



**2022-2023 MCC Governing Board
Programs & Outreach Committee
March 29, 2023 6:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

- Committee members present:** *in-person:* Anna Bartosiewicz – Chair; Lisa Mariam; Charlotte Loving
virtual: Ari Ghasemian (*Madison, WI; 5th virtual*)
- Committee members absent:** Melanie Sletten
- MCC Staff present:** Betsy May-Salazar, Executive Director; Sarah Schallern Treff, Performing Arts Director; Holly Novak, Executive Assistant; Mike Fisher, General Programs Director; Sabrina Anwah, PIO; David Craig, Graphic Artist & Webmaster; Kyle Corwin, Social Media manager; Catherine Nesbitt, Special Events Manager
- Guests:** (none)

CONVENE MEETING

Chair Bartosiewicz convened a meeting of the Programs & Outreach Committee of the Governing Board of the McLean Community Center on March 29, 2023, at 6:38 p.m. It was open to the public attending in-person and the proceedings were audio-recorded. No changes to the agenda were requested; it was adopted by acclamation. Two feature videos of recent MCC events were shown: Parent/Child Sweetheart Dance, 2/24, and Fiesta del Sol, 3/25. Participants of all ages enjoyed these wonderful occasions!

Sabrina Anwah took the opportunity to express special recognition of her colleagues on MCC PIO team!

Dave Craig, Graphic Designer & Webmaster: 7-years employed at MCC; has instituted several improvements including developing and improving on MCC’s brand and innovating our processes. He introduced us to CANTO - a web-based software system that organizes our digital content (images, videos and audio recordings). He upgraded our website from Joomla to WordPress. Dave also handles a huge project load with amazing creativity.

Social Media Manager, Kyle Corwin: Kyle creates content for and manages multiple social media platforms. He capably designs print jobs and writes the instructor and staff “Spotlight” features for the Program Guide. He handles Google ad accounts and is editor of the community partners e-newsletter, “MCC Connection.” Kyle is an excellent photographer and videographer of MCC events.

New team member, **Julia Jones, Administrative Assistant**, has done exceptional effort organizing our bill paying process, maintaining our community connections distribution list, updating clipping files and adding subscribers to the Constant Contact distribution.

PROGRAM GUIDE REVIEW - FORMAT, DISTRIBUTION

As MCC wants to continually improve in sustainability and good stewardship, this presentation explained:

1. the value of the Program Guide and its goals of communication;
2. what we currently produce, and
3. what we plan to do in the future – by giving an overview of the process, history of the Program Guide; benefits of this printed piece. Also examining what other county agencies produce (trends and best practices) and possible future options.

Mailing costs: Prior to 2023, the Program Guide was mailed to MCC’s 18K tax district residents. All residents of 22101 live within the tax district - mailed at bulk rate of \$.23 per piece. The other zip codes in the tax district are individually addressed: if mail to an individual address is sent to Merrifield (mail hub) cost - \$.81; if mail to the residential address goes to Fairfax hub, then it costs \$1.00 per piece.



Benefits of the Program Guide: MCC is a member of LERN Resource Network - world's largest continuing education and lifelong learning association. LERN has found that print brochures drive enrollment. This fact is confirmed by all evaluation surveys done by MCC (phone survey; strategic plan survey; Public Hearing survey) – the Program Guide is among the top two ways that people hear about MCC. Print brochures are “push” oriented – they arrive in the hands of the reader; the reader does not have to “go to get them.” **Even in the age of increased ‘pull’ marketing, ‘push’ strategies are still crucial.** We directly reach the person at their home; it’s already there. Print brochures are often easier to read and navigate than digital versions. Print brochures are kept, shared and re-read, accessible to all household members – while a digital product on social media is usually only visible to that person’s individual account.

Best practices & trends:

More cost-effective printer (rather than Fairfax Co. Print Shop): FCPA - every park and rec center in Fairfax Co. is represented in ParkTakes (145 pages); approx. 100,000 subscribers. Cindy Fortuno of FCPA said they now use a Midwest-based printer in Ohio (Freeport). Paper weight on ParkTakes is 40-lb., while MCC’s is usually 70-lb. paper. Savings of \$40,000 were realized on the first issue produced by this printer -very impressive. Production cycle: 10 days to print and deliver by truck to Merrifield (ready to be mailed); the printer also distributes to all FCPL branches. Virginia Recreation & Parks Society spends \$1M per year producing their printed guides; that’s how valuable they find them to be.

Comparison to Reston Community Center: Their 80-page program guide is mailed to 30,000 district residents, using the same Midwest printer - Freeport. Cost is about \$27,000; in comparison, MCC’s Fall guide was 52 pages and cost \$25,000 for 18,000 copies (Reston has significant savings, comparatively). Reston has done two guides with this vendor which they are happy with. Production cycle: Reston’s guide is now mailed three times per year; usually receive 1,000 additional copies to have at RestonCC. The printed guides are so popular, those 1,000 copies run out quickly! RestonCC still prints their camp guide through Fairfax Co. Print Shop because it’s a smaller document and less expensive to produce. As competitors, the fact that Reston is mailing out but we are not disadvantages MCC.

Items received by mail are equitable to the community: In not mailing the Winter/Spring Guide nor Summer Program Guide, it becomes an equity issue because it limits access to the elderly, for those who have English as a second language, and for those without access to transportation or computers. In making a decision not to mail the Program Guide, it’s with the assumption that everyone has a computer at home and that everyone has the ability to come pick-up a Program Guide if they want to. That is not necessarily true.

Why keep the printed Program Guide as a mail piece? **Because it supports our strategic plan.**

“Be Visible” – many people say they have never been to MCC and have never heard of it. Mailing to each household in the tax district brings MCC directly into the homes of district residents. It helps our visibility: even if you haven’t been here, you know it exists and we have reached everyone in the area. We also do distribution at public libraries and some outside distribution.

“Welcome Global Community” – MCC Program Guide in the mail serves as a personal invitation to new residents and patrons whom we have not yet met.

“Invite Discovery” – it showcases MCC’s wonderful and varied offerings and all the things that residents who want to build community and be involved in their community can do.

“Showcase excellence” – high-quality, excellent graphic design treatment of all the significant information. We include in the Program Guide direct patron comments and quotes about MCC staff and programs.

“Model Sustainability/Good Stewardship” – We want to reduce environmental impact and printing/ mailing costs as a long-range focus. But we don’t want to do it at the cost of losing one of our major marketing pieces.

MCC’s plan moving forward:

1. Reduce the size of the guide considerably by restricting the length of descriptions and revising design elements. Specifics still to be decided but that is the new philosophic approach.

2. Reduce weight of the paper used from 70-lb. to 40-lb. or lower (if possible) and use a self-cover. Fairfax Co. Print Shop cannot do lower-weight paper. Web-based presses are much larger and can accommodate very long runs and thinner paper.
3. We want to establish a relationship with a printer located outside of this area if we can save money.
4. We want to include the cost of mailing preparation services in the printing contract to streamline the process. Currently, we go through a printer at the county, then have a fulfillment house prepare the documents for the mailing, and then it goes out. A comprehensive printing contract would result in time and cost savings.
5. We want to mail the Fall 2023 Program Guide to tax district residents again, as has been done in the past.

Our Program Guide is an important part of MCC's marketing effort. And even more effective and equitable when it's mailed to tax district residents' homes. It's also an effective tool for MCC to attract new patrons as it is widely distributed in the community as well. Making needed changes to deal with the additional costs and environmental effects of printing and mailing the brochure are a high priority of the staff and are being fully embraced.

Q&A

Can we measure how not having it in peoples' mailboxes may have affected program attendance?

MCC staff opinion is that [the lack of mailing] had an impact; but because of an upswing of expanding programs and more people going out post Covid, we're not seeing a direct correlation in reduced attendance and not mailing the guide. However, anecdotally several people have mentioned that they don't know what's happening right now at MCC. And then they realize that they did not receive the Program Guide at home.

Summary by Executive Director May-Salazar: We need a few touch points where MCC is getting in the door – and it's not an “opt in.” The approach is to mail the guide and it will be in the households. All the measures above enumerated about ways we can cut back on paper and this will reduce cost and impact on the environment. There are other things we are doing to supplement the fact of not mailing it – such as postcards. We want to commit to three mailed program guides throughout the year. We can evaluate also the other pieces being mailed and perhaps cut back or combine them. Being visible is the most important thing we can be. Even when the program guide was being mailed to all the households, it was a struggle to get people to realize that MCC is here. So, the fact that we decided not to mail it once or twice did not help us. The research has been very fruitful: finding out that others have left the county Print Shop and found a much cheaper and more efficient way to print.

Is it possible to produce a guide in newsprint and a little more recyclable?

Ace is now put in the *Washington Post*; but it is not of great quality. We want to do something in-between: something that people will keep (newsprint becomes a throwaway). We want the MCC Program Guide to remain a designed piece, but there is the option of a lower grade paper that will help the environment.

When people register, is it possible to ask: “How did you hear about this program?”

We do ask that; and in looking at the results, the top two answers are: 1. word-of-mouth and 2. the program guide. We also ask registrants if they want to join our e-newsletter; we get new subscribers that way.

Bulk rate vs. First Class mailing: Another option considered was bulk rate vs. First Class mailing. The advantage of First Class mailing is that someone can opt out from our mailing list - to not have it mailed to them. But the cost of that is prohibitive; for us to take on such cost for the purpose of giving people an opt-out is not worth it. The fact we can mail bulk rate for all of 22101 is phenomenal. And then we have a handful of others that aren't bulk rate. But it does mean that if people don't want to receive the Program Guide anymore, they must call the Post Office and ask that ALL bulk mail not be delivered to their home. Sending postcards as our only marketing piece is not effective because those go by bulk mail and they may not get delivered or are easily lost. Being small, they may get stuck in something; or the postman just deems as trash.

How can we maintain high print quality?

A concern about going to a cut-rate printer would be, if it's a noticeable decrease in quality, then many more people would throw it out rather than keeping it around. It is often the second or third time you leaf through the MCC program guide where you decide to sign-up for an event or class. We should realize that often something costs less for a reason. It is recommended to see samples of print quality first before making a decision.

Comment by Sabrina Anwah: We have been given some other options that were rejected because of poor quality. We don't intend to reduce the quality.

Clarification by Executive Director May-Salazar: We are trying to be responsive to a previous board decision to stop mailing the MCC Program Guide - for environmental reasons and also cost issues. We are being conscious and respectful of those concerns. We're trying to propose a different scenario of some concessions in the size and the paper weight in order to be more environmentally sensitive while still being able to get the marketing results and impact we need.

PUBLIC HEARING ON FY2025 PROGRAMS - DEBRIEF

The written comment period for March 22 Public Hearing on FY2025 Programs continues through COB today.

1. We are interested in your feedback about the introductory presentation as setting the context for what MCC does with incoming public input.

Consider a different format for the annual Public Hearing on Programs. Set it up differently: people might open up and talk more if seated at tables in small groups in Community Hall with staff and board members facilitating at each table. Make it more conversational with a series of questions: What do you like about MCC? What do you think could be better? The current format feels too stiff. Calling it a "hearing" seems judicial, which is a off-putting to people. It is probably intimidating for a lot of people to actually speak up in that type of situation. We might get more feedback if it were a fun setting; 'gamify' it in some way! And not just open-endedly asking: "What do you think?" But asking questions that guide the responses in some way. Instead of getting random information during the Public Hearing, request answers to specific questions: What do you like about it? What do you not like about it?

Knowing the bureaucratic reasons of what we must maintain, we can look into considering a new style of format. Thinking through within the parameters of what must be done: What we can do differently?

Pursue the idea to offer free training to the community for emergency preparedness (expressed by the resident who gave a comment about free CPR). That was really interesting and is definitely something we want to follow-up on. **ACTION ITEM:** We will follow up on that option (public comment by Kevin Kierce).

2. The survey was added to the process this year; it is still open and we need to decide whether to close it for the Public Hearing on FY2025 Programs duration or let it run a while longer. 17 responses received so far. We're willing to keep it open – there is no reason to close it out. It is valuable information being collected; it is not time-bound.

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION: CYCLICAL SURVEY *fall timeframe

First we must go one level up to think about the purpose... the research goals; and let those goals dictate the actual survey questions.

It's most important to develop categories and buckets of things to look at: age demographics; type of program (six-week duration; weekend program, evening programs; one-off workshop). We need to get all those layers. This is important because someone may want something very specific but doesn't want it to last for 16 weeks – they want a one-time workshop. What works for everyone? We need to be able to consolidate ideas into groups of subjects. It could be easier to process the information if the responses fall within general categories. **Because the way that information comes to us now is random, one-off comments, it is difficult to put priority weight to anything.**

Workshop-style setting may be better to elicit useful public feedback. Also, some people expect a direct response – “What did you do with my idea?” And that’s not the purpose of this data gathering – so how do we clarify that? A workshop setting might work to get this type of feedback.

Value of open-ended questions: There is still room for people to write something in, always, if there is something we missed. And with the strategic plan, that will help guide public input: “Here is the strategic plan and within that, we are emphasizing these things. What would you like to see in these areas?”

Value of multiple choice or scale rating questions: For youth responding to surveys, if it is multiple choice or a simple scale to rate something, everyone is willing to answer if it is super quick. But if it is ‘free response,’ people just close the tab and don’t want to bother doing it. The rating questions on a scale of 1 to 5 – youth really like that.

Caution about open-ended questions: Ends up skewing the responses somewhat if it’s open-ended. The only people who will answer those are generally somebody who is very upset about something. Or they are very [strong opinionated]. The open-ended comments seemed to be saying: “Keep it up.” And then some people were also very vocally saying: “Do not do this.” It gets both extremes, neither of which is very helpful. Making it easier to fill out questions would be good.

Comment by Executive Director May-Salazar: We just received a lot of individual suggestions, which is very skewed.

Something that is a great example of ‘full-circle’ is SIA – something that was a noticeable void and now it’s not.

That’s a good success story of responding to public comment about cost of programs for seniors and frequency and diversity. We’ve been able to address a lot of those previous comments.

Further discussion: cyclical survey instrument (approach recommended by Executive Director May-Salazar)

We’ve had initial conversations regarding survey and tying it to deliverables and measurables of strategic plan. We plan to have a standard set of questions that we give out after every program to start to assemble survey results for everything, across-the-board. Reston CC’s goals are a good model about “quality of life”: “Does this improve your quality of life?” We will evaluate ALL our after-program surveys to make sure to have a consistent set of questions. Then we will look to the Fall 2023 survey – a bigger survey to go out, and then in Spring 2024 at the Public Hearing we can report on survey results. I see these in tandem: a report in spring and the survey in the fall.

NEXT STEPS: *questions by Chair Bartosiewicz*

Timing: *So, the thinking would be that the first iteration of the cyclical survey would come out in autumn 2023?*

Clarification by Executive Director May-Salazar: Yes. And then we will be able to report on that data for the spring 2024 Public Hearing. Then whatever data we gather there can feed into the survey for the next year.

Coordination for thorough input both by board members and MCC staff

As the survey is being developed between now and autumn 2023, do we have some sort of touch points between the staff and the board to have open lines of communication about it, to keep board informed on work of staff and ensure everyone is looped-in to the process on a high level.

The Programs & Outreach Committee could be the vehicle for this reporting— Chair Bartosiewicz can report on discussion to the rest of the board. We would like it grounded to a committee for this kind of conversation to be had - making sure it meets everyone’s expectations and get everyone’s ideas on it.

EVENT LIST – UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BOARD MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Chair Bartosiewicz encouraged all board members to please review this list and participate as they are able.

Parking Lot Sale: We hold it here at MCC parking lot, renting about 60 spaces in lower lot. There will be a “kids’ row” and an “adult” area; children ages 5-15 can sell their gently-used items, with parental supervision only. The goal is to promote entrepreneurial and math skills, as well as being fun. DJ will provide music. Vendor will sell coffee – 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. It’s a fun event and a great way the community comes out – usually 1,200 people attend. It’s a great opportunity to clear your attic or your basement!



WE NEED HELP: To unload cars: helping people in the 2 hours prior – as they drive in, to unload their items and then direct them to parking. And the same thing: to get everyone back out at the end of the event.

Earth Day – 9 a.m. to 12 noon: a drive-thru event strictly for McLean tax district residents. Collecting paint cans, bicycles for Africa, giving away seed packets and tree saplings; unload bulk items for Habitat for Humanity or Goodwill. Recycled art display – organized by “Art with Ms. Pam.” She is on the board of MPA and does a wonderful job of collecting recycled art from all the schools in McLean district.

WE NEED HELP: composting of food scraps; putting the art up; taking cans of paint from cars; taking bikes out; directing people and answering questions; giving out seed packets, unloading art; unloading cans of paint from cars; unloading file boxes for shredding.

SpringFest: WE NEED HELP: there is always help needed for the line for pictures with the Easter bunny; directing people and assisting with egg hunt (3,000 count!); The children are like Pied Piper – they follow you! Your help is always needed.

BLKSMTH is offering a gallery pop-up in Community Hall (6:30 – 8:30 p.m. tomorrow evening). If you’ve seen his Instagram posts, he does things with grass and flower petals. We will recreate that inside Community Hall to take selfies to take overhead shots (in the genie hoist).

“The Good Humor Men” – it is light humor. Come and enjoy these great comedians! Comp. tickets are available. The three comedians will take the stage together to take questions.

Board engagement on social media platforms: We would love to have board engagement on MCC social media platforms and helping to push out “likes.” Because every little “like” and “share” helps us expand our network. And you all lend it credibility when it’s shared by you. So, that would help us greatly to expand our reach.

OLD /NEW BUSINESS

Chair Bartosiewicz remarked that it does matter when board members are visible at events and when we bring people to attend. She thanked the staff for the overview of what is upcoming. Chair Bartosiewicz is very excited about the program guide and the vision for the upcoming cyclical surveys. Chair Bartosiewicz looks forward to bringing this to the board at the next meeting.

The floor was opened to any topics of old or new business. Nothing else was mentioned as a further topic of discussion for this evening.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bartosiewicz thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted – Holly Novak, Executive Assistant