



**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-acclaimed 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 i.e. 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 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 ½ and ½. 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 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 is with 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. 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; an interview takes 30-35 minutes and is 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 HQ). 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 i.e. 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.

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 that should be heard and may not come through the natural 'community comment' process like the folks who are sitting here behind us.

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 civically 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 i.e. 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 of the 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've 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 employ 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's 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 do 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.

Mission: What you do.

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.
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.
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.

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.

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.

5. Among my friends, senior programs. And programs not necessarily for seniors exclusively, but programs that seniors too would be interested in.
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? 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.
7. I think the answer is: Yes – because we all pay taxes.
8. For all the issues being talked about, it's not just improving structured programming. There is already lot of structure here such as hiring people for big shows at The Alden or having painting classes for 8 weeks... but also having a better un-structured 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.
9. 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.
10. There are two aspects: I come to MCC to experience something ... 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.
Comment by Ms. Walter: A huge trend in arts & culture generally is “immersive theater” – where people can participate and create that environment.
11. 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. 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
12. Because of what we lived through last year, emerging technology is important to continue. 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. It has changed, and we must move toward the future. 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. 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. Getting technological resources... bringing in the youth... and engaging people in new ways.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. To piggyback on what was 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 go to 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?

16. 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, collaborates and works 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.
17. Another thing about being culturally-diverse: it's great to have cultural events and do more of those; 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.
18. 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 know there is diversity and I want to be respectful of that.

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.
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.'
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 afoul 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 table.
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.
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. What the actual guidelines are vs. what is black-and-white keeps getting lost like a game of 'telephone.' That is really frustrating.

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.

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. Sometimes it’s really confusing – the more that’s being passed down, it gets twisted.

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 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.

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.
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.
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: 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 be respectful 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.

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. 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

Opinion expressed: 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: 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 we can have some flexibility for the schedule – especially for the Community Listening Sessions – because I think every one 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.

Opinion expressed: 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 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