issues. That is more ‘corporate’ rather than ‘community’ – but there is a focus to try to do that.

Question: The whole timing issue of the timeframe for these "wants/ wishes:" when we look at the integrated arts campus, is it something that we can work on right now? Or should we be concentrating on outdoor programming even though it’s at the end of the list – that’s more feasible and more approachable? Because a park amphitheater is 5-years out. So, should we be looking at the possibilities within 3-years? Within 5-years?… in terms of ‘ranking’?

Opinion expressed: That’s a great point. The more you program for something, the more you realize the needs to provide better facilities to accommodate that program.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: it’s a little bit of “both/and.” The way we arrived at the amphitheater is because MCC Performing Arts has been programming the park and building that audience for 20 years now. We can’t really focus on MCP without doing the work. However, figuring out how to manage our time and resources will be the next aspect involved.

Question: Generally, if you’re building into a strategic plan, aren’t those usually 3-5 years long?

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Yes. That’s something we can also discuss with the board and the consultants.

A 3-year plan makes sense because the board rotates so often: five out of eleven board members rotate off every year (45% rotating). An example is the interior courtyard: the previous board was insistent that it should be a meditational gathering space – not programmable. And now, all of you are saying it should be a programmable space. But that is a $200,000 - $300,000 change. So, we need to figure out a way for us to keep moving forward as an organization while not every three years having to re-do something because there is a new direction. We need to find a balance where we don’t keep throwing good money after bad.
Opinion expressed: Well... COVID-19 happened between that time. Comment by Joe McGovern: The point is that because of COVID-19, it is an outdoor ‘programmable’ space.

Opinion expressed: What I really liked is the view of the governing principals which are the ‘mission’ and ‘vision.’ Many of us have different ideas... and you can’t capture that in a survey. Part of the next conversation should be: let’s look at starting from the governing principles of the organization. Then the question about whether we can change something to programmable space or not will make us articulate: Do we have a view that all our facilities/resources should be viewed as being ‘modular’ and adaptive?... or... No - they should be made and resourced as such [purposeful, specific usage]?

Comment by Executive Director Singh: The problem is that if the board rotates off in three years and then the new board has a different idea of what it should be... then we are stuck with an expensive remodel.

Opinion expressed: True. But the MCC vision statement is from the 1980’s – which was a very different world than now.

Opinion expressed: People do change. That’s why it’s so dynamic and you must be continually checking-in with your stakeholders. If the board does change, so long as you really know what the community expects of you (not just one or two people who present themselves as ‘representing the community’ who really aren’t) then you are in a good position. You must determine who your most important stakeholders are.

Opinion expressed: The demographics need to be taken into consideration. Demographics in McLean 20 years ago are much different than the demographics in this area now. It’s a large area of 58,000+ people. My ‘network’ is parents with young kids. Many people in my network don’t realize that they are paying for MCC. The moment they realize it, they decide to go in and start to enjoy the programming. And they start asking for more things: “My kid is in 2nd grade, why can’t you do a program about how butterfly migration happens (like the schools)?” FCPS has had such resources for a long time; but MCC has not looked into it. MCC could become a destination for those children. How can we then look at 3-year, 5-years; sometimes even 20 years: a long-range plan? In the last 15 years, I have noticed that the idea of creating a ‘single-use’ type of place - people are moving away from that. Why? Because we don’t know the unknowns. Once COVID-19 hit, people were looking for a place where they could take their families in an outdoor environment where they don’t have to be with other people. The walking path in MCP to the library was heavily used during pandemic. That’s something that was not anticipated. Look at the fact that MCC has a courtyard and people call all the time asking if they can hold an event there. I think the opportunity is here. This is the first time MCC is doing a strategic planning process; but we’ve got to look at it over more than one year because a lot happens in one year. As has been mentioned, several of us will be rotating off next year... and all of us will be rotating off in 3 years. What is the legacy of the Board? That’s what we need to look at for the future.

Question: What we are talking about is ‘flexibility / modularity’ type of thinking – so that when an idea comes in, it must be thought about as something that can change in the future and there is flexibility to do it. On another topic... I’m wondering: What does ‘contemporary programming’ mean? If we are trying to engage the community, then we want to find strategies to do that. But another way to attract diversity is by the programming. That’s what we should be doing for. The ‘contemporary’ was a little generic - I don’t know what was meant.

Comment by Executive Director Singh: When we do the next version, we can clarify with a glossary or definitions for the next iteration. We are just summarizing what we got. I can work with all of you to clarify the language for the next iteration.

Opinion expressed: To me, “contemporary programming” meant that it reflected demographics of the community— things at MCC that are fresh and exciting. But you all may have had totally different interpretations. The one on the bottom “start your own business class” is very specific; it wasn’t up at the strategic level.

Opinion expressed: I don’t think we would do this for our survey: it’s like you took what we thought was important and tried to put it in a ranked-choice. It’s a little biased. In many ways, the board members came in on a platform of what they thought was important. I came in on a platform of sustainability; that’s important to me. Diversity and inclusion are
important to almost every other board member. Getting kids off of electronic devices was important to another person. This is skewed and you must answer the questions in a different way.

Comment by Executive Director Singh: We must ask questions differently. But the biggest chunk of this work is going to be the community feedback. Because we ‘think’ we know what the community wants; but they will tell us what they want!

Opinion expressed: I recommend having a consultant do a 30-minute interview with each person using a common set questions and pull those into buckets. It’s really: 1. the ‘buckets’ that we care about, and 2. the temporal thing. Maybe you can create a process where the consultants will talk to each board member.

Comment by Ms. Novak: What occurs to me: Everyone is saying that everything is always all-important, all the time. If everything we want is all-important, all the time... then we’re not going to get priorities. That’s what Executive Director Singh is trying to do. You must have prioritization somehow.

Opinions expressed: You must ask the right questions. You are absolutely right, Holly. Within these broader categories, I could see focus groups where you’re asking people to silent brainstorm broad categories... and then specific examples of what they would want to see. Silent brainstorming is a principle of “design thinking”: everyone writes stuff down, put it on a board. Then you group responses and then look at the groups, voting on which ‘groups’ are important, then go to specifics.

Opinion expressed: I’m wondering if the “vision” statement shouldn’t drive the priorities? I think that’s the place to begin.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: The last time the ‘vision’ statement changed, it ended up being an 8-month process for the board. I’m happy to stand-up a committee to make that happen. I don’t want us to spend all our meetings on it for the next 8 months. We have much more important things to focus on. I’m just saying what happened last time. I’m fine having someone chair it and lead it forward. But I agree that: If you don’t have a ‘vision,’ then how can you build a strategy? It’s like “the chicken or the egg” question. Maybe if we know the consultant is charging us $2K an hour, we’ll get to the vision statement quicker!

Comment by Ms. Novak: I think it’s iterative. You may develop a preliminary vision statement... and after you look at all the details, you start to build back up. Come up with a preliminary/partial vision statement... and then refine it. So, it could work from the ground-up and be built that way.

Opinion expressed: That’s a good point, Holly. You can’t be siloed; but I think the “mission” and the “vision” feels like the 1980’s in a way.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: I agree with both. I agree that we need to look at it first and that it’s ‘dated.’ But I want to be mindful of your time. We also must take community input: we can’t just create a mission and vision without involving the community. We would be looking at suddenly a $150K to $200K consulting bill, as opposed to half as much without that piece.

Opinions expressed: We need to look at other community centers. What are other community centers doing? As far as the mission, we can change that slowly. I would rather focus on our energies and time towards accomplishing the ‘spirit’ of the mission... instead of trying to work with the ‘verbiage.’

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Yes, that’s why we didn’t make that a focus of this meeting. But it’s not off-the-table.

Comment by Ms. Schollern Treff: “Balancing historical programming with emerging needs and ideas.”

Clarification by Mr. Singh: “Programming/lifting up”... Black and indigenous community stories.

Question: February 21 is United Nations ‘Mother Language Day.’ My family is originally from Bangladesh; Bangladesh fought a war with Pakistan and gained its independence based on its language. Both were Muslim countries; but had different languages, different cultural features. In recognition of that which killed 1 million people in less than a year, the U.N. has designated that day. Just around this table, we have multiple backgrounds. So, can we have a recurring international event at MCC?

Opinion expressed: I would rather it be called “International Day.” The word “mother language” kind of seems nationalistic.
Opinion expressed: Fair enough. I was using the official terminology used by the U.N. But the concept being: this would be an opportunity to have tables featuring different languages and food...connections between language and arts. Many of us have kids doing emersion programs. It's also a marketing opportunity for several organizations that exist in McLean that market to people of different languages. It could be an interesting concept.

Comment from Vice-Chair Post: Again, this all goes back to the idea of the larger, over-arching framework: calling attention to nationality and culture. Culture manifests in many different ways, so we set the higher goal; and then within those goals, we have these initiatives like “mother language.” Trying to put this into rank order would be unproductive. We need to have the larger, broader ideas of what we’re doing for our communities; and then smaller goals. And then the staff will program to those concepts or ‘pillars.’

Opinion expressed: It’s also hard to mix programming with facilities; because facilities are things we presume will be around for a really long time and are ‘permanent infrastructure’ changes. While programming presumably would change and grow and adapt as the community’s interests and needs change. So, it was hard for me mix those things together.

Opinion expressed: And looking back on the ‘anchors,’ I would love to see the next version of this be: bucket it by the anchors/issues. The notion of “environment” – I’d like us to focus on that. I think it needs to be broader than “environmental justice.” Because, looking at these results, something about the environment or “sustainability” has been in the top 3 or 4 on almost every single question. So, we are clearly missing something in our current anchoring framework.

Summary by Chair Zamora-Appel: But this goes back into the type of programming being based on demographics: because the way these are ranked is: 1. programming --under educational... social... cultural... environmental. 2. that’s when the actual types of events could be talked about. Perhaps doing more large events and festivals like McLean Day. Is there a possibility to do more of something like that? A lot of festivals happen in Fairfax County – they are everywhere. We have the idea that we want to “engage the youth” with more programming— anything that is technology... innovation... emergence. That’s the kind of thing that we would want. Providing educational programming for women, men and veterans who want to go back into the workforce. Yes – that is provided by other organizations. But why not partner with MCC? That bucket would include resume writing; opening or expanding a business. That type of thing would be beneficial for the community because everyone on the MCC Governing Board was elected by the community. So, we must ask the community for their ideas. They may not necessarily send their responses via e-mail or through a survey. They will simply come to us with their ideas because I represent them.

Opinion expressed: Talking about engagement with other communities: Fairfax Co. makes sure that materials are printed in different languages. Can we begin to put MCC materials into other languages? How much of that can we do? If it’s an easy drop-down, that is best outreach to seniors.

Clarification by PIO Sabrina Anwah: Yes – we can contract to get things translated. In the new redesign of the website, we will have a translation available on our website. It’s not as good as “google translate” but it is basic.

Summary by Chair Zamora-Appel: It’s important to have this conversation now because it has been echoed a lot: the idea of having a pollinator garden outside... or billboards.... How can we then move forward? The strategy would be: What is important for the community based on what the community wants? And we’re not going to get everything we want. So, how can we then make those priorities? What we need to look at in the 3-year master plan is to ask if all of what is there, is part of the start of this strategy of what the community wants? Once we get to the point where we’re actually going back to the community to ask them, yet again: What would you like to see here at MCC? We have asked this many times; and they are routinely asked once a year. So how can the public be more engaged. We will hear people saying: ‘I told you what I wanted 3 years ago and nothing has happened. So, what is different this time?’ The strategy also includes: “Why?” “Why is it different this time?” Why is it important that we are talking to our community again? It’s a matter of having the right messaging. This is a very good launching point where we can now move forward. I’m sure that our ideas and feedback is not ending. We’re going to continue with this conversation.
Opinion expressed: Regarding the demographics about the community, it’s important for us to look to the future of what McLean is going to be. But, also to accommodate the current stakeholders. Those demographics you sent are very enlightening; everyone needs to be aware and familiar. That’s a part of this process. Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: U.S. Census Bureau website – McLean CDP – reports and breakdowns. Yet, I hear that some MCC programs are not sold-out every time. Why is that? Is it that the programming is not what people want? Or that they don’t know the programming is here? It’s a matter of understanding our community. The Asian community has increased since the last census; it’s almost a quarter of our population. U.S. Census Bureau has projection numbers that can be requested for a specific geography. Looking at the demographic numbers is important as we move forward, because if you compare today’s numbers to 10 or 15 years ago, they would be very different. And if a strategic plan were done 15 years ago, it would not be relevant anymore because McLean has changed so dramatically.

Opinion expressed: Someone was asking what is the issue that attendance is not where we would like it to be because people don’t know… or why are they not coming? Fairfax County did a market study for the arts; two results turned up:
1. People just don’t know. 2. Perception that the quality of the programming that is available isn’t of the caliber of going downtown to Kennedy Center or other venues.
Opinion expressed: How do you get people to come and engage in these events – especially cultural programming? I really believe that instead of doing one-off small celebrations like a “mother language” day, or AAPI events or heritage month, it’s more important, in addition to those events, to be having regularly programmed events where we are integrating these cultures such as having language classes every month. It doesn’t have to be a paid professional language tutor. It can be senior citizen immigrants who speak another language and are willing to teach their mother tongue to kids. Instead of one big AAPI heritage month – maybe have a series of Mah Jongg nights where older Asian ladies come in here to play. Those regularly-scheduled events will bring people in more. That might be a slow process; but it will get people to be a more committed base to McLean Community Center. Opinion expressed: Yeah – that’s a fantastic idea.
Opinion expressed: When we put on the performances during those months, weeks and days, we are competing with other organizations that are doing the same thing. If we spread it out over the year, then we kind of take that competition away, and MCC will have more of a ‘grab’ for that attention than one performance.

Opinion expressed: I want to echo the point about engaging seniors of diverse backgrounds: in many cultures, it’s not uncommon for older people to sit in a courtyard and talk and drink coffee. I feel like even though we are a community center, MCC is not the first place where people go. They go to the Galleria or mall and drink coffee there. How could MCC offer that? I’ve talked to folks who work on mental health issues in the county – among seniors during the pandemic, there was nowhere for them to go. Maybe they live here because their kids are taking care of them; but they don’t have a community network to develop. Maybe MCC can provide that engagement.
Opinion expressed: That’s fantastic – as part of the whole idea of deploying our mission/vision in the actual building – and putting things outside that engage people to come in such as having tea in the courtyard. MCC is not “the hub.” Things such as that will make it the hub. People just want to drop-in; they don’t do that.
Opinion expressed: It also involves having transportation. MCC is not exactly ‘pedestrian-friendly’ or close to public transportation – it is far from Metro. I suggest MCC having a downtown presence in McLean.
Clarification Executive Director Singh: We are looking at catering if we can. But MCC is not licensed to be a food provider. It would create a whole other long licensing process to become so. We can do catered events.
Opinion expressed: For this meeting, why aren’t we getting food from local restaurants? Jersey Mikes and Sweet Leaf are chains; but there are several good restaurants in McLean. We’ve talked in other meetings about how we are connecting with local businesses in a productive way.
Clarification by Executive Director Singh: It’s harder to work with local restaurants because they are not good at catering large events. They are only set-up to provide maybe 10-20 meals at a time; but you cannot place an order for 100 items.
not set-up as a catering kitchen.

Opinions expressed: I beg to differ: there are several local-area vendors that are absolutely prepared for large-quantity catering. They may be more expensive. I also know of Indian restaurants who cater for large events. Maybe we can say: “We want to work with you, but Fairfax County has these requirements…”

Opinion expressed: In considering places where seniors can gather, you might also collaborate with Lewinsville Center and Vinson Hall. Vinson Hall is a self-contained community with transportation to Kennedy Center; doctor appointments, etc.

Opinion expressed: Vinson Hall is a great resource. I have partnered with them to provide educational resources to our younger generations. It was fantastic. That is intersectionality. Using Vinson Hall as a resource of some of this programming that Ms. Schallern Treff and Mr. Fishers are talking about is something we really should consider. Some ex-ambassadors who live at Vinson Hall! There is a rich wealth of knowledge.

Opinion expressed: That’s a great point because 21% of McLean population is over the age of 65. So again, looking at the demographics: Is MCC doing the right programming for the right audience?

Summary by Executive Director Singh about the strategic planning process, going forward:
Research all residents; consider current and future projections of demographics in programming; reach all residents; rigorous data collection to inform our path forward; broader marketing strategy in traditional and social media. It will be really helpful for us to know how we can move forward in the next iteration in the survey and also how we can tee this up for the consultants to come in and work with all of you. Right now, we’ve budgeted about 8 hours for the consultants to work with the board. It can be four meetings of two hours; or if you want to do longer dives together. The more we can get ready for that next step, the better. The consultant will receive information in advance.

Opinion expressed: Maybe as a first step, can we start with how this stuff emerged from the conversations of staff to create these ‘anchors.’ Two suggestions: 1. A definition of what you broadly define as the buckets. 2. The board should decide jointly: Do we agree with these? Or.. Do we want to tweak them? Once you have those, the next step becomes: What is it for each of these topics that we really care about? Design a new survey: what are your priorities? Most of us started with three questions: mission/vision; dream direction; dream project. And then you filtered those into these buckets.

Comment by Ms. Novak about method: The three questions that were sent to the board were literally the first step; that was qualitative information. What we have is qualitative: all the verbiage that you sent back — but it’s only responses from eight board members. Then, this is a little more quantitative — but it’s still very small. My point is with that — keep in mind that staff has spent hours and hours developing this analysis.

So, you don’t want to ‘pick it apart’ too much. It’s valid what you are saying. But to say: “Throw this out; go back to square one…” — you must be careful of our process.

Opinion expressed: You can’t take our personal opinions and then pop it into a survey to try to get a ranked choice analysis. You must have a ranked choice analysis aligned to material issues; and then get more details. We are not going to ‘pick it apart;’ but I think the way we went about it is different. You must start with ‘broader’ issues and then dive down.

Response by Ms. Novak: But it is two separate pieces. It’s two tracks: you guys are developing your initial input, and then this ranked choice. Meanwhile, the staff has been building their pieces to go with it. So, it is two tracks.

Opinion expressed: The staff has done the work. Let’s make sure that we agree with this. I go back to “environmental justice:” I like the terminology; but I think it’s too narrow for the issue that’s arrived here — which is sustainability. I don’t know what the right term is — we’ll figure it out. “Building and engaging community:” Frankly, what’s missing here is partnership. We’ve mentioned several times: schools; community groups. This is just ‘wordsmithing’ — to bring that in. The Board didn’t even know about this until literally it was handed to me. So now that we have this framework, let’s start from there. Ideally, we’d like to re-visit the ‘mission’ and ‘vision.’ And we know we can’t do that because of the time commitments. But if this is the next level, then let’s work on this.
Opinion expressed: I really appreciate all the work that the staff team did. It’s been amazing. I also think we have a lot of really smart people in this room. When I’ve developed things like “logic models” you always start with things like: environmental… social… cultural… economic conditions that are happening. In our community, we are fortunate to have a lot of resources: we have a lot of social capital, human capital, economic capital. Thinking three years down the road, I’m worried about flooding in our community. What happened two years ago when the streets of McLean had cars floating away – that kind of emergency. I’m worried about climate change; a lot of conditions are happening very fast. Hopefully, there is not another pandemic coming. 1. Having a sense of all those ‘conditions.’ 2. And then, in this little niche that MCC fills for the community - Where does MCC fit in and what kind of impact can we have? 3. How do we bring the community together and have foresight in looking at those conditions? That is what I think we need to have a sense of before we meet with the consultant

Opinion expressed: The employees of the McLean Community Center are one of the biggest, most important stakeholders. The issues you have identified that are important to you can build the basis for this larger materiality assessment.

FORWARD RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW GOVERNING BOARD CAN BEST HELP MCC STAFF DO ITS WORK

Opinion expressed: Regarding earlier comments - the staff did do a really good job. If you were to just do an overall idea of the work that they must do immediately, it is: 1. Engagement; 2. Environment; and 3. Diversity – as an overall umbrella. Then the details will come along. Take the spirit of what they found out here, and what we as board members have decided – that will be a good grasp on what needs to be done and the type of programming that people want, whether it’s from the board or the community.

Summary by Chair Zamora-Appel: I want to echo what has been said: thank you to the staff. Doing strategic sessions is hard – because we are going to say things that we think are the best answer and solution for the future. And there will be ten others who will say: ‘That’s a great start, but this is where we really want to be.’ It doesn’t reflect that we don’t appreciate the work you have done. I know it’s very hard to put your heart and soul into a presentation… and then hear the hard parts that some of the board members do not agree with. It is important to know that we’re a team. Right now, we are working as a team to get to the vision of what MCC is. Having all the feedback – surveys; focus groups; questions; e-mails – everything, once we get to the solution phase with the consultants, we’re going to see that where we started and where we end up is probably going to look very different. The over-arching goal here is that we are all working together. We respect everything that MCC staff has done. This past year has shown that it wasn’t easy; but yet, there was a lot of programming. It has not been an easy road; MCC staff has risen to the occasion every time. I really appreciate that. Sometimes we don’t say that enough. I just want to make sure that you know that whenever we are having conversations, we always talk about the programming that is happening. Looking to the future, every other board member here will echo: We really appreciate the work you are doing. Please let us know how you want us to move forward. Because ultimately, you are executing the programming that we are sometimes providing the vision for. With Daniel Singh at the helm, I think we’re going to go to a very good place for the future!

ACTION ITEMS / NEXT STEPS  Chair Zamora-Appel transitioned the conversation to articulating action items and next steps:

1. glossary; definition of terms
2. Next iteration of the survey. Daniel can work with Carla, Rasheq and Suzanne for ideas about how the survey should go.
3. Building information for the consultants. In August, we have no meetings, so we have a little bit of time to get this worked out. Though no official board meetings, but Daniel can still meet with board members and move things forward for that.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Not under contract yet. The bid is out; we are hoping someone will put a bid in. Several vendors have written to us saying that Fairfax County rules are too difficult – they will not even bother putting in a proposal. The same thing happened with the website re-design. We solicited ten vendors for the website redesign; out of them, only three responded because they said the county rules are too cumbersome.
Opinion expressed: It was suggested to consider universities that have very robust ESG/social/corporate programs in Fairfax County — George Mason University, George Washington, American Univ.; Georgetown University MBA “Service Corps”.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: We can see how the bids come in and if we find someone who is good. And if not, then we might have to re-open the bid.

OLD / NEW BUSINESS

MCC Governing Board endorsement letter regarding amphitheater/redevelopment of McLean Central Park:

* A DRAFT letter was sent out to the board with a deadline to comment by a certain date.
We need to make sure we publish and have an ability to: 1. galvanize people and 2. give comments into the media. Because what is driving the conversation is comments by other people about their letters appearing in the media. Please give us your feedback so we can finalize it by 12 noon tomorrow, Friday, July 16, so we can turn it around and put out a press release tomorrow. Then you’ll have the final language and we can use that to create the campaign for the concert this weekend.

This concert is one of the most popular groups; expect 300-400 attendees. It would be nice if we can get the letter approved tomorrow to be able to release it.

Question: But in a way, you really don’t want to ‘lead’ the people attending the concert. You really want to understand their impressions without leading them based on our comments, right?

Comment by Ms. Novak: A question about process – the letter better be received before you do a press release. It must be to the recipient. You can’t say: ‘We’re going to send a letter…”

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: No, but we can send the letter out tomorrow electronically.

Comment by Ms. Novak: I’m just saying - we must have the right sequence. You can’t say: “Oh, we’re going to do a press release and then the letter is going to come later.” No.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Chair Zamora-Appel sent a final version; we can share it out to everyone tonight for comments. The problem is that we don’t yet have Sharepoint. It’s hard to edit; if you do “track changes” and send it back, we can finalize all the changes.

Opinion expressed: We have been working through GoogleDocs; but you don’t have access to that. I’m happy to put the latest version back on GoogleDocs and give people until tomorrow to make their edits. Otherwise, you’re exchanging Word documents back-and-forth.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Give us the final one as a Word document; because we can’t access GoogleDocs.

Comment by Ms. Novak: But you can’t vote on it electronically. It’s either tonight or on July 28 for a vote.

*It was requested to take a few minutes now for everyone to study the document immediately. It should be read aloud for virtual attendees.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Don’t worry about copy-editing. Sabrina Anwah will do a clean copy edit tomorrow. It’s mostly about content.

I appreciate your doing this work. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: if we miss this, it’s probably not going to ever happen in the next twenty years. Because a lot of things are aligned: Supervisor Foust supports FCPA is in favor of it… the funding is there.

Opinion expressed: It also goes back to stakeholder engagement: what is really reflective of the community? That’s why the concert on Sunday is an opportunity to really understand: Do they want something else? Or is this fine? And we have to be prepared for people to maybe not…

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Sure. But they do not understand that the way the gazebo works is because of what MCC puts into it in terms of expenses: about $2K a week; also about $15K-$20K in equipment annually that’s depreciated. The community has also asked us for a later start time for concerts; but we’re not able to do that because 5 p.m. is hottest part of the day. If you move the start time any later, our staff is loading-up equipment when it is dark. Some of the feedback comments already tell us that the public would want a more-equipped facility.

Clarification by Ms. Schallern Treff: And the amphitheater will be easier for the community to use.
Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Yes — and right now, the gazebo can only be used by MCC for professional events because we have the equipment. But the community doesn’t have speakers and sound system.

Question: I have a point to make because I have read that July is the hottest month in the metropolitan area. So, could we perhaps in future years, consider the concerts maybe in late June and early September or October — and not in the heat of the summer?

Clarification by Ms. Schallern Treff: We do June concerts.

Opinion expressed: That’s an excellent point. And it’s only going to get hotter; and you must really provide the flexibility of programming in alignment with seasonality...

Opinion expressed: I’m fine with the letter; everything is good. You guys did an awesome job!

Opinion expressed: We heard at the last meeting, concerns about the parking situation by local neighbors — regardless of the number of parking spots — of people parking in the neighborhood to the detriment of those homeowners. So, I think that needs to be reflected here in some way. We can’t just dismiss it by saying “MCC has _____ parking spots.”

Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: I was there on Sunday and the parking lot was practically empty. Obviously, people are choosing to park elsewhere.

Opinion expressed: We have this parking issue and the noise issue; and these are, frankly, anecdotal. It could be anecdotal from quite a while ago. The challenge is: we can’t address those directly. Those are not things we can quantifiably make an argument FOR or AGAINST. Therefore, how we tried to write the letter was: “MCC Governing Board is cognizant of these issues.” And this is what we’ve been informed by staff about this. That’s our position.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: We can put in things such as: hiring an off-duty police officer to station in that area and not have people go into the neighborhood at all to park.

Question: In the future, could arrangements be made to use the parking garage across the street? Maybe that’s one way to address the situation.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Yes; but we should say generally: “We will work with neighborhood organizations…”

Opinion expressed: We put that as provision in the letter – that that must be addressed.

Opinion expressed: We can say: “We are cognizant of this issue and we will look for alternative solutions.” Something along those lines.

Question: Isn’t that in our first paragraph: “We think this is only successful if we address the sustainability and the traffic…”

Opinion expressed: You’re right — we talk about addressing traffic flow. But other board members, who are relatively new to this effort… Let’s just put it more clearly or be open to re-wording that.

Opinion expressed: I like the letter. The only comment I have now is that the opening line makes it sound like the MCC Governing Board only supports three things in the whole plan. That’s probably not the intention that we want to emphasize — only support for three specific aspects.

Opinion expressed: I think Barbara put that in. But I actually like talking about the vision vs. the specifics. Do you feel strongly about keeping that first paragraph?

Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: It gets to the point of what the letter is about.

Opinion expressed: “… supports the redevelopment plan, in particular…”.

Opinion expressed: Yes — because we want the park to be redeveloped. But we want to focus on these particular aspects.

Opinion expressed: Yes — and I want to survey the crowd. The other thing that struck me is that we’ve written at the end of the second paragraph: “We support the plan as long as FCPA can develop the facility.” What troubles me there is that it’s like: If they don’t do this, we don’t support it. Which is not actually true. We can “encourage” that. But I don’t know how to say it.

Opinion expressed: We can change it to say: “We’re confident that it will be developed consistent in a way that respects…”

Opinion expressed: I edited the word “sanctuary” because it had a religious overtone.

Opinion expressed: I will try to incorporate everything tonight and put it back on GoogleDocs. You all have until tomorrow to make any comments. Once that’s done, I will distribute it to everyone and Ms. Novak will take that text and put it in the right template.
Clarification by Executive Director Singh: If the letter goes out by 2:00 or 3:00 p.m., we can get the press release going. Friday is not a great day for press releases. If you give us the final letter, we can have it ready for Sunday.

Question: Can we do a vote now – have a MOTION?
Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: Yes – we are going to make a MOTION on the letter with a caveat that there are not going to be any significant changes to this letter. The only changes are the ones that we just discussed and maybe some grammatical copy-editing. But in terms of the actual letter’s voice, I think we are in a good place. It does include what we all wanted. I believe we are ready to put forth a MOTION that accept the letter with the agreed-on changes and final edits.

MOTION: To accept the letter DRAFT with the minor edits and releasing it tomorrow.
Unanimously approved by all seven Board members present.
Abstained: Ivy Chen; Max Blacksten; Maria Foderaro-Guertin; Bill Glikbarg

Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: Thank you everybody. And thank you for the collaboration on this letter. It was not an easy task. Rasheq did a lot of work. Comment by Vice-Chair Post: Absolutely! Thank you, Rasheq.
Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: And I think this is going to give us the talking points and the messaging to do this. We only have until July 30 – so there’s not a whole lot of time. So that give us two weeks from tomorrow.

Survey at Sunday concert (July 18):
Question: So, what’s going to happen at the concert?
Clarification by Executive Director Singh: We had talked about giving people a copy of the letter and saying they could edit it if they wish. And if you don’t want to edit, you can use these talking points and send them as-is. I want to see what you all think.
Opinion expressed: I haven’t been to one of these concerts yet; I’m hoping to attend this weekend. Are there opening remarks by someone?
Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Yes – very short. I support sending the letter because MCA has been very active and has put signs up in the park: “Don’t pave our parks.” They are not allowed to do it; but we can’t take it down because we are not FCPA staff. So, everyone coming into the concert saw the sign: ‘Don’t pave our park.’ Which makes it sound like they are going to create a paved amphitheater. But the amphitheater is complexly open and green space. The other organization has been very aggressive.
Opinion expressed: Sarah Schallern Treff can set the stage; and then the questions can be more neutral. “Hey guys… do you love the outdoor concerts? And then people will start clapping! Wouldn’t you love to have a bathroom facility here?). She can set that stage… and then the questions can follow.
Opinion expressed: Or… maybe the other way to do this is have the letter. Have a QR code that you can either show or hand-out. If we could get it set-up, could you put it on a music stand or something: take your phone to link to the website for a statement of support written by the Governing Board. If you agree, please fill it out and it will automatically get sent to the right people. That’s what I was going to do.
Comment by Executive Director Singh: I don’t know if it will be a QR code feature. But if not, I can check into a few iPads that people can use.

Opinion expressed: I think that letter is too long for people to read.
Comment by Ms. Novak: Personally, I don’t think you should be sending it as anything other than as a .pdf. People should not be able to pick-and-choose pieces of it.
Opinions expressed: This is actually a good point because I was thinking about that too. You’re absolutely right – the letter is too long and people won’t read it. And if they do read it, they will find something they don’t like about it. Instead, if that’s something that you guys could condense to what’s appropriate, and we can approve that. I want a set of talking points that people can write. Yes. It’s almost like a form letter, built out of the letter with key points: “We are writing in support…”
I can share what I’ve started working on this afternoon and maybe Sabrina and Daniel can make it better. And, then Sarah, your job is to get people to go that website and send their comment. The goal is: flood the peoples’ mailboxes with it; 100 people who hit that in support. Because that’s exactly what MCA is doing right now with their campaign.

**Question:** Could we do small postcards with the five key messages and then a QR code that could take them to the longer document?

**Clarification by Executive Director Singh:** I don’t know if a QR code will work. But we can create the five messages. We are using a website called “Network Action” and they don’t use a QR code.

**Question:** I’d like some clarification: So, the point of the letter is to garner support for MCC Governing Board’s position - not to collect comments? Yes – exactly. That’s correct.

**Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel:** If we were two months out then we could be using that and use those metrics for the letter. But because we only have two weeks of the comment period, then the talking points would be taken out for the press release. The press release itself could be one of the documents we could be sharing, as well. And hopefully this will also garner support and interest from the press and there will be other articles that will be written on it.

**Opinion expressed:** That’s why we held a Special Called Meeting two weeks ago – which was open and publicly announced to everybody And some board members even spoke with their comments. So, the idea here was: We’re reaffirming what already exists. The dialogue has been: let’s take the amphitheater out. Our position is: let’s make it better by taking into account the feedback that we received from the community. That’s how we tried to argue it.

**Comment by Sarah Schallern Treff:** Here’s what I need: a script for Sunday and some directions. Are people coming to walk around with QR code? How is this going to work?

**Clarification by Executive Director Singh:** I can help and work with you on that. Some of the board members will be there. Maybe you can give us some iPads; and if board members have iPads, bring them too! We will print out the QR codes and have them on a little card that people can take home.

**Question:** Is she allowed to say that as a member of the MCC staff? Or does it have to come from us as board members? Could Chair Zamora-Appel have five minutes to speak to the crowd?

**Clarification by Executive Director Singh:** It would be better if a board member does it because we are county employees. Any of the board members can do it. Please meet up with Sarah Schallern Treff at 4:45 p.m. by the stage to prepare. And we’ll have iPads or little business cards with the MCC logo and QR code: “Support your McLean Central Park.” Barbara, Lisa, Rasheq and Suzanne all said they would try to attend the concert on Sunday.

**Clarification by Executive Director Singh:** Now that you have an official statement, you can move forward on social media. Wait for that. Once the e-mail is sent to FCPA Superintendent, then you’re fine.

**Opinion expressed:** I’m glad we are going to have that FOIA training coming up, so we will really know how to do it.

**Clarification by Executive Director Singh:** As board members, you will probably always get requests for personal meetings with individuals. Please always just re-direct the public to the next upcoming board meeting’s “Public Comment.” You shouldn’t have people meeting you in your homes or cafe’s. It breaks your privacy. And also, we don’t want people to think that someone has influenced a decision of the board based on your personal friendship.

**Clarification by Ms. Novak:** And also keep in mind that we have the Governing Board committees. We haven’t even started the committee meetings. Those are the disciplines where we move up various ideas for larger consideration. So, that’s where the groundwork starts – at the committee level. Keep that in mind, O.K.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Zamora-Appel thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted – Holly Novak, Executive Assistant to the Governing Board
CONVENE MEETING
Chair Zamora-Appel convened a Special Called Meeting of the Governing Board of the McLean Community Center on September 2, 2021, at 8:32 p.m. This meeting was open to the public attending in-person at the McLean Community Center.

ADOPT AGENDA No changes were requested to the proposed Agenda; it was adopted by acclamation.

REVIEW FY23 OPERATING BUDGET PROPOSAL
Programs & Outreach Committee Chair Le Menestrel confirmed the committee had reviewed and discussed several new ideas and thematic initiatives to be undertaken by the MCC staff in FY23. A Motion was affirmed by the committee to include these items as part of the proposed FY23 Budget presentation of the McLean Community Center.

REVIEW FY23 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS
Capital Facilities Committee Chair Post confirmed that CFC had discussed several proposed Capital Improvement Projects to be undertaken in FY23. References were made to initiatives and new ideas that have been suggested by the Governing Board over the past two years. The goal is to continue to move forward by reflecting such initiatives in the annual budget development. A Motion was affirmed by the committee to proceed to include the FY23 CIP projects list as part of the proposed FY23 Budget presentation of the McLean Community Center.

REVIEW PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF MCC FY23 FUND STATEMENT
Treasurer Saboo explained that, with the foregoing committee review process having occurred, the board has had ample opportunity to articulate strategic priorities, address specific topics, and seek answers to questions pertaining to FY23 Budget development. MCC Governing Board is now ready to put forward the FY23 Budget proposal (“Fund Statement”) for public review and comment.

Point of order: My question is that between September 8th and September 22nd (on Sept. 16) it goes to the public. On September 22nd the Board will approve it. Between Sept. 15 and Sept. 22 could anything be changed? I want to be sure that I will see new data. It’s my first time through this, so I’m trying to understand the process.

Clarification by Comptroller Karra: If any change was made, we would have to give 30-day notice if we were to adjust the September 22 Public Hearing on the FY23 Budget.
Summary by Chair Zamora-Appel:
Once the budget is published, there is no going back. There is no ability to make changes. That’s why we have had all the meetings tonight so that the process: Programs > CFC > Finance – was purposeful. I am quite pleased with the discussion of details that we didn’t know. Lesson learned: next year, there needs to be more involvement by board members. Read the Minutes from the previous year and the clarity will be shown. On Wednesday of next week, we will have another chance to discuss it. That will be a public arena; the public may come back with questions. We have a chance to hear from the public, if there are any major issues. Nothing has ever come up in the past. This year, we will have public comments sign-up for Sept. 8 and Sept. 22. If the comments come in, we don’t have to respond. The only time the public receives a response is when they vote. We don’t have to respond to a question from the public.

What I see on this budget is a clear, transparent effort. On that, are there any more questions? We had a survey and Public Hearing on Programs back in March 2022. The Programs Committee Chair discussed some of those points and the new board is seeing this budget for the first time. Once we get to this point in the budget cycle, we have already received the prior feedback from the public and they are part of this budget. The budget planning cycle begins again next spring.

*Executive Director Singh has asked staff to show how they have fulfilled requests from the public.

Opinion expressed: Chair Zamora-Appel will prepare remarks for Sept. 8 and set the parameters for public comment.

MOTION: To present the proposed FY23 Budget to the public at a Meeting-of-the-Whole on Wednesday, September 8, 2021, at 6:30 p.m. at the McLean Community Center.

Unanimously approved.

ANNOUNCE FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT
Chair Zamora-Appel reiterated that public accountability is very important in developing MCC’s budget priorities. To support the public’s role to contribute feedback about the proposed FY23 Budget, comments will be welcome in-person at two upcoming meetings to be held at MCC:
1. Meeting-of-the-Whole
   Wednesday, September 8 6:30 p.m.
2. Public Hearing on FY23 Budget
   Wednesday, September 22 6:30 p.m.

OLD / NEW BUSINESS
Chair Zamora-Appel opened the floor to any topics of old or new business to be considered.

1. Recent FOIA requests:
   Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Two FOIA requests have come in (900 pages; 2,450 pages). Once the requestor pays, we must meet the required timeframe for producing documents.
   Question: Do we as board members have a right to know who the FOIA requestors are? I would like to know in case one of those individuals comes up to me in a public place. I want to know why they are doing this.
   Opinion expressed: Be aware of the ‘meeting’ that shouldn’t have been in the meeting – that conversation shouldn’t have been in there.
   Comment by Secretary Foderaro-Gueretin: As secretary, I’m going to put that as a separate document. The in-between comments took place between one meeting and the other meeting on September 2. We will try to get something published.
   Clarification by Executive Director Singh: PIO Sabrina Anwah is putting out a news release about a mistake having been made and what we are doing differently now. We should always assume there is a microphone on and everything is being recorded. Three people constitutes a ‘meeting.’ We would be charged a fine for breaking FOIA rules.
   Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: Lessons learned. I didn’t know any of this. There was no announcement made. Everything we have said as a board has always been on behalf of the community for MCC. Sometimes we have side conversations and they will be recorded. I have nothing to hide. I am only here as a volunteer.
Comment by Executive Director Singh: It’s good that we are transparent. Virginia is one state that has a one-party consent. It is permissible that someone from the public comes and wants to record it; we are checking with the lawyers about it. Let me figure out how to get you all a copy of the transcript.

Question: Do we want to specify that comments from Small District 1A-Dranesville residents are welcome?

ACTION ITEM: If a person wishes to speak — we will first ask for their residential address to verify if they are Small District 1A-Dranesville residents.

Regarding new County e-mail addresses: SharePoint
Rasheq Rahman will work with Holly Novak and Vivian Brown in IT to trouble-shoot problems and have a smooth roll-out to the board.

Audio recordings: Vice-Chair Post requested to have a discussion about recording MCC Governing Board meetings... and potentially not recording these meetings. The board needs to address it because she is now very uncomfortable about what has transpired in terms of the FOIA requests.

ACTION ITEM: Check with Fairfax Co. about whether MCC Board meetings have to be recorded.

Opinion expressed: These meetings are valuable for those who are new, because we have this limitation of not being able to discuss over e-mail. My concern is that we are talking amongst ourselves one-on-one and not sharing information until the last moment. There has to be some middle ground here.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: The way I understand it is that we cannot make voting decisions electronically. Three or more people constitutes a “meeting.” Even if it is not three or more, that record is FOIA-able. One-on-one conversation is FOIA-able; it’s a record. Texts, phone calls, hand-written notes... all FOIA-able.

Opinion expressed: Either way, we should accept that it is FOIA-able.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: The other option is to have “Executive Session” for personnel reasons, or a business transaction where a competitor would gain an unfair advantage, or a land rights issue.

How the board can be more prepared:

Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: If you look at your binder on Tab 4, it speaks to importance of pre-reads. We will need to read the documents ahead to understand what is being conveyed. That way we can be more productive and not have to spend three hours in each meeting (because of restrictions about not being able to communicate outside of meetings).

Opinion expressed: If you can, please give more time. I was up until 2 a.m. going through this. Executive Director Singh has to deliver it by 8 a.m. to redact material. Send things to the board in advance. Give us that information well in advance.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: The reality is that I must do things for the county executive and Supervisor Foust [in their required timelines for deliverables].

Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: We need information. Coming to meetings without prior information is unproductive.

ACTION ITEM: Have the pre-reads well in advance, then you can reference and help all of us to be better stewards of our positions.

ADJOURNMENT
Chair Zamora-Appel thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted – Holly Novak, Executive Assistant to the Governing Board
2021-2022 MCC Governing Board
Public Hearing on FY2023 Budget and Regular Meeting
September 22, 2021  6:30 p.m.

MINUTES

Board Members Present:  (ALL) Suzanne Le Menestrel; Carla Post; Maria Foderaro-Guertin; Barbara Zamora-Appel; Ivy Chen; Max Blacksten; Bill Glikbarg; Melanie Sletten; Lisa Mariam; Shivani Saboo; Rasheq Rahman

Staff Members Present:  Daniel Singh, Executive Director; Ashok Karra, Comptroller; Holly Novak

Guests:  Camila Alfonzo Meza (Supervisor Foust’s office); Deb Bissen (MPA); Christopher Henzel; Norma Benner; Robert Jordan; Ned Benner; Johanna Sachse; Jeffrey Shapiro; Bill Denk; Alice Middleton; Cole Mallard; Paul Kohlenberger; Lissy John

CONVENE MEETING
This meeting of the Governing Board of the McLean Community Center was convened on September 22, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

ADOPT AGENDA  The Agenda was adopted by acclamation.

OVERVIEW OF FY2023 BUDGET PROPOSAL

BACKGROUND: Meeting-of-the-Whole on September 8 was an opportunity for the entire board to see the FY2023 Budget presentation. There was thorough Q&A that evening, as well in previous Finance Committee meetings held in August and September. At the end of 9/8 Meeting of the Whole, no further changes were requested and the FY2023 Budget was deemed ready for posting on MCC website for public review.

For public awareness and education, Comptroller Karra explained the FY2023 Budget proposal. For any questions not answered during this meeting, Comptroller Karra said he would address it at the next meeting or respond to the individual as soon as possible in coming days. During this explanation of the published FY2023 Budget presentation, questions were raised by board members and the public—as enumerated below.

MCC has had a strong core of financial stewardship: we have maintained 2.3c per $100 of assessed value and we will continue to maintain that. The tax rate for FY2023 will be 2.3c per $100 of assessed value. FY2020 and FY2021 have been challenging years for MCC, as for the whole economy: COVID-19, which has affected and impacted FY2020 and FY2021. FY2022 is predicted to be a full normal year of programming. Registration for programs has been picking up and alternative virtual programs are offered through MCC’s website. FY2022 is the first year MCC has offered virtual programs. MPA handles their classes and registration on their own system; it does not run through MCC. We expect FY2023 to also be a full year of normal programming, based on priorities established in each department.

Executive Director Singh explained a method of organizing the programming information shown in the budget: FY2023 is the first year of applying ‘anchors’ and common themes across all departments, looking at: performing arts, classes, special events—and how the budget aligns with what we’ve identified as priorities. In the coming year, our focus will be: diversity; equity; engaging our local community; regional destination. Our goal over three years is to make sure to hit all the categories in an equitable way. The next three major areas are: finding innovative ways to get our programming done; events around recovery and re-engaging local artists. MCC staff identified the primary column that pertains to each program and also noted other anchors and addressing multiple issues that also
apply. You will see that our main budget focus is on the McLean community: McLean Day; 4th of July; classes—all designed to benefit the local residents a lot more. Tables and columns illuminate how classes and events are organized based on the 12 thematic anchors identified.

A glossary of anchor terms is provided. *All FY2023 budget information is shown on MCC website as of Sept. 15, 2021.

Public comment: At public meetings, it would be good to have printed hand-outs for the public who is attending. Thank you.

Q & A: *As the budget was explained, questions and requests for clarification arose.

We projected this way because we expect FY2023 will be a full normal year. Alden Theatre has specialized equipment—which requires their own maintenance and equipment budget.

The major expenses in PIO office are postage and printing & typeset costs for seasonal Program Guides. MCC is trying to be more 'green' by reducing the amount of overall printing by 30%.

Question: Regarding reduction of 30%—is that a view across-the-board of all MCC operations, including public notifications?
Correct. It is both for PIO/media and Special Events, because those two departments spend the most on publications. We are trying to reduce that by putting notices on social media and on the MCC website.

Question: Is the effect to move some of the expenses from 'printing' to 'managing' social media accounts—so it's not going to 'zero'...but you still have all those accounts to manage?
Correct. You will see a bit of an increase in website maintenance—that is going to go up. But in the long run, hopefully, MCC will be able to be more sustainable—keeping the actual costs down and making it 'green.'

Question: Regarding Compensation/Benefits for the employees—do we have any sense of the amount per person?
MCC has a total of 32 full-time employees; remainder are all part-time and seasonal employees for camps. Some teachers and instructors are included in the payroll as contractors.

Question: Some employers have a designation of "FTE" (full-time equivalent). You are really defining here what makes up "FTE's." What is the rough number of FTE's for instruction? Which departments are heavily FTE-staffed?
This is FTE's...plus: contactors, over-hires for theater; instructors. Special Events has only three full-time people; the rest are all part-timers. MCC Finance Dept. has the breakdown of such information. Instruction is mostly contractors: 3 - 4 FTE's; the rest are all part-time contractors. We have different types of employees: full-time--50-60 hours, some get benefits; some don't; seasonal people for Camp McLean—they don't receive benefits.

Question: Where in the FY2023 budget is the expense for programs, classes, workshops?
Under "Instruction"—classes, seniors classes, bridge all are shown in the "Instruction" category.

Question: Regarding paid performers: Do we evaluate whether Performer X filled the house, while Performer Y only got ½ the audience—so we need not have them back again next year?
Clarification by Executive Director Singh: We don't base our artist contracts on revenues—because then we would never present a local artist. Anytime MCC presents a local artist, we have really poor audiences. We look at: What is our mission? How do we serve our community best? These areas have been identified in the grid—from public surveys, and from staff and the board input—and we program based on those priorities. Community centers never make money.

Question: Do we have a sense of which kind of performance draws an audience?
Yes, we noted that Harvest Festival is already sold out—so we are looking at next year adding an afternoon session. We don't look at event-by-event; it's more about whether there is an interest that we want to make sure is supported. On the flip side: sometimes there is a need that might not have the audience; but we want to build that. It might run at a loss for a few years. We will still run it because it's an important priority.

MPA receives an estimated $240K in-kind toward the cost of the space that MCC provides. 33% of MPA's profits is shared with MCC. If MPA rented a regular property, this represents what it would cost them.
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS:
Two Capital Improvement projects were carried over from FY2022 — security and fire alarm system at OFC, which was completed as of last week. Storage shed — one is used by theater personnel for golf carts and traffic cones. It is 15 years old and rotting and must be replaced. We will have two sheds, one for Special Events and the other for theater equipment; approx. $35K.

The next items are estimates: two EV charging stations in MCC parking lot which cost $75K each station; $100K for electric capacity. This cost might be zero to MCC depending on what the county will provide as they initiate such projects for all agencies; these are placeholders. Shade sails outside on the back plaza — for people to sit and relax. MCC roof — estimate is based on what was done for OFC (sq. feet) —about $750K+. We don’t know if we will have to replace it next year but are keeping it as a placeholder in case there is an issue.

Public comment: Question: When you did this enormous renovation to the MCC, wasn’t the roof included in that?
No -we did not do the roof because that would have added-to and thrown-off the original construction budget of $8M. The roof replacement is a separate project because it’s not related to the renovation; it’s related to what was the existing building. The renovated portion is not involved in roof replacement – only the old portion of the building.

Question by board member: Does insurance cover it? Does MCC have to pay for it, or does it come out of Fairfax Co. general insurance?
We have our own Fund; MCC is ‘self-funded.’ Now it becomes a discussion with the county – because it is their building. We need to talk about the Governing Board presenting it to the county and asking them: What are you going to do about this? This is your building. Can you do something about it? The county might actually commit to it themselves. But… we need to keep the money set aside in case there is an issue. If it’s not spent, it will go back into MCC Fund.

Public comment: Question: I have a question about the EV charging stations - that is ¼ million dollars. If this community center is for the local community, I would think that people could pump their gas before they get here? Or charge their cars at home before they drive just a couple of miles to get here? That seems like an awful lot of expense to MCC that I think is not right.

Opinion expressed: We put that in as a placeholder because: 1. We want to make sure that MCC is aligning with the county’s climate action plan. One of the largest contributors to greenhouse gases in Fairfax County is transportation. A goal of the county’s plan is to add additional EV charging stations.
2. While MCC is not a new building, we want to make sure that MCC is adjusting for the future; this is a placeholder. Many people in McLean may have their own charging stations; but others may not. Having that availability, as this area grows into more and more electric vehicles – is something we are looking into in alignment with Fairfax Co. planning. Our contention is to create the infrastructure. It’s very possible the county will actually be paying for these things... or will work with public/private partnerships. We want to have a placeholder so as to align MCC with sustainability goals and initiatives – many of which MCC is already aligning with today: LED bulbs; pollinator garden; looking at composting here. We are making sure to prepare for the future, because we have already experienced the effects of climate change at MCC. In 2019, we had major flooding. And this past year, there was flooding from the ground-up and through the ceiling. We are already aware that this is an issue.

Public comment: I’m just trying to take a common-sense approach. If you have five electric cars, it’s their responsibility to be able to charge their car at home before they drive three miles to get to MCC. We don’t have gas pumps here for people to pump their gas here. I think it’s great to do the LED lightbulbs and those things – because that’s something that everyone is using in here. But a quarter of a million dollars could go toward a lot of activities here. I think seven activities for FY23 seems like very few. I would love to see more children’s activities here and have the
tax money go toward something like that. It’s not a new building – it sounds like it’s not a requirement to have EV charging stations here. As a taxpayer, I would like to see more focus on the children and let the adults find a different place to charge their cars.

Opinion expressed: We’ll take your views into consideration, obviously. But we’re trying to prepare the infrastructure. There are three different costs that Comptroller Karra put in as a placeholder: 1. Infrastructure—electric supply upgrade 2. roof 3. the two charging stations.

Public comment: Just one other comment: you have the risk of creating a real ‘white elephant.’ We really don’t know how electric cars are going to roll-out. There may end up being EV charging at every gas station—who knows? It’s not the job of the community center to encourage electric vehicles. I also think you are subsidizing the wealthy because most of us can’t afford electric vehicles at this point. And they can just charge-up their own cars. This is kind of ‘boutique environmentalism.’ I think we should stay away from that and focus on providing great MCC activities.

Opinion expressed: This isn’t boutique environmentalism...

Opinion expressed: Oftentimes, parents might be coming to pick up children from activities here, straight from other things. And the convenience of being able to pull-in and charge your car...

Public comment: Parents have that capability. If this is a local community center, people are not traveling far to get there from their home. Parents can think ahead to buy gas before they get here or charge their cars before coming. There’s no need to offer that.

Public comment: And how long does it take to charge a car? Are you there for two hours?

Opinion expressed: As a member of Capital Facilities Committee, it’s also important to reiterate: the MCC Governing Board has thought about this in a ‘staged’ process. In order for MCC to support—whether usage by individual members of the community, or for Fairfax Co. vehicles—we need to invest at very minimum $100K in upgrading infrastructure—parking lot electric system. The idea is that we need to be able to meet any sort of county policy that goes forward. According to the existing policy, we are trying to invest now to avoid more expensive costs later due to short-term notice. We are trying to think ahead. We invest in the infrastructure as we invest in other things—including children’s programming, as well as issues of “diversity, equity and inclusion,” which is key to our budget. These are all investments for the future that MCC Governing Board has looked at through our entire portfolio. We’ve identified anchors in order to see how we invest the resources that are provided by the taxpayers.

Opinion expressed: I just wanted to reiterate my support for what has just been said. I was actually the person who initiated the idea of EV charging stations at MCC. I own two plug-in hybrid cars. I commute to work in DC; many working families are coming here from DC to pick-up kids. Frankly, “range anxiety” is a big barrier for people to own electric cars. The cost is going to come down; more models are becoming available. I concur with other board members that MCC needs to plan for the future. Climate change is here and is already negatively impacting MCC facility and our community. So, I support it.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Fairfax County’s recommendation was 5% of our lot—12 spaces. Clearly, we are not going to out and invest $900K. We want to try it out with two out of the recommended 12 spaces and see what the usage is. Based on that, we can go forward with it. The county has done its research and they are recommending that any county-owned facility is to have 5% of their lot as EV charging stations.

Opinion expressed: We are putting this in as a placeholder and the staff is already planning to research it, pending full funding—collaborating with the county. I expect there will be funding from other sources. But again—infrastructure is really important to us.

Public comment: If charging stations are put in and used by clients of MCC, I assume there will be some sort of fee structure that they will be charged to use the charging station, while county vehicles would
not be charged. It seems to me that you might want to look at that possibility in assessing the expenses.

*Opinion expressed:* There are several possible business models we could look at. We are taking it in a staged approach to make sure to provide that infrastructure) and then look at how to best serve the community by having this resource.

**Comptroller Karra continued explaining the Fund statement.**

We must work with the numbers that have already been advertised for FY2022. We project ending FY2023 with $3.798M— with $1M for Operating Contingency Reserve; balance is $2.798M Capital Reserve.

*Question:* FY2021 began in July 2020. During that period, MCC has been managing COVID-19 issues through this budget, and have continued to manage that, and ended-up with a surplus. That speaks to MCC staff’s ability to manage this during an unprecedented pandemic. Looking forward in 2022, you said you expect it to be full operations — effectively a world that was ‘before COVID-19’ in terms of operations? Do we have anticipated expenditures for FY2022?

*Clarification by Comptroller Karra:* We will do a 3Q review of FY2022 from Fairfax County in February 2022 - wherein we will revise all numbers for the current year and predict for the end of the year. We will also get revised real estate taxes proposed for FY2023. So, we will have a good idea of what the numbers will be at end of FY2022 and start of FY2023, in terms of taxes. We will have six months of actuals in February 2022; we will project what the next six months are going to be and give that to the county.

*Question:* I see many reports that our property values are going up. At the existing rate, shouldn’t MCC’s revenue be going up? Looking at history – in the past couple of years, assessed values went up, but MCC’s revenues were less than our predictions..about $200K less in FY21; it was a surprise. If assessed values are just what they are assessing you on, people are not actually paying that. If something goes wrong, and you are due a discount or something... your value drops off. So, end result is different. We are looking at a $22B dollar tax base in Small District 1A-Dranesville—that is very large! Thanks to the public, we have this sizeable tax base. But we don’t know how it’s going to turn out. We can only project from past history. The county has made some exceptions for COVID-19 if people filed for leniency or forgiveness of property taxes. It’s an ‘unknown;’ we don’t know how that is going to play out. In February 2022 we will get an accurate idea of assessed values.

*Summary by Chair Zamora-Appel:* Thanks to Comptroller Karra, and to everyone for participating in the process. It’s a complex budget that is not easy to comprehend. This process will culminate tonight with the Board approving this budget to move forward. There were no further questions expressed by board members or the public.

**MOTION:** To approve this budget and move forward in the process.  **Unanimously approved.**

**APPROVE MINUTES OF RECENT MEETINGS**

Several sets of Minutes were ready to approve. Chair Zamora-Appel complimented Ms. Novak for all her work in preparing very detailed and thorough Minutes. She asked everyone to voice any questions or suggested revisions to these Minutes documents. No changes were requested. Three MOTIONS were stated to approve the following respective Minutes as written:

**MOTION:** That the Board approve the Minutes of the Governing Board Regular Meeting on July 28, 2021.  **Unanimously approved.**

**MOTION:** That the Board approve the Minutes of the Governing Board Special Called Meeting on August 4, 2021.  **Unanimously approved.**

**MOTION:** That the Board approve the Minutes of the Governing Board Meeting of the Whole on September 8, 2021.  **Unanimously approved.**
Minutes of July 15 Strategic Planning Meeting are not yet ready and will be approved at the next meeting on October 27, 2021.

Minutes of the Special Called Meeting on September 2, 2021 are not yet ready and will be approved at the next meeting on October 27, 2021.

CHAIR'S REPORT / EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Chair Zamora-Appel emphasized how great it was to see everyone this past Saturday at OFC Block Party! Many young people attended and all seemed to have a great time! CapitalOne opened this weekend; but there is no comparison. We are doing a good job here; MCC is providing what is needed for our families. Meeting OFC staff, it was awesome - to see the work that actually happens with the budget that we approve here in this meeting. Chair Zamora-Appel relayed the Board’s thanks to the staff. They did a really good job! There is a lot of positive chatter about MCC programming for the fall - especially outdoor programming. People are excited - especially young families. The children love picking up a pumpkin to decorate - every year, that’s a big deal!

Opinion expressed: Congratulations to MCC staff for the Block Party! It was a lot of fun; my 23-year-old daughter picked up free stuff and had a good time! My daughter had been there as a middle-schooler; so it was nostalgic for her to go back to OFC. I was able to meet a lot of the staff whom I had never met before. It was really well done!

Looking forward - we will have training next week about FOIA for Board members.

Thank you, Rasheq for taking on the SharePoint project. We are looking forward to that because it speaks to sustainability. Moving toward this online site will reduce paper even more; but also, it will get us to a place to be better prepared for board meetings: we will have the latest information. This will be the place to see updated materials. It will help the effectiveness of the MCC Governing Board.

Clarification by Rasheq Rahman: I have been working with Ms. Novak and Vivian Brown, the IT specialist, and have developed a step-wise process. Ivy Chen and Max Blacksten will be the next level of users. We will be moving to two systems: 1. Fairfax County Microsoft Exchange e-mails and 2. SharePoint. This will be fully managed by the IT staff of the county and MCC’s IT representative. Goals: Archiving and documentation purposes, including past documents. Having all the information in one place, it will be easier for us to do our jobs on the board. Once we are comfortable, we will be writing documentation and sharing it with the board - and hope to release the formal roll-out later this fall.

Question: Along those lines, is it possible for us to also get Slax or Teams?
Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Microsoft Office should include Microsoft Teams and is approved by Fairfax Co but Slax is not a county-approved product.

Hispanic Heritage Month – September 15 through October 15. MCC has a lot of full programming.

COVID-19 restrictions have returned and masks are required indoors.

Strategic Plan - We have been waiting on the Fairfax County process. We are looking forward to this because it will give us a chance to talk to the community at-large. Of the many thousands of people who pay real estate taxes - we would like to hear more. What people are expecting? What have their experiences been? How can MCC move forward to the future? Hopefully, that will happen in the next month.

Thank you to all the committees who have met - some have not yet convened. We look forward to those future meetings; let us know how we can assist you in launching. Max Blacksten has been very eager and helpful with a lot of good ideas! The committees are constituted with specific members - but everyone can participate if you are interested. Chair Zamora-Appel encouraged everyone to attend often - to learn something new. Each committee is a piece of a puzzle; once altogether, that’s what makes MCC!
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Strategic Planning: We finally got approval on the strategic planning contract. We hope to have something finalized in the next week or so, with some dates in October to meet with the consultants. Full board and then we must think through: Having a small committee working with the consultants? Or… Having the full board be at each and every meeting? Whatever the board decides is fine; but we need to have everyone involved while also maintaining forward momentum.

MCC facility - roof update: Two different vendors have evaluated and they will come back on the same day and peel back layers to see exactly what is needed. An architect will provide an estimate for the floor aspect.

Question: Do we have a sense of whether or not the county will provide funds?
We don’t know yet. We must define the problem and get the estimate before we can ask Fairfax Co. for support. But yes — we are informing Facilities Management dept. and keeping on-track with them. The county will let us know if there is anything they can do.

Participation: OFC had 480 people at the Block Party; it was packed; concert on Saturday had 360 people. Game night attendance has been variable at OFC – ranging between 5-12 people. Spread the word about that! McLean 5K has 314+ people registered; the highest number of advance registrants ever. Outdoor events are very popular. Harvest Festival has 40 families on the waiting list with a capacity of 500. It is very popular! We are looking at what we can do differently for next year.

Question: Have we addressed the concerns of the neighbors?
We arranged timed entries + security personnel directing traffic + letters going out to the nearby neighborhood.

Upcoming events: House of Terror – 50 enrollees with a 250 capacity); Monster Mash there are 89 out of 187 spots registered. OFC is also doing Trunk-or-Treat. We are getting local families to sign up to do a decorated car. For safety control, we are buying and bagging the candy; it will be held outside - minimal interactions with people.

Classes: We have moved some classes to hybrid. It will be interesting to see if that continues. Hopefully, we can get back inside the building soon.

Internal operations: Operationally, we are working on updating our SOP’s. This will flow into the county’s Emergency Action Plan …mandated that every agency initiate… or update… their Emergency Action Plan. MCC has those documents in place, but they are outdated.

Workforce staffing: We are going through a Workforce assessment of our whole organization, making sure we are on-track for equity, staffing needs, programming needs, and also managing post-COVID-19 needs.

Sustainability: Two staff members from each agency will be nominated for county-level sustainability efforts – Joe McGovern and Jennifer Garrett will lead it for MCC. Executive Director will sit-in on as many meetings as he can.

Website redevelopment: The website re-development kick-off meeting will be next week. We will start addressing such problems as cookie tracking and keeping track of which newsletter or website is being accessed - to have the ability to track usage of a QR code and other promotions.

Liaison with local groups: Executive Director Singh will make a presentation at McLean Citizens Association on October 7. It’s a short 20-minute presentation about MCC.

Opportunities for Board to assist: Great upcoming opportunities to interact with residents: we need volunteers to help with McLean 5K race packet pick-up; ArtFest. MCC staff is slammed; any help you can give us is appreciated.

ACTION ITEM: Ms. Novak will send the e-mail from Mike Fisher about MCC Board members assisting with McLean 5K packet pick-up on Friday, October 1.

Social Media posts: Sabrina Anwah will send out the October social media posts toolkit to Board members.

Ally Week: Supervisor Foust will be coming to the family event for Ally week events and the inter-faith panel.

Opinion expressed: I want to say thank you for organizing Ally Week. I have close family members who are lesbian, and this is really important for me personally and for the community. It’s important to me that these events are
The Center of It All
McLean Community Center
1234 Ingleside Avenue
McLean, Virginia 22101
703-790-0123 / TTY: 711
www.mcleancenter.org

open to families...as being fun, but also having meaningful discussions. Thank you to MCC staff and to Executive Director Singh for organizing that. I've signed up and have been sharing it around on social media.

LIAISON TO FRIENDS OF MCC
Rasheq Rahman met with Cecilia Closs to establish a mutually-beneficial relationship of the MCC Governing Board with Friends of MCC organization. Friends of MCC was supposed to have met in early September but they postponed to October 4 at 7:00 p.m. Rasheq updated Cecilia with a schedule of MCC events. Friends is excited to partner with MCC for major activities. Rasheq will approach them about various opportunities for partnership and express the MCC Governing Board's ongoing mutual support. He is looking forward to that and will hopefully have more outcomes to share next month.

OLD / NEW BUSINESS
Two committees have not yet met, the Elections & Nominations Committee and the Ad hoc 50th Anniversary Committee. Therefore, no current reporting in tonight's meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Chair Zamora-Appel invited the public to introduce themselves and give verbal remarks if they wished. Several people had signed up in advance to speak; all were verified as being Small District 1A-Dranesville residents. Each person was allowed three minutes to speak.

Jeffrey Shapiro:
I want to talk about the Drag Queen issue. I’m probably as tired of talking about it as you are of hearing about it; but I don’t think we have gotten to the bottom of it or gotten appropriate feedback, or really had any kind of dialogue. I sort of feel like I’m talking to a wall. I know that everyone here is very energetic and focused on MCC; and this was something that MCC did. So, I do think it’s an issue that needs to be discussed.

My main point is: truth is important. It’s important in life, it’s important in individuals and it’s also important within a community. At this Drag Story Hour, the first person made a statement which I thought really captured the event: "I am a non-binary transgender woman, which is a lot of words to say that I am a normal woman that gets to define what that means for myself." That’s just not a true statement that was presented to children. In the first place, I am a man... and will always be a man. And I will never be anything but a man. To say that I can be a woman whenever I want is just not presenting reality to children. Now certainly, adults may choose to participate in a fantasy. And we all know the score; we all know what this is all about. But children are different because they are still trying to understand reality and the fact that we live in the world of men and women.

So, I think that statement, with the philosophy that drove the selection of books and the presentation of the performers... I think it was an enticement to lure children into the story hour. Sort of like a pedophile luring kids into his car with candy. And then it was the lewdness, which has already been talked about. These were adult sexual performers and they were performing to little kids.

I’ve been somewhat disappointed that we haven’t heard back and at least gotten an agreement that we’re not going to do it again. We have to pay for this organization; we’re in the tax district. The MCC is not supposed to be a missionary organization; it’s supposed to represent the community. And right now, I think you are making war on a segment of the community. I’ve looked at some of the emails about this: it was instigated by the Executive Director. It was not the result of a groundswell of requests, or an ‘organic’ kind of event. It was instigated as a specific event by MCC and I just think it was inappropriate on many, many levels. I would like to hear that we are not going to do it again. I’m not trying to re-litigate what’s past. But at least have an honest dialogue. And if you
Christopher Henzel:
On June 26, MCC used taxpayer funds to pay drag performers to put on two performances for small children age 4 through 8. Since then, area taxpayers have repeatedly asked the MCC Governing Board this simple question: Will there be any further taxpayers’ funds spent in this way? Taxpayers have raised the issue in e-mails to the board, in the local media and during the brief period at each board meeting which is set aside for public comment. At board meetings on July 15 and July 28, Board Chair Barbara Zamora-Appel stated that there would be a public meeting of the board at which the board responded to this simple question. However, during their meetings over the summer, board members and MCC staff have urged each other not to respond to public comments.

I and other public commenters have posed this simple question to the board at meetings on: July 15, July 28, August 4, September 8, and again this evening. There has been no response. Instead, the board discussed at its special meeting on August 4 a new rule that would limit public comment. On September 8, the board held a “closed meeting” from which the public was excluded, as well as all MCC staff except for Mr. Singh. Up to now, the board has published no Minutes for its meetings since the July 15 meeting when Ms. Zamora-Appel first made this commitment. During tonight’s meeting, there was a vote to approve some of the Minutes that have been built up over the summer. We heard some discussion that there seemed to be some element in some of the meetings that some members of the board didn’t want to see recorded. I hope the Minutes that are ultimately published will accurately reflect the Chair’s commitment to address the drag performers funding issue.

Did the board discuss funding for drag performances during its September 8 “Closed Session”? Has it had further discussions on measures to muzzle public comment? Maybe the Minutes will tell us.

But it shouldn’t be this hard to find out what the board is doing. If you on the board believe that what you are doing is right, and that Fairfax taxpayers support it, there is no need for secrecy. In view of the continuing lack of transparency surrounding the MCC and it’s Governing Board, it is really frightening to me to hear this board’s discussion about its budget. An operation as opaque as this one should not be entrusted with millions of dollars in taxpayer money.

Cole Mallard (representing his wife, Kathleen Mallard, who was unable to attend) – verbal remarks presented during this meeting on 9/22:
I’m not Kathleen but I am her husband, so she’s asked me to read her remarks if that’s all right.
Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on the topic of McLean Community Center programming budget. My wife and I and our parents have resided in the MCC district for over 60 years. We appreciate the many wonderful cultural performing arts festivals, family events, and so on, by the MCC that our residential tax dollars have funded.

So, we were very upset that our tax dollars were spent to pay for the Drag Queen Story Hour for toddlers and young children sponsored by MCC with the Fairfax County Library system several months ago. And now MCC is sponsoring another event: the LGTBQ+ Ally Week next month. We’ve read the MCC’s budgets for FY21, FY22 and proposed FY23. It’s not clear which funding stream these events fall under.

Our question is really more about the appropriateness of these events for the McLean Community and how tax dollars are spent. Across this country and around the world, extremely powerful and wealthy LGTBQ lobbies are
pushing their agendas at break-neck speed. Sometimes this is done under the guise of ‘reaching out’ to LGTBQ youth who might be school drop-outs, runaways, or just confused. We’ve been told this is the rationale MCC gives for offering these LGBT programs.

I have a message for the MCC Board: If you want to help these youth, the most important programs you can offer are the beautiful and healthy things of this world, in the form of performing and fine arts such as classical music, literature – activities that lift them above the confusing and sometimes dangerous LGBTQ lifestyles.

The same is true for our innocent little children. The Drag Story Hours have no redeeming value but only serve to confuse them, even at times to the point of traumatizing. And finally, engage our young children with the lovely, fun music and dancing and yes, story hours that do not entail scary readers who frighten them. Thank you.

Cole Mallard (the following comments were submitted in writing on 9/23):

Good evening and thank you for this opportunity to speak to you on the topic of the McLean Community Center programming budget and special thanks to Ms. Novak.

My wife and I and our parents have resided in the MCC District for a combined total of 70 years. We have enjoyed many wonderful cultural, performing arts, festivals, and family events put on by the McLean Community Center over the course of the years.

We were thus stunned by the Drag (Queen) Story Hours for toddlers and young children sponsored by MCC with the Fairfax County Library system several months ago.

And now, MCC is sponsoring another event – LGBTQ plus Ally Week in early October.

We have read the MCC budgets for FYs 21, 22 and proposed for FY23 and it is not clear which funding stream these events fall under. However, our concern is really more about the appropriateness of these events for the McLean community.

Across this country and around the world, extremely powerful and wealthy LGBTQ lobbies are pushing their agendas at breakneck speed. Sometimes, this is done under the guise of reaching out to LGTBQ youth who might be school dropouts, depressed, runaways, confused, etc.

That is the rationale that MCC gives for offering these LGBTQ1+A programs.

MCC Board, if you really want to help these youth, the most important services McLean Community Center can offer them is to engage them with the beautiful and healthy things of this world, in the form of performing arts, fine arts, classical music, literature, and activities that lift them above the confusing and dangerous LGBTQ lifestyles.

The same is true for our innocent, sweet little children -- the Drag story hours have NO redeeming merit but only serve to confuse them, even to the point of traumatizing them.

Engage them with fun music and dancing, and yes story hours that do not entail scary readers who frighten them.

Thank you and please take these remarks into thoughtful consideration.
Robert Jordan:
I am here to offer comments on how MCC might strengthen its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access to its strategic approach, future programming and budget. First, let me thank the MCC for highlighting the importance of diversity and inclusion in its current programs which reflect the interests of the majority of McLean residents. I’m specifically referring to the current programming focused on the LGBTQ community and celebrating Indian Festival Day. I’m pleased that diversity and inclusion is going to continue these important elements of MCC programming. In FY23, significant portions of The Alden Theatre and MCC proposed budgets are earmarked for these elements. I think it’s important to recognize that McLean is a very ethnically diverse community. For example, enrollment at McLean High School is 26% Asian Pacific Islanders, 12% Hispanic and 6.5% multi-racial or other. At Langley High School the percentages are similar. These figures approximately reflect the composition of McLean’s overall population. While we do not necessarily reflect the diversity among Asian Pacific Islanders and Hispanic populations, nor do they include residents of European or African origin – I want to suggest that MCC in the future focus on an approach of programming that celebrates the diversity of the individual countries of origin of McLean residents. This coordinated programming could be termed: “national festival” approach – to include a variety of activities that highlight the culture of one nation each month. It can be scheduled for one week during the month. Activities could include: music and dance performances in The Alden Theatre; arts or handicrafts exposition in coordination with MPA. Food theme could feature local restaurants specializing in the country’s cuisine; screenings of films that represent the country’s culture; discussions of the country’s literature; reading of children’s stories from the specific country. A festival approach would allow MCC to heavily promote its focus on diversity within the McLean community. It would rely, in large part, on significant involvement by community representatives from the specific country during planning and implementation of the event.

Deb Bissen (McLean Project for the Arts):
First of all, I want to thank the board and the MCC staff for their cooperation and support for our upcoming MPA ArtFest – it’s always a wonderful day of community spirit and the arts in our community. So MPA is very happy to be able to offer that again, and we are looking forward to a beautiful day in the park! Secondly, we have a new exhibition opening up in the gallery on the second floor: “Not Strictly Painting” – this is our 13th edition of that. A virtual opening is available tomorrow night on ZOOM. The show is curated by two local curators. The gallery is open to the public on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons and Saturdays with dates shown on the MPA website. We are limiting the people in the gallery to six at a time – to provide social-distancing. Lastly, Fall classes are starting this week – if you are still interested or know someone who would be interested, there is still opportunity to join us. Information is available on MPA website. We are excited about MCC’s involvement in the upcoming “Art of Mass Gatherings” event – MPA ArtFest is an example of a community festival and hopefully will give ideas on how we can make the festival even better, especially in terms of sustainability and different things that can help improve it for our community in future years. I hope you’ll join us on Sunday, October 3rd in McLean Central Park.

Small District 1A-Dranesville resident (no name given):
I am a resident of Small District 1A-Dranesville and I have been a resident of McLean for close to 30 years. I also object to McLean Community Center funding drag queen/king story hours for young children. This only serves to confuse the child; and it’s cruel to bring children into an environment that they cannot understand. I was at the first performance on June 26 and the only comment that one child made was when Majic Dike showed her purse in the shape of a dog and called it “cat.” But this young child said, “No, it’s a dog.” And she said: “It’s a cat.” Now, what kind of a message are we sending to children when we tell them something “A” is “not A – it’s B.” That an orange is not an orange – it’s an apple. Well, that is just not treating children properly. So therefore, in conclusion: I would
say that the McLean Community Center board should no longer promote or fund any drag queen story hours for young children.

Chair Zamora-Appel thanked members of the public for their presence tonight and for expressing their opinions. After each person spoke, she responded:

We appreciate your taking the time to share your comments regarding topic. All community feedback is valuable and will be taken into consideration.

All MCC Governing Board meetings are open to the public. You can view the board schedule on our website at: https://mcleancenter.org/about/governing-meetings/meetings-agendas

Thank you.

The following public comments by Small District 1A-Dranesville residents were submitted in writing in advance of this meeting:

1. Mark Clemente
From: Mark Clemente <clem1979@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 21, 2021 12:57 PM
To: Novak, Holly R <Holly_Novak@fairfaxcounty.gov>
Subject: Drag Queen Story time

Ms Novak,
I just learned that $900 of our taxpayer dollars was spent on paying drag queens to read to our children at the library. Is this true? If so, I am horrified that we are subjecting our children to this dangerous nonsense, then being asked to foot the bill.

If you have any say in this matter, do the right thing and let's stop polluting the minds of our children with this nonsense. Enough is enough. Corruption of innocent children is (or should be) a crime.

Common sense should prevail. This isn't complex or thorny. Do the right thing by our children or we will all pay the higher future cost to our diminished culture.

Sincerely,
Mark Clemente

2. Alice Middleton
From: Alice Middleton <cathcap@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 21, 2021 3:59 PM
Subject: McLean Community Center budget for 2022-2023 input from a taxpayer

Dear Mr. Singh and Ms. Novak,

As you consider the MCC budget for the upcoming fiscal year, I wish to state that as a taxpaying member of the Dranesville District, I STRONGLY object to ONE DOLLAR of my tax money being used to support or pay for Drag Queen/King story hour(s) in Fairfax County.

The recent June 26th drag queen/king story hour at the Dolly Madison Public Library was not in the best interest of our children. It only served to confuse children about things as simple as a dog or a cat and/or a male or a female. Children are not well served by such a program.

I was in attendance at the 10:30 performance on June 26th and found the performance of the three drag individuals (paid a total of $900 of my tax dollars for two performances, I understand) to be a complete waste of time and money. The children in attendance seemed to walk away confused and upset.
Please eliminate from your budget (if even considering) and/or do not fund any drag queen/king story hours (or other events) with my hard earned tax dollars. It is not in the best interest of our community, young children, or the people of Fairfax County.

Respectfully submitted,
Alice Middleton
6313 Hunting Ridge Lane
McLean, VA 22101

3. Lissy John

Dear McLean Community Center Governing Board,

My name is Lissy John and I’m delighted to speak with you today. Just last year I ended my 3-yr term on the MCC governing board and understand the dedication it takes to volunteer as a Board member and serve as Executive Director of this organization. Thank you for your service in bettering our community.

I’m here today as a private citizen, a mother of 3 young children, and as a person of faith to express my support for the inclusive approach you have taken toward your programming, particularly with respect to the LGBTQ and the Indian-American communities.

I was so happy to see programs such as the Drag Queen story hour as part of your Pride celebrations and the upcoming LGBTQ Ally week being held on the Plaza. The Trevor Project reports that suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death amongst young people ages 10 to 24, and LGB youth seriously contemplate suicide at almost 3x the rate of heterosexual youth. They also report that LGB youth are almost 5x as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth. Our LGBTQ children are constantly bombarded with messages that they are not normal, they are less than, or are somehow immoral. As a society we talk about protecting our children and about being inclusive but so few are willing to do the real work of rethinking how they operate. Those that do are often faced with pushback from a small but vocal minority who reject change, even if it saves lives. I applaud you for doing the good work of supporting our vulnerable LGBTQ youth. God doesn’t make mistakes, and I believe that any of our children, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, should feel welcome in our community.

I was also personally inspired by the Indian-American programming you’ve put forward, like the Diwali celebration and Garba virtual workshop. As an Indian-American myself, I grew up seeing very little programming that celebrated my culture. The absence of it suggested that our iconic celebrations, dances, and cultural practices weren’t welcome in American society or was a thing that only non Americans do. But I am an American, just like so many other first- or second-generation immigrants in McLean. It’s wonderful to see the MCC educate the broader Mclean community on the different ways we can be American and to create well-rounded, globally minded citizens. I look forward to taking my children to not just the Indian-American events but to other cultural events as well.

In summary, thank you for everything you do for the Mclean Community. I continue to enjoy bringing my children to the MCC and look forward to many more programs to come.
4. Kristin Crouch

Ms. Holly Novak  
Secretary, Board of the McLean Community Center  
Mr. Daniel Singh  
Executive Director  
McLean Community Center  
1234 Ingleside Avenue  
McLean, VA 22101

Dear Ms. Novak,  
Dear Mr. Singh,  

It has come to my attention that, through the financial support of the MCC, the Dolley Madison Library hosted “Drag Story Book Hour” on June 26 of this summer with a target audience of “babies and toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children.”

As a tax-paying resident of McLean, I object to exposing young children to this type of sexualization in a library setting. It detracts from Fairfax County Public Library’s mission of promoting literacy and learning, while using taxpayer dollars for an activity which violates the conscience and morals of this taxpayer.

During their middle and high school years, my children used the resources and services of Dolley Madison Library. As a parent, I was grateful for the support my kids received in their education and learning. This work is proper to the role of any library in society – to serve as a safe haven for kids. Our youngest children – indeed, all children of any age – deserve to be able to learn and thrive in an atmosphere free of the hyper-sexualization of the outside world.

During the upcoming MCC budget deliberations, I request respectfully that no funds be allocated for this type of activity. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kristin Crouch
5. Jeffrey Shapiro  (Letter to Editor – Fairfax Times  July 30, 2021)

In reply to Drag Story Hour article

Dear Editor,

I write in reaction to the Drag Story Hour event held in the McLean Library on a Saturday in late June 2021.

A drag queen dressed as a trans woman named Transwomania performed at the event. The drag queen was introduced by a trans woman named Transwomania, who described herself as a drag queen and a trans woman. The drag queen performed a variety of drag queen routines, including a lip-sync performance and a dance routine. The drag queen’s performance was well-received by the audience, who cheered and applauded throughout the performance.

It is important to note that drag queen performances are not new to the McLean Community Center. In fact, the McLean Community Center has hosted a number of drag queen performances in the past, including drag queen performances at its annual drag queen event, the Drag Queen Prom.

Overall, I believe that the Drag Story Hour event was a positive addition to the McLean Community Center’s programming. The event provided an opportunity for children and families to experience a unique and entertaining event. I hope that the McLean Community Center will continue to host similar events in the future.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Shapiro
McLean, VA
6. **Paul Kohlenberger**
From: Paul Kohlenberger <paulkohl@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 9, 2021 9:35 AM
To: Novak, Holly R <Holly.Novak@fairfaxcounty.gov>
Subject: Budget presentation deck

Hi Holly—
When you get a chance, please forward a copy of the budget presentation slide deck that had been distributed to members of the Board before last night’s meeting. Thanks!

Best,
Paul

**REPLY:**
Hi Paul. The presentation slide deck that was referred to in Wednesday night’s meeting was preliminary DRAFT data. Ashok Karra assures me that the final Fund statement + complete PowerPoint slide deck for the FY23 Budget Proposal will be published on MCC website on September 15.

The Public Hearing on FY23 Budget will be held on September 22 at 6:30 p.m. Public comments are welcome at that meeting; please let me know if you wish to speak.

Sincerely,
Holly

**ADJOURNMENT**
Nothing else was mentioned as a topic for discussion this evening.

With no further business, Chair Zamora-Appel adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Holly Novak - Executive Assistant to the Governing Board
2021-2022 MCC Governing Board
Special Called Meeting
September 29, 2021 — 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Board Members Present:  
in-person: Shivani Saboo; Bill Glikbarg; Melanie Sletten; Rasheq Rahman; Suzanne Le Menestrel; Maria Foderaro-Guertin; Barbara Zamora-Appel; Carla Post; Lisa Mariam  
virtual: Ivy Chen

Board Members Absent:  
Max Blacksten

MCC Staff Present:  
Daniel Singh, Executive Director; Holly Novak

Guests:  
Lou Nuzzo (Asst. Fairfax County Attorney); Paul Kohlenberger

CONVENE MEETING
Chair Zamora-Appel convened a Special Called Meeting of the Governing Board of the McLean Community Center on September 29, 2021, at 6:10 p.m.

APPROVE AGENDA  No changes were requested to the Agenda; it was adopted by acclamation.

CLOSED SESSION
Chair Zamora-Appel directed the individual from the public to please exit the room so that the board could continue its discussion in “Closed Session.” With the public having exited, only MCC Governing Board members and MCC staff remained in the room. Mr. Nuzzo participated virtually.

Motion Going into Closed Session:  *Chair Zamora-Appel stated the following:  
I move that the McLean Community Center Governing Board go into Closed Session, pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A)(8) for the purpose of consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. The subject matter to be heard, discussed, considered, and consulted upon are the legal requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and their relation to specific records and meetings of the McLean Community Center Governing Board and the McLean Community Center.

Closed Session began at 6:10 p.m.

Closed Session ended at 8:20 p.m.

Motion Coming Out of Closed Session:  *Chair Zamora-Appel stated the following:  
In accordance with Virginia Code Section 2.2-3712, I move that the McLean Community Center Governing Board members certify that, to the best of each member’s knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the Closed Session was convened were heard, discussed, considered or consulted upon in Closed Session. The MOTION passed unanimously.

Following the MOTION to reconvene into Public Session, Chair Zamora-Appel announced that public attendees could now return to the room to observe if they wished.
OLD / NEW BUSINESS
Chair Zamora-Appel opened the floor to any topics of old or new business to be considered. The following topics were brought up for discussion:

1. Public comment procedures: RESPONDING

Question: In a prior meeting, we talked about the structure of “Public Comment” and if we were able to engage in what people are saying. What are the rules about not engaging with them? What about changing how it’s done? Is it ‘guidelines’… ‘suggestions’… or something actually ‘required? We talked about potentially being able to talk to the lawyers? Is that meeting going to happen? Can we make that happen soon?
Clarification by Executive Director Singh: We can talk to Fairfax Co. lawyers to see what they recommend. But the MCC Governing Board sets the policy for what we want. The lawyers can only say: “This is what we recommend.” They typically recommend not responding ‘in-the-moment.’ They want us to deliberate about it and either give a written statement or address it at the next following meeting. A caution is that communicating in-the-moment can be troublesome by responding before we’ve thought about it in full deliberation.

ACTION ITEM: Executive Director Singh can request the lawyers to provide advice.

Question: The problem is: I don’t think I’m ‘responding’ but I would like to ask a question to clarify what is being said.
Clarification by Executive Director Singh: That is considered a “response.”

Question: While it is a response, I’m not taking a “position” for MCC when I do so; I’m just trying to understand what the issue is.
Clarification by Executive Director Singh: The Fairfax Co. BoS has tried and tested over multiple boards and have developed a public comment policy. Clearly, we can make up our own policy and depart from that; but it will entail a lot of your time and staff time to manage it.

Opinion expressed: The Executive Director is saying that this is the attorneys’ advice. However, if a board member wants to learn and wants to ask a clarifying question, that is your right to ask.

2. Public comment procedures: DISCUSSING TOPICS RAISED

Opinion expressed: Even if we don’t engage with the public when they are giving that comment, I think it’s important that, as a board, we discuss anything that is brought up in public comment — whether it’s something really silly… or something serious that is brought up multiple times. If somebody is making the effort to come here and engage with a local community board, we owe it to them at an upcoming meeting to just address it. “Thanks for your suggestion. We’re not going to be moving forward with it because of____X____.” OR, “We will be moving forward with it…” I think we owe it to the public.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Saying “We’re moving forward…” OR, “We’re not moving forward…” gets into details that we should try to avoid. We can say: “Thank you for your feedback — we appreciate it.” But when you start giving reasons… that prolongs further back-and-forth comments and subsequent complaints.

3. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Access (DEIA) statement

Opinion expressed: I would like to suggest at the next meeting that we read the Diversity & Inclusion statement and end with: “It is the Board’s intention to support the staff in conducting events that comply with this statement.” Then the public will have their answer. Because we can’t keep doing this. We have deliberated; based on that deliberation, the Board has formed this statement.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: But that deliberation itself must take place in a public space. We will have to dedicate a portion of the meeting where you deliberate the statement in public and then affirm it. The public will want to know about it: if we deliberated it as a public body, then they should have been able to attend such.
Opinion expressed: We could state at the beginning: to discuss this DEIA statement in this meeting— so as to put the topic on the Agenda. Then we can read it. And then end with a statement: “As such, the MCC Governing Board intends to support the staff in events that they feel advance this diversity, equity, inclusion and access goal.”

Opinion expressed: Also, we should leave it open — if there are objections to it, that we leave it open to discussion. If someone doesn’t agree with certain parts, we can discuss it then. It would demonstrate to the public that this is our deliberation. At the end of the day, it’s our statement and we’re responsible for it. We are sending it to the public — and that’s it.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: The attorney’s advice about growing a thicker skin is important to keep in mind. Despite this DEIA statement, people will find a reason to use the budget... and find the next thing to complain about. They will keep coming back; they’re not going away. Some have already signed up through the end of the year and will keep doing so.

Opinion expressed: But I think we need to affirm and verify that we are saying: Yes — the MCC Governing Board is going to support events... including an additional event such as Drag Story Hour... as warranted in your programming decisions. The MCC Governing Board supports you. Does everyone feel comfortable with that?

Opinion expressed: I suggest we just go with the statement already negotiated. Everybody has agreed upon that.

Opinion expressed: I do think it’s important that we have a discussion on it. We must think about it irrespective of the actual issue at-hand. As a policy — no matter what the issue is: If roles were reversed, what would we like to see if we were in their place? I think a discussion is important; and it’s important for the public to hear our point-of-view. Because at this point, what I’m hearing is: a lot of the comments aren’t even about the ‘Drag Story Hour.’ It’s about the public feeling like they are talking to a wall. And that frustration is very valid for them; their former point isn’t. I think it’s important for the public to hear us having an open discussion. DEIA statement is important and great as well... and it’s broad.

I think it’s O.K. for us to have a targeted discussion on it because the public has attended so many times.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: What are you saying – discuss the response to Drag Story Hour?

Opinion expressed: When the public comes and says: “Oh, we’ve had a lot of public comments about this...” It’s O.K. for the MCC Governing Board to respond back: “These are the concerns we’ve heard and that’s important – and these are our thoughts...” Or... “This is my thought. What do you think?”

ACTION ITEM: Put it on Agenda for October 27, 2021 Board meeting: discuss DEIA statement.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: We can put it on the agenda. But my only guidance is that: when we start responding to particulars, you will focus forever on individual topics. It’s not just Drag Story Hour... it’s EV charging stations... amphitheater... MCC doing events on the plaza. People will find things that they are not happy with and the amount of time that MCC staff is devoting to this... I’m actually having to approve overtime to get every request sent out on time. You are just opening up more public comment activity by doing this – which is fine as a policy. But I’m just letting you know that there are severe consequences.

Opinion expressed: The repeated question has been: Are you going to use the budget to support these type of events? We need to give them an answer. Because engaging in the back-and-forth will get us nowhere.

Opinion expressed: No - just have a discussion amongst us in the “Old/New Business” section: “We’ve had this public comment topic a few times... etc.”

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: But then they will find out what is going to be said in this meeting and then the public will say: “At this meeting, this person said this... and therefore I want to come back and respond.” It’s not going to solve what you are saying. We can do it that way, but it’s not going to resolve it. People are not going to stop attending.

Opinion expressed: I think what we’ve done so far and how we handled the original thing led to this. Now we’re being constantly bombarded. We can’t get other people who have legitimate concerns to speak at our meeting
because there is no slot. If I have someone who wants to talk about a real issue, they don’t even have a slot available for the next three months because it’s filled up with this stuff. If they want to keep filling it up and make it a ‘thing’… that’s one thing. But at least we have on the record: This is our view on this topic. We haven’t been able to get on the record about anything on this.

**Opinion expressed:** I’m upset wasting MCC staff’s time trying to do real work for MCC and having so much of this keep reiterating itself – which we have a view on, as a group. I want to put it to bed.

**Comment by Ms. Novak:** I’m managing this O.K. Because I value the public dynamic, I’m not complaining. I want the communication level open. Because it’s very important – we just learned why. It’s not bothering me – it is a lot; but I happen to like public discourse. I understand there can be disagreement. I value it - because that’s where you get better decisions.

**Clarification by Executive Director Singh:** But disagreement is different from hate speech, racism, sexism or gender. They are not just disagreeing. **Opinion expressed:** Yeah - what I’m hearing is: homophobia.

**Opinion expressed:** To that point, I would recognize that as even more of a reason for the Board to say something. In most other environments, that sort of speech wouldn’t just float by. I know that’s what we’re not trying to encourage. To me, it’s appropriate to just put our foot down and say: “This is where we stand.” I understand that the DEIA statement does that; but it’s appropriate for us to be a lot more targeted about our statement given the language and behavior that the public has shown. And even if we were to make a statement in response, especially given how it must be done – it does take a long time. We all know that it’s frustrating how slow government bodies respond to things. I’m sure the public feels that frustration. If we can have a public working session on the DEIA document in the form of a future discussion in-person and have a faster turnaround time— I think that would be better for everyone.

4. **Future “Town Hall” meeting:**

**Question:** And on that note, in a previous meeting we also talked about a potential “Town Hall” where we could engage with the public. Are we going to do that? What are the steps to make that happen?

**Clarification by Executive Director Singh:** We will have a general public listening session as part of strategic planning. But it wouldn’t be focused on any particular issue. We would want to ensure a wide group of representatives present so that strategic planning can move forward.

**Opinions expressed:** Let’s make sure that that is well known in advance – so the board can reach out to our networks to try to attend. If given only 3 days advance notice— that’s hard for us to reach out to encourage people. I know people who would be willing to come. It’s a priority that we hear from a diverse view of McLean residents.

**Question:** Aren’t we hosting something in The Alden with various ministers?

Next Thursday night, Oct. 7: a panel of three ministers and one Rabbi.

**Opinion expressed:** And any of us can sign-up to be an usher at that event.

5. **Further discussion of DEIA statement:**

**Question:** Where are we on this? Are we going to read the DEIA statement and have a declaration? Or are we going to have a conversation before we do that? What did we decide?

**Opinion expressed:** I prefer that we have a conversation first…

**Clarification by Executive Director Singh:** But that would seem artificial – having a “statement” right after having a discussion. We can have a discussion in October and then have the DEIA statement read aloud in November… but then it’s going to delay the process even further. And the public will be even more frustrated.

**Opinion expressed by Programs & Outreach Chair Le Menestrel:** Since I chair the Programs & Outreach Committee, the discussion could be how the work of Programs & Outreach Committee can help support the DEIA statement,
working in partnership with Executive Director Singh and MCC staff. That’s where I would like to go – move forward with a strategic discussion rather than a reactionary-type response.

Question: The DEIA statement is now on our website, correct? And we’re not going to take it down, right?

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: The statement is now on MCC’s website.

Opinion expressed: Frankly, that will be a starting point for discussion. We could talk about it as a board: the statement is out there... now, how do we implement this policy in our programming? You could do the same thing in Capital Facilities Committee. Use the board process: committee-level discussion; then at a future meeting of the board, we could consider it.

Opinion expressed: Saying: “We are going to use funds for this program – and MCC staff has said that it’s in alignment with the DEIA statement. Yes – we will be supporting.”

Opinion expressed: You reference it in your Programs & Outreach Committee. This whole discussion should have been in the Programs & Outreach Committee to begin with; it dealt with a program. But it ends up becoming a board-level issue.

Clarification by Ms. Novak: The next Programs & Outreach Committee Meeting is not until November 3. We do have the Strategic Planning meeting on October 13: ENC meets at 5 p.m.; then Strategic Planning is 6 to 9:00 p.m.

Opinion expressed: Does this not fall under ’strategic planning’?

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: We are paying consultants; so, I wouldn’t want to tie-up their time.

Opinion expressed: Agreed - we need all the time with the consultants. To me, 3 hours is short! I think it should be done in the next full board meeting.

Opinion expressed: It’s a procedural thing. And the public has been bringing up procedural issues! This is our procedure: 1. Bring it up in Programs & Outreach Committee; vote. Then referred to the Board. 2. Then the full Board will vote on it.

Programs & Outreach Chair Le Menestrel said she could call a meeting of Programs & Outreach Committee before October 27.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: We will figure out a time. So, are you O.K. with how we are proceeding?

On the 10/27 Board meeting agenda, we will say that we are going to discuss it.

ACTION ITEM: Discuss the DEIA statement at the October 27 full board Regular Meeting.

6. Bylaws:

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: For us to change a policy we must make sure the policy ties-in with our MOU. Reston Community Center figured out a way to do that: they have updated their MOU and attached Bylaws to it. Bylaws do not have to go back to the MOU and get ratified by the BoS and county attorneys. This is something for you all to consider.

ACTION ITEM: Read through MOU before the strategic planning happens. Think about what sections you want to update. Do you want to stay in MOU way? Or move towards portions being in the MOU and portions being decided by “Bylaws” - which would give more flexibility to make decisions? Rather than having to put it before the BoS. Think about everything you want in there so that we make one amendment to go to BoS.

ACTION ITEM: Question: Would it be possible to get a WORD version of the MOU? We only have the original .pdf. It’s a grainy xeroxed copy. Executive Director Singh will try to convert the original scan into WORD.

7. FY23 Budget:

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Our Workforce planning didn’t align with FY23 budget process. The final meeting is Oct. 7; we are proposing some staff changes. 1. Right now, we have a ½ time non-merit IT position. With so much ‘virtual’ and many renters and instructors doing hybrid teaching, we can’t get that person
on-site often enough. People then seek out Daniel because he knows more about IT and he ends up helping instructors set-up their classes. To continue in this direction is unsustainable. Workforce is suggesting moving it into a full-time IT person. Also, right now, we don’t have anyone looking at marketing analytics: e-mail conversion rates; Facebook analytics. No one on staff has that expertise. ½ of it would be IT support and the other ½ would be analytic support: separate mailing lists for OFC, The Alden; Mail Chimp; Constant Contact. We want to combine all that and make it into one position. 2. The other position is ½-time Executive Asst. for Executive Director — hoping to make that full-time: helping Daniel + grant-writing. This will affect our budget by $100K in FY23.

**Question:** Does a particular salary amount trigger a required review?

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Yes - our meeting of Workforce is next week and then they will finalize it. If they say “No — you can’t do it.” then I can’t do it. We are making the case and hopefully they will agree. Even if we put it in the budget and all of you agree, BoS still has to vote on it; we can’t make the decision without them. If you get it in to them, they will look at it in their March 2022 meeting and hopefully approve it. And then we will get the position open in July 2022.

**ACTION ITEM:** If this change is approved by Workforce — we will have a brief meeting on October 13 and get it approved before our October 27 Regular Meeting. So that the public can see the change as published before the Oct. 27 final vote.

**Question:** If the two positions are increased to full-time, would there be cuts in other areas to still have a balanced FY23 budget?

Not right now. Current tax assessments are coming in higher; so, we will still be able to balance the budget and not involve cutting anything. Just this past week, we are seeing how difficult it is to recruit people: we formerly had 45 volunteer ushers for The Alden Theatre; 0 are coming back this fall because of worry about COVID-19 in an indoor space. Not one single person is coming back.

**Question:** MCC staff is large compared to others. Did you explore cross-training or deploying someone from one area to another to cover these positions? Do you ever do temporary-to-permanent hires? Many A/V folks work several jobs (gigs) = talent pool.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: There is no way; we might be able to move other positions around but they wouldn’t be able to cross-train. Fairfax County won’t let us bring in someone who is high-skilled and make them do something that is not at their level. We might be able to eliminate some lower-skilled positions; but we don’t have the level of positions to cross-train them up to. And we can’t just move “temporary” people to permanent — because that would bypass the equity of the hiring process. There is a different process for full-time positions vs. temp. MCC must hire through a normal process.

**Question:** Have there been any adjustments to the staffing list that you sent us a few months ago?

Not yet. We are not letting any vacant positions be hired; we are holding off until after this fall, to determine:

1. Are people going to come back in a different capacity? 2. Are there different needs? No one is hiring anymore until we figure out the lay-of-the-land for the future.

**Question:** How many vacancies does MCC have currently?

About six vacancies: one in The Alden; one in PIO office; a couple in OFC; Special Events Assistant; the Executive Assistant position under Daniel has been vacant for three years. Our IT person wants to retire as soon as possible. We are keeping the positions empty right now because we don’t know. IT person is ½ time now; it would become a full-time IT position. The Exec. Assistant position is vacant (½ time position); it would become full-time. It’s actually a little more than double. Before the renovation, George Sachs didn’t hire at that point; it has remained vacant for three years.

**ACTION ITEM:** We will update our FY23 Budget based on these changes. This all gets collected by the county accounting & procurement office — they will amass our budget that balances out the whole county’s budget. Then BoS approves it in the new year. MCC Governing Board will vote on the budget in final form on October 27.
8. **Mask-wearing (required inside MCC):**

*Question: Can the board make a policy about mask-wearing: if people are not complying, that they would be escorted out?*

**Clarification by Executive Director Singh:** We can make more stringent policies if we want.

**Opinion expressed:** Committee chairs could also start each meeting with a statement mentioning this.

**Opinion expressed:** I liked when Comptroller Karra kindly gave someone a mask. Can we keep a box of masks here? *Ms. Novak always has them on-hand now, at-the-ready.*

**Opinion expressed:** You can always stop the meeting; and then everybody else would get frustrated with that person.

**Opinion expressed:** What's bothersome is the attitude. We are in a COVID-19 environment... and this is a Fairfax County building.

**Clarification by Executive Director Singh:** That's why you all responding to the public with the DEIA statement is not going to satisfy this person. They are not here because of one thing... they are here for a series of things.

**Opinion expressed:** But it will make us feel responsive. And we need to respond.

**Opinion expressed:** We will be “on the record.” That’s important. Everything has been about what we’ve done on the record... and what we have not done on the record.

Nothing was mentioned as a further topic for discussion.

**ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business, Chair Zamora-Appel adjourned the meeting at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Holly Novak - Executive Assistant to the Governing Board
2021-2022 MCC Governing Board
Special Called Meeting
October 13, 2021  6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Board Members present (all):  in-person:  Barbara Zamora-Appel; Rasheq Rahman; Lisa Mariam; Bill Glikbarg; Suzanne Le Menestrel; Max Blacksten; Maria Foderaro-Guertin; Melanie Sletten; Carla Post; Shivani Saboo; Ivy Chen

MCC Staff present:  Daniel Singh, Executive Director; Holly Novak

Guests:  Meg Friedman (AMS Planning & Research); Merrily Pierce; Paul Kohlenberger; Adrienne Henzel; Christopher Henzel; Jeffrey Shapiro; Johnna Sachse

CONVENE MEETING
Chair Zamora-Appel convened a Special Called Meeting of the Governing Board of the McLean Community Center on October 13, 2021, at 6:06 p.m. This meeting was open to the public attending in-person.

ADOPT AGENDA  No changes were requested to the proposed Agenda; it was adopted by acclamation.

FY2023 BUDGET
Treasurer Saboo explained that, over the past several weeks of thorough review by Programs & Outreach Committee and Capital Facilities Committee, as well as sequential meetings of the full Governing Board to examine the FY2023 Budget in detail, everyone has had sufficient opportunity to articulate strategic priorities and seek answers to questions about FY2023 Budget development. The public has also had ample opportunity to express their questions and examine the preliminary FY2023 Budget proposal by observing previous meetings. Right now, the board is voting to send the updated FY23 Budget proposal to the public for review. It will be posted on MCC website and paper copies available at the MCC Welcome Desk. On Oct. 27 the Governing Board will vote on forwarding the final budget to Fairfax County, after receiving public comments between now and October 27.

MOTION:  That the Governing Board present to the public the updated FY2023 Budget.  Unanimously approved.

STRATEGIC PLANNING KICK-OFF
Executive Director Daniel Singh welcomed Michele Walter from AMS Planning & Research. She is a nationally-acknowledged consultant. Mr. Singh has known about her work through the Maryland State Arts Council as they put together new funding for a $25M budget with all the state organizations. She also did the master plan for ArtsFairfax and has worked with other organizations in Maryland. AMS Planning & Research focus is to assist MCC Governing Board to establish workable goals and priorities for the coming years – so that MCC continues its mission to effectively serve residents of Small District 1A-Dranesville with creative and worthwhile programming.

AMS is 35 years old; a research-based firm working in the arts and culture sector (a distinguishing factor). About 40% of their work is on capital investments (building new and expansion); remainder is business and strategic planning, audience-development work, some cultural arts planning. Ms. Walter has been with the firm for 15 years as managing director. Prior to that, she did a capital construction project and before that, she ran a symphony orchestra. Everyone at AMS came from a role in arts & cultural organizations. The firm specializes in arts and cultural organizations and has offices in L.A., Phoenix, Cleveland, Connecticut, Richmond, VA.
Ms. Walter is looking forward to working with the MCC Governing Board. This meeting is an introduction to strategic planning. She talked about the overall scope of work, with detailed focus on the first phase from now until second week of December. She explained the firm’s approach and philosophy about planning and the future... from 30,000 feet level. With a couple of provoking questions to kick-off the conversation, tonight will be a fact-finding time together. AMS has an ‘open and engaged’ way of doing strategic planning. They believe in partnering with clients: they will preserve Wednesdays for committee meetings or board meetings and provide regular updates. It is recommended that a smaller task force be constituted (perhaps 3-5 board members) because there is a lot of back-and-forth in trying to do some work from a process standpoint. That small group of 3 to 5 can advise the consultants directly.

**Question:** How much of your work is with public arts institutions... and how much with private institutions?

The first this was analyzed was in 2008: about 1/2 and 1/2. It’s interesting because the way things move has helped AMS keep a balance: the private sector dries up but the public sector has a long lead time; then the public sector dried up but the private sector is ready to come back again. Clientele: colleges and universities; big cities; small cities; rural communities, 85% is U.S.-based and they do a fair amount of work in Canada. AMS is a research-based firm. Their scope of work will include looking at other places. AMS is big on benchmarking, exemplars, and learning from others about best practices.

AMS has organized MCC’s project into four phases...

**First phase:** Situational Analysis — we learn as much as we can about you... put our objective eye on things... and bring back to you what we think the situation is. This is tricky because not only do we have COVID-19 last 18-19 months, but before that, MCC was only operating for 6-7 months because being closed for renovation. While we can look all the way back to MCC’s pre-renovation and say, “This was the situation.” that is almost irrelevant because it was about 7 years ago. AMS will be looking at phases: “This is who MCC was... after renovation.” “This is who MCC was during COVID-19...” This is where MCC is now.”

**Question:** Will you take into consideration the classes, workshops conducted by MCC that aren’t necessarily arts or performance-related? Yes — everything. AMS Planning & Research does museum work; they have also worked with libraries and some work in the commercial sector with Broadway. Yes — they will look at everything that MCC does.

**Second phase:** Context and Opportunities. What does all this mean? If this is where MCC is, and this is where the environment is, and this is the situation: What does this mean? What are some opportunities? What do we want to look to for the future? This is where AMS does some benchmarking and exemplar work. They also do an internal survey of priorities and perceptions (of the board and staff) to get a sense of internal alignment questions: 1. Where people think some improvements could be made? 2. Where more effort is being expended where it’s not maybe the most important thing MCC does? They also spend a lot of time in this phase bringing everyone together... bringing people together around purpose, vision mission, board/staff alignment. So, you will see board retreat or meeting; and you will also see a meeting with board and staff together.

**Question:** For your staff interviews — is that individual? Or survey-based? What’s your methodology?

AMS has several different input moments: beginning phase (individual interviews); surveys of board and staff; externally - three community input sessions and a community survey. So, there is a fair amount of input.

**Question:** For the board interviews... is that all members of the board? Or just leadership? That’s something we will talk about.

**Third phase:** Strategic Plan — alignment around mission, vision and conceptual goals. And then we put the bricks and mortar together to create the strategic plan, including evaluation and implementation, recommendations.

**Fourth phase:** And then there is an optional monitoring task which we will decide in the end of you want to do. That is AMS’ discipline of coming back for the first three months; then six months and helping with budgeting and how is the plan being implemented moving forward?

If we keep a pace of rigor, we will be done in February 2022 (while working around the holidays). This includes your monthly meetings on-site as well as other work that is being done.
Detailed discussion of First Phase...

Situational Analysis (now, through mid-December 2021)

AMS received a lot of internal documents. They will do a 360-environmental scan as well as operational analysis looking programs, finances, staffing. Look at what’s been going on? Trying to understand MCC more critically and thoroughly. We tend to do this from a ‘lines of business’ standpoint. The board can tell me some of the programs you are concerned that AMS would be including in the analysis.

Opinion expressed: For example, programs such as: How to do something. I’ve submitted a list of classes.

Clarification by Ms. Walter: It may be that we are looking at programs for children; or programs for seniors; theater/visual arts? We will look at drivers: What drives attendance? What drives economics?

Question: Will you be looking at things like competition? Other sources?

Proposed list of interviews: Supervisor John Foust; Deputy County Executive Chris Leonard. 11 Board members — that is up to you all. We will use ZOOM: I will send an invitation to everyone (interview takes 30-35 minutes; confidential).

Standard protocol of questions; we don’t attribute what anyone says. We’re just looking for common themes — no preparation required! We will also speak to the leads of each MCC department.

Question: When would the organization partners be interviewed? Such as Dolley Madison Library...

We hope to structure the community input sessions that way, as opposed to individually – because McLean has so many community organizations to tap into.

Question: We recently hired someone for seniors programming. Where is that reflected in the proposal?

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: It would be under “Classes” - General Programs/Instruction.

Clarification by Ms. Walter: And if there is another person we need to talk to, we will. We’re not rigid!

Competition: AMS’ approach to the environmental scan is broad: they look at direct competitors; partners; competition for the dollar; what’s happening as a changing and growing community (Amazon hqs.). The sports venues have started presenting activities; casinos are turning into competition. There is a lot to look at holistically. AMS also looks at the educational environment; volunteerism in a community — anything that is competing for peoples’ time.

Comparative: We look at Small District 1A-Dranesville compared to the rest of Fairfax Co. Fairfax Co., as compared to Northern Virginia, to really understand the forces in this community. That helps us understand opportunities and challenges for the future.

Question: I love that you do that. It’s really necessary. Have you analyzed the added options (shifting to online; virtual) presented by COVID-19? Have you done the environmental scan in a COVID-19 context as well as a non-COVID-19 context?

As best as possible, AMS is keeping tabs on that issue; it continues to change. We thought by Fall 2021 we would have answers; but we still don’t have answers.

Question: What is your geographic radius? DC? Southern Maryland?

We seek your advice on that point. The DMV is interconnected. MCC is proximate to Washington, DC but at the same time, you are very community-based. So, we want to do a deep-dive on community because I think that’s your primary market, for sure.

Community Listening Session 1 — intentionally scheduled before the survey so that the themes articulated will help inform some of the topics in the survey. This is conceptual. They are perfectly willing to do this more than once in a day so as to catch people when they are available. We will rely on staff heavily in terms of promoting it and getting the word out. AMS is an active-based firm! You will find that we will give you lots to do! An example of a community listening session has people writing down phrases, post-it notes. It gives you feedback in a good way.

Question: How many people participate in each listening session? Are you aiming to have it be first-come-first serve or representative of the demographics of our community?

We need to decide that. AMS can handle whatever is needed. We have even sat in bars when we were having trouble finding people – seriously! Every community is different – this community is very engaged. We can have ‘themed’ sessions: educators and partners; general public. It depends on what we all decide is important. There are three of these –
not meant to be the same people each time; but not meant to be different people each time. They are just different points in the planning process. Typically, more-engaged people stay on. The first one is sort of a catch-all, broad-based and hearing general themes. Then it drills down. The last one is to present the plan and give us community feedback (respond to it).

Opinion expressed: The board is interested in helping with that; so, if we know the parameters, we can also reach out to our social networks to make sure their voices are heard.

Opinion expressed: As a third-year board member, it’s almost impossible to get good community input. The scheduled community input meetings are zilch - people just don’t come. I love the idea where you go out into the community. That’s the only way you will get the true input of all the community rather than just tiny groups of people representing one issue.

Opinion expressed: On the other hand, the internet can advertise for people to come. Maybe that is a vehicle for communication to get people interested in one of these sessions - through MCC webpage; e-newsletter lists.

Opinion expressed: Right. But what I’m saying is that, even though MCC has advertised consistently and significantly, over-and-over again, there still isn’t that input. You will need to come up with more creative ways to get out to the community to receive that input.

Opinion expressed: It could be the targeted sub-communities. The board actually represents a diverse part of McLean. I’m a parent of young children and the PTA’s are a natural point. Two high school students are on the Governing Board and we have senior citizens on this board. We each have our networks (including ethnic connections) that should be heard and may not come through the natural ‘community comment’ process like the folks who are sitting here behind us [from the public].

Comment by Ms. Walter: This is really helpful. We need to get our Task Force together so that we have this kind of input from the board and others. It’s good early-on to know that it’s not a slam-dunk. Because I see a really civic-ly engaged group of people.

Opinion expressed: I was going to suggest free stuff! You can do ticket give-aways... and free food. It might be that we look at neighborhood demographics and target geographic regions or activity-based stuff (pre-PTA meeting); faith-based organizations.

Opinion expressed: Our Board Chair is a census expert and she has told us about how McLean is changing. So, she can give you some thoughts about that.

Community Survey: we want to distribute it as widely as possible. Of course, we’ll send it to all program participants here to get their feedback. But we really want to reach people who are not regulars or don’t even attend at all. We hope to use partner organizations. In the past, we’ve had success getting libraries to agree send to their entire library card e-mail list; or a link in local newspapers. It’s important to hear as many voices as possible from the general public. The Community Listening meetings will target groups; but the survey will be targeted broad-based.

Question: Would it even be possible to stand outside of our local grocery stores with an iPad? We would be willing help with that! We have done that. Absolutely. It’s called “intercept surveys” and it works very well. But it’s a question of training and having volunteer resources.

Opinion expressed: Our youth member mentioned that when there is “free” something, the youth will show up. And it needs to be something that is important to youth. Secondly, a lot of PTA’s three times a year allow non-profits to have a flier to go every child. It’s just a matter of knowing when each school has their own schedule. Executive Director Singh has made contact with several PTA’s in the region, and it’s just a matter of asking. But I know that if it’s a non-profit and it will benefit the community, they will make the allowance to do that.

Opinion expressed: Chesterbrook Elementary wouldn’t allow MCC to publicize because we are a government agency. But you could go to the PTA meetings.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Elaine Tholen (FCPS school board) has agreed to send it out from her e-mail blast.

Question: Would local citizens associations also be a source? Yes – local citizens associations are a great source. And they are a great place to hold community meetings too.

Question: Have you worked with other community centers like ours?
Yes. It’s not about the kind of center—it’s about the kind of community. Different communities have a different approach to participation and we must understand what it is.

Opinion expressed: Faith-based organizations are also very viable in McLean.

Opinion expressed: A lot of people in my neighborhood that are new families probably don’t know about MCC. They were not aware that they pay taxes to support MCC. That’s the kind of outreach we could do as well.

Opinion expressed: I keep thinking of all the realtors and new developers here and have them hand something to new owners.

Summary by Ms. Walter: We love having these ‘kick-off’ meetings because we learn so much! These are placeholders: a certain amount of time and money allocated for public input. If community meetings are a bad idea and intercept surveys are a better idea, we will absolutely switch it out. We just need to hear as much as we can at the appropriate points in the planning process. We are happy to re-work the approach accordingly.

Question: What is the “Defining Success Workshop”?

First, AMS gets all these inputs and bring people together (this group... or a group that we’ve defined). And we go through a 2.5 hour workshop to brief you on everything learned to-date and then, given those inputs, we define: What is the future vision? What is our ideal? We begin the conversation by defining success first... and begin the conversation about purpose, mission and vision, as well.

Question: Do you have a percentage of success for your surveys—for a population of 10,000, do you want to reach a certain percentage? From a statistical standpoint, unless you have a closed distribution, you can’t know what your error rate is. We hope to get hundreds of responses in a community of this size. But we can never tell you +/- 5% because we will not know what the actual distribution was.

Historical progression for arts & culture consumption and appreciation: From an organizational standpoint, cultural organizations used to just scrap it together: being ‘viable’ meant having enough money to pay the bills. So, the big aspiration for decades was just to be sustainable. Sustainable business model—we just want to know that we can make it. Begin with nothing... get some money... get some important work done, be busy... end with no money. And do the whole thing over again next year. That’s not adequate today in terms of being able to adapt and change. We been encouraging our clients to think in terms of “vitality” instead—having resources to reinvest, ending the year with a surplus; thinking about the future; planning and budgeting in 3-year cycles; energy and vitality that brings more community impact. We think about how the audience has changed... how the public benefit has changed. In 1960’s and 1970’s it was about ‘excellence.’ People who appreciated art cared and no one else paid attention. In two decades, boards became more professional and people realized it was a business—these arts groups need to start ‘behaving like a business.’ Efficiency was really valued. One way that was accomplished was by more offerings and including more people (the ‘castle on a hill’ started offering festivals and bringing in more people). In 1990’s, we started having metrics and ‘effectiveness’ was the buzzword: How many people are you reaching? How many times are they coming? Broad-based, still focused on diversity and more inclusion. But the definition of success was about anything that you can count and report back on. What we have gotten to is: this notion of public value = success is defined as ‘entanglement.’ This is a very different notion.

MCC is perfect example of a ‘cultural anchor institution.’ Anchor institutions used to be very embedded in the corporate sector. When all that changed, community leadership started to come out of places that had deep investment in capital assets and weren’t going anywhere. For a long time, it was viewed as “Heads and Meds”—i.e. no civic engagement except universities and hospital systems. But once the corporate system became fluid, they said: we employee a lot of people and we need to compete. They got involved in advancing civic goals. The third asset-laden industry in any community is the arts. This building is not going any place—so, it’s in your vested interest to build community and be in service of the community. This notion of “public value” and ‘entanglement’ is very real for successful arts & cultural venue of any sort = public value. The cultural venue has a vested interest in building community. And the community stands to gain great benefit from the work that you do. That’s ‘entanglement.’ The truly entangled community center/civic organization is at the table—helping Fairfax Co. and McLean with their priorities, as much as that they are gaining benefit from those partners and stakeholders.
DEIA and social justice is a through-line for everything AMS does. In their philosophy of planning deeply, they are making sure our conversations are respectful and inclusive. Making sure we are thinking broadly about DEIA, embracing ambiguity, making room for diverse voices. When we come into an organization, we realize it is at its own level of engagement on these questions. Every person in that organization is at their own level of engagement around these questions; and so, we respect everyone’s beginning point. Fairfax Co. has taken a very strong position as it relates to DEIA. We think MCC’s effort is all consistent and in tandem with how the county is moving.

Question: That’s the external vision. What is the key to success as our internal progression of the board/staff relationship? When you look at other organizations like us, how do you think about that maturity?

We can talk about it as we define our purpose: What is it? How to you define future success?

Question: Can redefining purpose, mission and vision of this community center be something that comes out of this?

We are finding more of our clients being unsettled as to a true understanding of their purpose (perhaps because of COVID-19 and the dramatic last couple of years). MCC’s purpose can change; that might be part of the reason. Is our purpose to engage in-person? Well, I don’t know. Is our purpose to make an active building? A lot of clients think their purpose is to make a building active. Well, if they’ve been successful for the last 18 months and the building has been shuttered – what does that mean about their purpose? So, it will be important to start our conversation before we get to... “What we do”... is to ask: “Why we exist?” For a lot of organizations that is changing... or can change. We will have that conversation.

Question: What is ‘success’ within the organization, as opposed to the external perception of the organization?

Clarification by Ms. Walter: We can talk about future success and that helps us define our purpose. But we can’t agree on success until we’ve defined our purpose. That’s one of the protocol questions: How do you define future success?

Everyone will have an opportunity to talk about that. I think it must start with this conversation about purpose.

- Purpose: Why you do it? And for whom?
- Vision: The impacts you aspire to make.
- Values: How you do it.

We want to understand the environment... What does that mean about opportunities that present to you? Innovation (programming innovation)... staffing... partnerships with civic organizations to expand resources to do our work. Once strategic goals are in place, practically speaking, how does that change MCC? What do we need to do to be able to accomplish that?

What are the one or two issues that Strategic Planning needs to address in order to ensure future success for the McLean Community Center?

1. To educate and 2. To entertain. (Melanie Sletten)

2. To ensure that everybody feels like they have a place here — so it’s not just perceived by the as center for families with very young children or for seniors. But the community perception that I get from people is that there is really nothing for the 18-60 year-olds: there is a big gap in services and programs. We are missing out on a lot of opportunities to serve the community better. (Suzanne Le Menestrel)

3. Not only is there a gap with age 18, but with the OFC Teen Center, it drops off once teenagers get closer to 13 or 14. OFC doesn’t serve high schoolers as well; they have middle school parties. We should focus on high school age/teenager sector as well. (Max Blacksten)

Question from Ms. Walter: Do we need to reimagine OFC now because it’s being used more at the middle-school age? And, what are we doing for high school?

Yes – make sure OFC is engaging high schoolers; and also have programming here at MCC for teenagers as well. (Max Blacksten)

4. Even beyond just trying to engage, or for entertainment, I think making it feel like it’s sort of a home or ‘hub’ for everyone. It’s hard to entertain teens at MCC. I don’t think we strive to do that — but even being a place for sex
education or mental health resources – there are other ways that this can be a hub for different age groups beyond entertainment.  (Shivani Saboo)

5. Among my friends, senior programs. And programs not necessarily for seniors exclusively, but programs that seniors too would be interested in.  (Melanie Sletten)

6. I'm a big believer in 'culture eats strategy for breakfast' concept. Are we creating a culture that the board can control and staff can collaborate in a shared purpose? Are we creating a possibly differentiable experience for different groups within our community? Parents of young children – what is the experience that I can expect from MCC vs. fellow parents of teenagers vs. a fellow board member who has an interest in seniors? Can and should MCC provide that for everybody? If we decide that's what we want to do, how do we then enable that processed experience, going forward.  (Rasheq Rahman)

I think the answer is: Yes – because we all pay taxes!  (Suzanne Le Menestrel)

7. For all the issues being talked about, it's not just improving structured programming. There is already lot of structure here (hiring people for big shows at The Alden or having painting classes for 8 weeks)... but also having a better unstructured environment for people who just want to come without planning ahead or giving a commitment for several weeks. I think that's also really important.  (Shivani Saboo)

8. We’ve talked about having some kind of a café because we are so far from restaurants or coffee shops. Making it more welcoming where you could just hang-out: have nice outdoor furniture and a shady area as a gathering place. Whether you are coming here to meet up with people or staying here while you wait for a class.  (Lisa Mariam)

9. There are two aspects: I come to MCC to experience something (art or performance)... or... I want to learn how to prepare the art. I want to create the art and have something to show you. That can be everything from dance to creating sculpture – it’s the participation: being part of it and actually doing it, not just experiencing it as an observer.  (Bill Glikbarg)

Comment by Ms. Walter: A huge trend in arts & culture generally is "immersive theater" – where people can participate and create that environment.

10. For me, it's 1. trying to get as many people engaged as possible. One of my major things was trying to get some type of a gathering incentive (like a wine event). Would it be that difficult to have a coffee bar here where people can gather and relax? A lot of teens would welcome something like that – an incentive as a place to gather. And… 2. cultural representation of the community. Demographics are changing in McLean – each culture making this their home have a lot to showcase; and it’s important that others see it and experience it.  (Maria Foderaro-Guertin)

11. Because of what we lived through last year, emerging technology is important to continue (leveraging technology). A lot of people participated virtually. Having more inclusive, culturally-diverse programming. McLean has changed in the last 20-30 years. Demographics now are different – there are people living here who are different. We need to learn how to respect and connect with them. Having different cultural programming based on a lot of different breakout demographics: age, culture, race, ethnicity. Looking at the numbers – the breakout of McLean has been diversified in the last 10 years. It has changed, and we must move toward the future (which is now). To me, that’s one of the most important things – that we need to be more open to difference. And we need to be accepting of “different.” Having that as part of our strategic future would make it easier to be welcomed in McLean. We have a lot of friends who are young families that are very different than us. It’s always great to see the programing that has happened so far has exposed a lot of us to different types of cultures: dance performance two weeks ago, the outdoor programming- 3 events in the last 8 days: 1,200 people came to one of the events! That’s the kind of thing we need to look at. Getting technological resources… bringing in the youth… and engaging people in new ways.  (Barbara Zamora-Appel)

12. To be more inclusive, MCC needs to offer programs that are affordable to everyone. We can reach out to some of the people who aren’t attending the programs today because they can’t afford it…or else they choose not to pay for the prices we charge.  (Melanie Sletten)
13. You are asking what strategic planning needs to do... but I think we shouldn’t be so narrow. We need to be broader—this needs to be more about ‘vision.’ 1. One of the biggest things for MCC is stakeholder engagement: How are we going to engage with all stakeholders in repeatable, scalable way? How are we going to continue to do that when that’s something we struggle with significantly? 2. Relevance—how do we really be a relevant community center? Our tagline is “the center of it all.” MCC is not the “center of it all.” So, if we want to be the “center of it all,” how do we get to be the “center of it all”? 3. One of the biggest things important to me is that MCC becomes a model for environmental sustainability. We’ve got to think about that because this world needs it. It affects us because we’ve had floods in the building. (Carla Post)

14. To piggyback on what Carla said, McLean is very spread out geographically. We’ve have our downtown area—McLean H.S.; then Langley H.S. area is more rural and spread out. McLean is very disparate. MCC isn’t exactly in the center of it all. People to go DC, Arlington, Tysons, Alexandria—so, we can’t be all things to everybody. But we can serve a unique niche for the people who live in the broad community. But what is that niche? It means different things to different people. I think one thing we can do is be a place that integrates these kind of disparate neighborhoods and creates more of a sense of community. I very rarely go to the Langley neighborhood area. And you probably never come over here except for MCC meetings! (Suzanne Le Menestrel)

15. We will learn from you and your organization’s experience—we are a taxpayer funded public institution. As we learned over this FOIA training, the way the board communicates, collaborate and work with staff can be challenging. A lot of us want to figure out: How do we be innovative while respecting the rules? And frankly, some things are called ‘rules’ but they are basically 50-years of precedent? Is that necessary? And is that a path of moving forward? Things can be changed. It’s just a matter of standing up and saying: there is a better way to do this: use technology or whatever to move it forward. Frankly, I’m tired of being told that: it’s always been done this way... or... There is a rule for it (that no one understands). (Rasheq Rahman)

16. Another thing about being culturally-diverse: it’s great to have cultural events and do more of those (we are trying); but it’s just as important, if not more important, to empower those cultural communities to be able to use MCC facilities and resources that we have with low barriers to entry. It doesn’t need to be MCC hosting cultural events all the time. It could even just be—we have a relationship with those communities and they can feel like it’s easy and comfortable to use these facilities that they pay for, for their own events to celebrate their culture. (Shivani Saboo)

17. We’ve had people in here who are terribly negative on trying to support diversity—trying to show some of the diversity of human beings. We get people in these meetings who scream at us for doing that. I don’t know how to balance that. I’m interested in how you get a good segment of our society, because they are very vocal; and it’s just a few people. I sit here and it’s hard to listen to this—because I want to support the community. I know there is diversity and I want to be respectful of that. It’s really hard at some of our meetings where people have no understanding of that. So, I don’t know how to go through this strategic planning process and how to quiet down those voices and convince those people—because they’re extremely noisy on issues. I’m all in favor of trying to bring us together as a community, but wow, it is hard listening to that. (Bill Glikbarg)

What are the planning guardrails? Is everything on the table?

1. We can agree on what the guardrails are as a board. Is it policy or is it precedent? My view is: I would err on having those sacred cows and then be told later that this is what you should do. When I think of innovation, I’m open to “blue sky.” And then let the environment decide on the final requirements. (Rasheq Rahman)

2. I’ve heard it said that there are some documents that we can’t change because if we change a practice, we have to get permission from the county. I would consider those ‘sacred cows.’ (Melanie Sletten)

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Yes—we have to figure out what we can and can’t do. MCC is a county agency—we have to follow county policies. We want to make sure we don’t run afoot of the county policies. We either must update the MOU or follow it the way it is right now.
3. The board could be changed to an appointed board – by our county supervisor. It doesn’t have to be elected; it can be changed. That is on the table: it is written into the MOU that we are an elected board. But it changing the governing structure could be on the.  
(Suzanne Le Menestrel)

4. I understand the rules; and the rules are there. But a lot of rules have led to precedents for 40 years that were convenient for past boards or past leaders of this organization. If we’re truly going to do this work and set a plan for the future (we may not do this again for 10 years) – let’s have this conversation. And we’re going make this decision at this moment so we can have that context. So, when we get asked by the public: “Why did you do this?” we put everything out on the table and this is what we came to.  
(Rasheq Rahman)

5. To expand on what he is saying – with the whole ‘precedent vs. rules vs. guidelines’ and how that affects how the public views what we do as a board: a lot gets lost in communication. Where some people are making the actual rules and they are handing it to other people… who are then handing it down to us. What the actual guidelines are vs. what is black-and-white keeps getting lost like a game of ‘telephone.’ That is really frustrating.  
(Shivani Saboo)

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: The county is also doing a strategic plan concurrently. So MCC’s strategic plan will have to roll-up into those plans. Otherwise, we’re tracking three different sets of metrics. Timeline: the DRAFT is out already; BoS will vote on it in November. So it is perfect timing.

Comment by Ms. Walter: I would offer a ‘friendly amendment’: for another public sector client, we are actually referencing their plan and explaining where we’re not aligning to it. As long as it’s in reference and you can understand why, it makes sense.

6. A guardrail also is: If we do not have enough stakeholder engagement and a response from the larger public, then how do we even know what is? That actually informs what the guardrails are: it cannot just be our opinions. We are elected officials and collectively, have been elected by many people, so we can represent those individuals. But I would love to have input even into the guardrails. I think human rights and humanity are something we must consider.  
(Carla Post)

7. I agree with what Shivani said – if there are rules being passed down to us, it is very fluid. What can we do? What can we not do? Not only what pertains to the MCC Governing Board as a whole, but also just guidelines that we can follow. I want to reiterate that point: I think it’s very important to know the distinction of what can and what can’t be done... and what goes against the guidelines. Sometimes it’s really confusing – the more that’s being passed down, it gets twisted.  
(Ivy Chen)

Question: Please explain how does this goes into the strategic plan? Part of what comes out of this may be more restrictive rules... or guidelines?

Comment by Ms. Walter: I’m hearing degrees of confusion about roles, responsibilities and guidelines. Clarity of framework is easily a strategic planning issue.

8. A lot of organizations (govt. private sector) go through a change every so often. Regardless of timing, there is always an exercise of updating something that has become quite outdated. The MOU as it reads right now is outdated. Given technology and an easily accessible environment – that MOU is not. We cannot meet virtually because the MOU says we can’t; we must meet in-person. That’s just a tiny example. So guardrails – yes, there are rules that we must follow. But like any rule – there comes a time where it must be updated and changed to be inclusive of the environment that has changed. MCC as it was 30 years ago is not the same community center now.

That’s not the same – the board is not the same. People that come to events and instruction are not the same. So, that’s the kind of thing that we need to consider.  
(Barbara Zamora-Appel)

Clarification by Ms. Walter: Back to the previous question - at the end of the plan, AMS Planning & REsearch will have ‘implications and recommendations’: 1. This is where we want to go. 2. This is our purpose. 3. This is how we want to accomplish that. 4. And in order to do that, we have to revisit the structural situation.
9. When I was elected on the board, I got the list of the MOU and decisions backdated to the 1990's. That was before I was even born! Revisiting those and making sure they are all not going to bind us if we want to create something in the future — that we would not be bound by something that was written a long time ago. *(Max Blacksten)*

10. I was just going to mention timing and expectations as guardrails we hit: immediate expectations — everything NOW. We want everything all the time because it’s great! And yet, it’s hard to prioritize. Or there is a ramp-up of budgeting... planning... staffing... execution... implementation. That often is where we run into cross-purposes. *(Holly Novak)*

11. Clarification by Executive Director Singh: The other guardrail is calendar-wise. We begin planning for the current fiscal year from February – May, looking at previous years. That’s how we back into the dates we put in place. So hopefully, it will help us get your strategies into the next fiscal year’s budget.

Summary remarks by Ms. Walter: To wrap up - this is just the beginning! If you have additional thoughts, Daniel can give you my e-mail and you can communicate with me directly.

**TIMELINE: (dates for community engagement)** Theoretically we are through and having our “Define Success Workshop” in the beginning of December. The second phase of work brings us through January 2022. Community Listening sessions - we need to let people know about these things. Do we know about the format yet? We need to determine what that is together. This is a very compressed timeline — trying to respectfull of your mandate. It would be better if we could stretch it out a little bit. Clarification by Executive Director Singh: The dates are flexible

Opinions expressed: I don’t think November 1 is realistic. But we don’t want to put into the holiday season because then you will have no input because everyone is planning their holiday gatherings.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: November is hard also because of the election and then Veterans Day holiday and Thanksgiving.

Comment by Ms. Walter: We will have to tackle this timeline piece offline and map it out.

**Several questions and opinions regarding the whole board involved... or a smaller work team (task force):**

**Question from Executive Director Singh:** Do you want to ask them if they want to have the whole board involved in this process? Or just a smaller task group?

Clarification by Ms. Walter: AMS has recommended a small 4-5 person task force to lead this process, with regular reporting to the board (so it’s not leaving anyone out). Do we ALL need to discuss the format of the Community Input Session? Or should we have a smaller group of people wrestle that to the ground? Typically, we would ask a board to appoint a Task Force of board members or one or two key staff members. It’s easier to convene just a few people more regularly. But it is whatever is the will of the group.

**Question:** The rule is that if three or more board members work on something together, it becomes a public meeting. *Is there a procedure within Fairfax County rules where this group can be seen as not a meeting?*

No. It is a public meeting. We would just need to announce it. Board members must be here in-person; and the guests can participate remotely.

**Question:** How many times are you talking about meeting over the two months — once a week? Twice a week? Because that’s a little hard to do in-person. Or can we do subgroups? We can work 2 to 1: assigned separate tasks. That’s a procedural guardrail. You could identify 3-4 areas and then give a group of two people that responsibility to report back to you on it. We can do that work more regularly.

**Question:** How will the members for this Task Force be chosen? I would like to volunteer *(Melanie Sletten).*

**Comment by Vice-Chair Post:** I have a feeling that everyone is interested in this!

**Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel:** Whatever buckets you have — everyone is invested in this process! Once you have that conversation with Daniel, we can coordinate how it’s going to work. The hardest thing will be our schedules. I already have so many meetings - adding will be hard. But we’ll make time and it’s not a problem. It will be a matter of being flexible.

**Question by Vice-Chair Post:** Is there anyone who doesn’t want to be involved? None! **All want to be involved.**
Comment by Ms. Walter: Another suggestion is to have strategic planning be a standing item on your monthly agendas. And then we call upon different board members to run things by— or bounce ideas off of, in an informal way.

Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: I think it’s knowing the level of effort that is required for each of the different things that you need help from us — that would define how we can help. Because if you go by this existing timeline, it’s going to be very hard to do everything that you want to do with all of us. But if you can have some flexibility for the schedule— especially for the Community Listening Sessions— because I think everyone of us is very interested in helping with that. Once we have that schedule, then we can start helping with other things. When do you think we can have it?

Question: Would it also be helpful for AMS Planning & Research to know our areas of professional expertise? And what networks we have? For example, I’m a trained social scientist, so I have expertise in that area. And so do other people.

ACTION ITEM: Yes — we will send out a mini-survey: if these are our needs, put your name next to the market analysis piece.

Question: Do you have any strategies for our youth members to connect with our peers? Yes.

Comment by Vice-Chair Post: I don’t want to be a Debbie Downer about this. I know we all really want to do this. But I also know that it’s going to be harder to get it done in our timeframe. So let’s all think about it.

Clarification by Executive Director Singh: Going longer also will increase our bottom-line bill. I’m just making you aware!

Opinion expressed: I think Board Chair Zamora-Appel should make a decision.

Comment by Chair Zamora-Appel: I want to know the level of effort: I need to know what is required of everyone. Because we can divide and conquer: if you have four strategic tasks that you need us to help you with, we have enough board members to divide up the tasks and then have action items with due dates. Every time we meet with you, we will be prepared. I don’t believe in coming in and just trying to figure out things. If we come in with our strategy in place, we will be more successful with the concern that has just been raised.

Opinion expressed: But on the other hand, I would like someone from the consultant to brief us on what is happening (progress) at every monthly meeting.

Yes – It will be a recurring agenda segment (10 minutes at every monthly meeting).

Opinion expressed: We might consider using the committee structure to keep everyone included, if it’s possible to break it down into the committees: Programs & Outreach; Finance; Capital Facilities; Elections & Nominations; 50th Anniversary.

*The list of committees was provided to AMS in the background materials.

Concluding remarks by Ms. Walter: Thank you! I look forward to working with you all. It’s been very energizing!

Question: Before you go, are there any words of wisdom about how to NOT go about this? Or anything you have observed that you would say: BEWARE? Be very careful... or... Try to consider this...

Clarification by Ms. Walter: There are a few things:
1. Words in a strategic plan really matter. But wordsmithing by group is really horrible. We won’t do that. We will have to find a way to take it offline and then have people take input and then come back.
2. A clear process for decision-making is important. By the time we talk to each board member, we will propose some guiding principles. Having guiding principles are really helpful.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Christopher Henzel: MCC published on its website an Agenda for tonight’s meeting which did not provide for public comment. I was informed in an e-mail from MCC staff that I would not be allowed to make a public comment at tonight’s meeting. I responded by noting the MCC’s MOU with the county Board of Supervisors, which makes it clear that the public
shall be invited to comment at both Board meetings and committee meetings. The MOU also provides that "No advance notification shall be required for such public comments." Sometime after this, someone in the MCC or on the board, decided to reverse his position, and I was informed that I would be allowed to speak.

So... McLean taxpayers have questions for the board:

1. When will the board hold the public discussion about its funding of the June 26 Drag Queen Story Hour for children? At its July 15 meeting the board undertook to hold such a discussion.
2. When will the board publish the Minutes of the July 15 meeting? The agenda for the board’s July 28 meeting as well as the agenda for the September 22 meeting scheduled a consideration of these Minutes, but at both meetings, certain members of the board requested that the Minutes not be approved. Why the delay?
3. During its August 4 meeting, the board discussed the DRAFT of a new rule restricting public participation in board meetings. What has become of this proposal?
4. The board held two meetings (Sept. 8 and Sept. 29) from which it excluded the public. I’ve reviewed the board’s records for the past two years and there have been no other “closed meetings.” Clearly, something unusual is going on behind the board’s closed doors. What is it?

The board has attempted to operate outside its own rules and is making decisions in a non-transparent manner. McLean taxpayers should be alarmed.

Chair Zamora-Appel responded by stating aloud: Thank you for your comments.

ADJOURNMENT
Chair Zamora-Appel asked if there was any further business. Nothing else was mentioned as a topic for discussion this evening. Chair Zamora-Appel adjourned the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted – Holly Novak, Executive Assistant to the Governing Board