



**2024-2025 MCC Governing Board  
Programs & Outreach Committee  
March 12, 2025 5:30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**Committee members present:** *in-person:* Anna Bartosiewicz – Chair; Ron Keesing; Peter Pin; Aaron Stark; Sonya Thott

**Other Board members present:** Kristina Groennings

**MCC Staff present:** Betsy May-Salazar, Executive Director; Deputy Director Jonathan Melendez; Holly Novak, Executive Assistant; Mike Fisher, General Programs Director; Sarah Schallern Treff, Performing Arts Director; Sabrina Anwah, PIO

**Guests:** None.

**CONVENE MEETING**

Chair Anna Bartosiewicz convened a meeting of Programs & Outreach Committee of the Governing Board of the McLean Community Center on March 12, 2025, at 5:36 p.m. The meeting was open to the public attending in-person. Announcement was made about audio-recording for purpose of Minutes. No changes were requested to the agenda; it was adopted by acclamation.

**OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SURVEY (2<sup>nd</sup> version - survey started one year ago)**

*\*remarks by General Programs Director Mike Fisher, Performing Arts Director Sarah Schallern Treff, Executive Director Betsy May-Salazar*

**PURPOSE:** This data analysis supplements the annual Public Hearing on Programs (March 26). The survey is intended to provide broader community interest data to provide context to individual public comments given in the Public Hearing. This survey's goal is to reach broadly into the community, users and non-users. Tonight is a preliminary presentation; our analysis continues.

**MCC Programming Pyramid** (graphic created last year as a way to examine our programming): on a spectrum from widest benefit and broadest reach (at bottom) >> to more individualized benefit (as the pyramid rises). When considering programming through this lens, it helps us shape where resources are focused and how fees are considered.

**\*Public Benefit – Broad Reach:** large-scale community events; community and civic group meetings; Alden Theatre performances; outdoor concerts in MCP; our partnership with MPA. These events have high attendance and reach the most diverse and broad community representation. This is where we're putting our resources to reach people: these events usually have free admission (no cost to participants). The Alden performances are investments MCC is making as a resource for the community. The partnership with MPA is a facility usage investment (providing space) to fulfill MCC's visual arts programming.

**\*Key Target Audience – Community Need:** particular audiences we know and have defined as being a community audience that has needs, has requested support and shown interest: OFC After School program; Seniors in Action (SIA). Summer camps are in this category because there is a need in the community that MCC fills.

**\*More Individualized Benefit:** classes, drop-in programs, topical lectures.

**\*Relationship to pricing:** Large-scale events is where MCC's funds are going. For classes, [top of pyramid] the individuals support the costs of the class: registration amount + 20% to cover some overhead. **Frequent comments at public hearings focus specifically on the cost of classes: Why does it cost this much? It's because this is the model we've adopted. We are passing the 'individualized benefit' costs directly to our participants, whereas we are 'funding' McLean Day.** McLean Day, concerts in the park, Independence Day Fireworks are investments MCC makes as a community center.

**\*The pyramid diagram is not just dollars – it reflects efforts regarding reach and public benefit. Though significant funds are spent on The Alden Theatre, it is not MCC's 'broadest reach' and public benefit.**

FY25 and FY26 Key Initiatives: This slide may anchor the presentation at 3/26 Public Hearing – showing some FY25 and FY26 Key Initiatives. It would allow us to answer some questions before they are raised (i.e., investment in renovation at OFC). The public will appreciate hearing what is being done already.

KEY FINDINGS: Differences from last year's survey: this time, we asked about programs in-depth as opposed to a general view (based on some of the interests that came up in the last survey). What do you think McLean Community Center's current role in the community is? What do you think it should be? We included "Did you know?" questions (language learning – Did you know MCC shows foreign language films?) We also included "Did not attend any events" as an answer option for some questions - because it's valuable to know who is actually not coming. Most survey results this time were driven by online method, social media, and sending out through ACTIV registration system.

Characteristics of survey respondents: 320 (1/4 of the total we had last year). Estimated 80-90% in McLean tax district based on zip codes. Age demographics: 217 respondents - adults age 55+. 134 have young children. 34 have young adults and 14 respondents have young adults without children in the household. It was noticeable that in the age 55+, there were people with young kids in the house – perhaps an inter-generational family; or it could be parents who had kids later in life. We plan to look at our age definitions.

Overall satisfaction: 66%, and up to 70% satisfied or very satisfied with MCC programs. We're getting very similar responses from households with older adults and households with school-age children.

'Quality of life' question: Does having MCC, Alden and OFC in your community provide you with a better quality of life through programs, learning opportunities, services and community events? 75% - 77% strongly agree; agree. That speaks to their recognizing the value of the institution and why MCC is here.

Reasons given for low ratings: Ten respondents ranked satisfaction as 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' on two key questions. Reasons: a belief that our programming relates primarily to children; paying of tax dollars; a desire for more theatrical and musical shows in The Alden; that MCC should be a place which is free of any political agenda or ideology; cost of programs themselves.

Reasons given for not attending: 22 respondents said they do not attend MCC programs. 35% indicated "none of the above" when asked what programs they value most, followed by large-scale community events; classes, outdoor concerts; Alden Theatre performances. These individuals answered "Did not know" to a higher percentage of individual questions when compared to overall survey results. Some responses indicated they used to attend when their kids were younger but no longer do so.

Which of the following does your household value most? Top four programs – Classes, Alden Theatre Performances, Large Scale Community Events, Outdoor Concerts. Households with school-age children really enjoy the large-scale community events and outdoor concerts. Older adults seem to like theater performances and Seniors In Action (SIA).

Other programs suggested/referenced: Some programs we already offer were mentioned; not necessarily that they didn't know MCC offers it – rather, they are requesting they continue or do more. New or renewed ideas: day trips and other travel options; events for working adults; more opportunities for involvement; photography exhibits; tours; languages. Some ideas for improvement were mentioned: get bands with more appeal playing in the cooler evening; high-quality evening fitness; more recycling events, personal schedule conflicts.

'Top Four' programs 2024 vs. 2025: What did they participate in? What do they plan to participate in (aspirational)? What do they *value* at MCC? Same Top 4: The Alden performances; classes; large-scale community events; outdoor concerts.

Language learning: prior survey results showed interest. Survey questions this year focused on: what aspect of language? Is it for students? Parents? Format of classes? For what purpose (physically learn a new language or brush-up for vacation)? We also wanted to make sure there wasn't another 'path' to consider for language learning. Top responses: 1. 43% Learn a new language (not a 'brush-up' or refresher) 2. 32% None of the above; not interested in language learning; 3. 25% Brush-up for vacation travel. Target ages: 48% adults; 46% older adults, 24% grade school-age children (though most grade school children have or will have the opportunity to learn a new language). In comparing various formats, weekly classes or a series of workshops (3-hour session once a month) were most requested.

Outdoor concerts - obstacles to attending: 1. 45% weather; 2. 35% did not know about it; 3. 31% not interested in the performer. Hopefully more people will be interested this Summer 2025 with a broader line-up of artists. We will assess the response to Thursday evening concerts and perhaps do some follow-up surveys to see how it is received.

Gardening classes & walking club – also reflective of desired programs from the previous survey. Preferred ranking of gardening workshops: 1. Vegetable and herb gardens; 2. Native species; 3. gardening for beginners.

Leadership and meet-up location of walking club: If MCC were to create a walking club, where should we meet? 63% in the area adjacent to MCC. Other options were McLean (wider than just the immediate neighborhood) or NoVa (DC metro area). It does seem very clear that the walking club folks want to stay close and convenient.

MCC's visibility in the community: Three “Did you know?” questions were included to gauge how we are doing with our outreach and marketing. 47% did not know that OFC offers teen trip camps during summer and school breaks. 54% did not know that MCC shows free foreign language films. 56% did not know that the McLean Central Park will feature a new performance space where MCC will present outdoor concerts. We still have work to do to dispel misconceptions about what MCC does including ages served and services provided. Some comments were about things MCC already does. Some mention of requesting better advertising.

KEY TAKEAWAYS: Top four program areas remain consistent. ‘Be Visible’ (from our strategic plan) still needs to be a top priority for board members. Program surveys routinely completed by program participants after programs, after performances, at events are consistently rated higher than those in this general survey. Because, if you want to go to something you already know it’s great. A portion these survey respondents haven’t been to MCC events. That’s telling because it shows we’re reaching a broader group through this Community Feedback Survey. Non-users aren’t necessarily going to respond: ‘You’re meeting all of my needs.’ We’re starting to get ideas from this non-user group which will help supplement the public comments of people who choose to come in and make comments (i.e. who are already invested in MCC).

**NEXT STEPS: Based on the analysis and discussion, the following actions were recommended:**

**1. Target the age group 24 to 55 years old that aren’t coming for their kids.** What do we do for them that meets their needs? How do we communicate to this group all the things we offer? Many people see MCC as very focused: classes; theater – that’s what MCC does. We must continue striving: How do we get the word out about *everything* MCC does?

**2. Vary the method of how the survey is administered**

Survey: in Program Guide with QR code; in social media many times; a postcard with QR code. We did occasionally have board members at events with an iPad. We had an option for a written version (paper survey) if needed for accommodation. Also available in language translation (though we received 0 responses). If we are going to have translated surveys, how do we reach those audiences? Korean language version must go to the right parts of the community - to be able to know it’s available and accessible.

**3. Consider whether any change in direction or specific actions are suggested by the survey results.**

**\*continue with next steps of experimentation:** In tandem with the public comments at 3/26 Public Hearing, then we will combine it all together. This last year, we dug-down on some aspects to refine, such as experimenting with summer concerts on Thursday nights. The “walking club” concept had been in conversation for several years. Now should move forward. We have people who are interested in leading a walking club and MCC being the place where that generates from, with some staff support.

**\*offer a ‘trial run’ of requested classes/programs:** We’re already on the path for language learning: in the previous iteration, Spanish rose to the top as the preferred language. SIA is now in a seven-class series of Spanish language lessons. If we have opportunity to do a trial-run of a program (i.e. in SIA) we do so before pushing it out to the wider public. That’s been a great way for us to experiment with format and learn lessons. Walking Club – we’ve laid some groundwork, but needed to ask specific questions to set the parameters. Now we can start to generate that, moving forward.

**\*offer new styles of programs as requested by the public**

Some things have been implemented this year that came up through last year’s surveys and public comments: more civic-like group offerings (one-time lectures). We started a partnership with Safe Community Coalition specifically around youth (families and parents of teens). That’s been very successful (monthly); also various financial planning classes. Though subject

matter outside of our internal ‘buckets,’ it’s something we continue to look at: What are appropriate one-time lectures that are timely that the adult audience is interested in?

**\*frequency of administering the survey; introducing broader questions:** We will re-look at the frequency of the survey iteration. Because of the annual Public Hearing, it ideally must be administered every year. We need this information funneling into that public hearing [as context] because otherwise, it’s very hard to evaluate comments that come in, and gauge how universal they are. We will re-examine at the survey itself and get feedback from the board. And raise it up a level: asking questions that are broader.

**\*allocate \$\$ to advertise and look at other methods of distribution & general marketing**

It is beyond dollars – it is how. We’ve rolled-out banners; reintroduced the mailed Program Guide; mailing postcards. Regarding advertising directly - the local newspapers have diminished. It’s more looking at strategy. Summer concerts – advertising on back cover of FCPA *ParkTakes* in recent months; that goes to all households and a much broader reach (entire Fairfax County). We will do posters delivered to businesses (summer concert schedule) – hardware store; condos; dry cleaners. It’s interesting how people get their information (various approaches). Once you sign-up to follow MCC, then you receive all messaging. The main way to stay informed is to get our weekly comprehensive newsletter; but that requires a step for someone to take. We do paid advertising for various programs but that’s not necessarily reaching all of McLean directly. Hopefully, the digital sign in MCP will increase visibility of MCC marketing. It is now in pricing and then we will bring it to the board for approval of the \$\$ amount. Then it will proceed through the permitting process – hopefully it will be installed in Fall 2025 (but we can’t guarantee that).

**\*consider hiring college students as interns to fill gaps in MCC marketing staffing & research tasks**

Deputy Director Melendez mentioned that hiring interns has been done in other parts of the county. We have had interns at MCC in the past. Sabrina Anwah is retiring in Fall 2025 and we will have a big lift in PIO office to replace her. The amount of work she does (marketing - without anyone knowing anything about it) is enormous! We will put a lot of focus on our PIO area.

ACTION ITEM: Let us know if there is anything the Board can do to recommend people to be interns.

**\*advertise MCC programs & events at Total Wine and other McLean-specific stores**

The new banners on OFC fence are having an impact and are being noticed by people! McLean Revitalization is having conversations about street banners – one side is “Welcome to McLean” and the other side would be for advertising. They have talked to us and we would absolutely be on-board to put our key community events up on the banner (McLean Day; 4<sup>th</sup> of July), as a way to call attention to people about McLean Community Center. For the summer concert series, we are in conversations with them already about doing a partnership with restaurants (help us promote to pick-up a dinner and come to the concert). And then the next conversation we’re about to have is regarding our tie to MPA in their new facility. **That will also help MCC’s presence in the downtown area and continuing the conversation about visibility.**

*MCC staff will further refine this presentation for 3/26 board meeting.*

**PLANNING FOR PUBLIC HEARING ON FY2027 PROGRAMS** *\*remarks by Chair Anna Bartosiewicz and Executive Director May-Salazar*

This annual public hearing will be convened as a segment of March 26, 2025 Regular Meeting. By first giving an overview of the survey results, it will hopefully inform some of the questions and comments we may get from the public.

FORMAT: As a public hearing, we will take questions but will not be answering the questions in the meeting in-person. We will answer in writing as a follow-up. This will be announced so people are not expecting an immediate response. We want to promote a clear understanding that it’s an opportunity for the public to make their comments, but we are not engaging in responses in-the-moment.

**MCLEAN PROJECT FOR THE ARTS – SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY** *\*remarks by Executive Director May-Salazar*

MPA (our partner here on visual arts) is building-out a downtown McLean location – in a prime spot near all the new developments occurring. With a lovely pocket park nearby, it will have a café and galleries to complement what MPA does here. The intention is that MPA will still offer everything they do here: classes, camps; gallery. The gallery upstairs is very good for juried shows with multiple artists and an ‘emerging’ artist section at the upstairs atrium. Emerson Gallery is also very popular in the greater Mid-Atlantic region for 3D art (with its height and spatial dimensions). The new facility will have smaller galleries ideally suited for 1-2 person shows; a black box (for video art and light art) and a small 3D space.

**We have been in conversations about what the collaboration between MCC and MPA looks like as they expand to the new location.** We've been assured that offerings at MCC will remain consistent. Classes in new facility will focus on ceramics (kilns; 10 pottery wheels). MPA is developing class offerings as well as a membership for ceramicists who will be able to use the kiln at extended hours. MPA will have a café as a big part of their operation.

**MPA has approached MCC to be one of their MPA Downtown founding sponsors.** They are very close to reaching fundraising goal and ready to move ahead with construction. MCC had \$35K in the budget for MPA's annual ArtFest which didn't take place this year due to park renovation. **Lori Carbonneau approached Executive Director May-Salazar to ask if MCC would consider becoming a founding sponsor of MPA Downtown, redirecting these funds.**

Sponsorship Options:

Option #1: 5 - 10 potters wheels (recognition of MCC sponsorship on the wheels + on larger panel) MCC would also be included on electronic credit screen mentioning individual and group donors at entrance. The ceramics area is visible through a window but is not a public space. \$37,500 - \$75,000

Option #2: Curator's Circle \$25,000 or Visionary Circle \$50,000. These levels could also tie to direct sponsorship of an opening exhibition or programming.

Executive Director May-Salazar noted that a \$50K contribution would make a clear symbolic statement in recognition of MCC's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year and is on par with the funding provided to McLean Central Park for the playground project. She is more in favor of a contribution that is not program specific but shows MCC capital support for the MPA Downtown location as an investment in our community.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER:**

**\*Agree MCC sponsorship should not tie to ongoing programming.** Any joint programming conversations should happen separately as part of ongoing collaboration.

**\*MCC is worthy of higher-level recognition as a 'foundational' partner to MPA.** MCC sponsorship recognition should acknowledge ongoing collaboration and existing relationship between MCC and MPA. MCC is behind this project in support of the arts and MPA and values the visibility MPA will receive with a downtown location.

**\*MCC's ongoing support of MPA should be recognized at new location separately from funding opportunity.**

Executive Director May-Salazar has had a prior conversation with Lori Carbonneau regarding appropriate recognition for MCC in this facility separate from funding opportunity. To promote seamless marketing for MPA, MCC will be including the new location in our Program Guide (thus already supporting that new facility) and front desk staff will need to be informed regarding programming to answer public inquiries at front desk and by phone. Class sign-ups are handled through MPA's website, but MCC staff answers MPA questions that come to our Front Desk.

**Executive Director May-Salazar and Lori Carbonneau have been thinking collaboratively regarding appropriate recognition for MCC that maintains clarity regarding the relationship.** Such as: "... with support from the McLean Community Center" or some such in the appropriate display at their new facility entrance so that MCC has a visual presence in what they do.

**\*Programming Clarity between MCC and MPA**

MPA has some plans for expanded programming such as films and chamber music in the café which would duplicate MCC current programming. Executive Director May-Salazar will continue ongoing conversations with MPA to monitor such potential conflicting programming.

DISCUSSION about specifics of giving funds to this project and having MCC's name and presence there:

**1. Consensus that MCC should be recognized UNIQUELY - more than just a transactional donor of funds on par with a list of other similar level donors.**

*Comment from board member:* I think you've hit on it perfectly. Ultimately, supporting this project is great and something MCC should do. I also don't think that we or they should conceive of this as just another 'donor' and a transactional thing.

Supporting that, in my view, would be a recognition of the relationship we've had for decades and a continuing partnership that we look to have moving forward. It's not about putting MCC on par with other donors who give a similar amount of money. I don't even think that's the right conversation to have. MCC should be recognized highly for the depth of our

partnership with MPA. We should also give an amount we are comfortable with because this is an exciting time with what they are doing. *Seconded by another board member*

**2. Make sure MPA's programming is in-sync with MCC's values and priorities on an ongoing basis.**

*Comment by a board member:* I would assume that if you were to use the money entrusted by MCC to support this, that whatever MPA's programming values agenda is, would be in sync with what MCC would want to see. Despite having decades of experience with MPA, we don't know the agenda going forward with the new venture, and whether their priorities are going to change or go in a different route?

*Clarification by Executive Director May-Salazar:* We feel confident it's an appropriate extension of exhibiting artists in new ways. What does change is that it will become a facility MPA can use to raise funds through events. **MPA was looking for an ability to have a revenue source that they could not have here because MCC is a county agency.** Whenever we do rent Emerson Gallery space, it is revenue coming to MCC because it is our space. The partnership with a restaurant is a clear change for MPA – but not programmatically or philosophically.

**3. This is an opportunity to explore and define a more integrated relationship between MCC and MPA – not just having our name on a donor wall. We have had a partnership for decades.**

Executive Director May-Salazar had that exact conversation first with Lori Carbonneau: What does it look like? How are we working together? We do have a funding proposal from MPA, but it ties specifically to the levels of donors in the initial ask (i.e. funding the ceramic pottery wheels). Executive Director May-Salazar prefers a “visionary” level of funding. We can go back and say we are willing to commit to a funding level and propose different recognition: ‘Supporting Partner;’ ‘Strategic Collaborator.’

**5. Future Joint Programming:** Lori Carbonneau is interested in doing more joint MCC/MPA programming in new location (as we do in other locations) such as in the pocket park. Lori Carbonneau asked about MCC's appetite for greater involvement. MCC is open to conversations regarding opportunities to collaborate in the future on different programs however, Executive Director May-Salazar has been clear in the past that MCC does not want to take over ArtFest. We will provide financial support (as we've done, and we have increased the financial support so that MPA could do what they need to do), but MCC does not have the capacity to implement the logistics of ArtFest.

NEXT STEPS: *Question from Executive Director May-Salazar: Does it feel comfortable as an appropriate use of funds do to this?*

**1. Emphasis should be on MCC being considered as a founding donor with appropriate distinct recognition.**

**2. Alignment to the goals and mission is appropriate requirement for this use of MCC's money.**

**3. This is a one-time special gift, not an annual funding for MPA programming.**

*Opinion expressed:* I'm comfortable with it, personally. This is a major milestone for MPA. To me, this is not about an annual subsidy for programming. This is a one-time event to help them found a new facility after we have been partners for decades and something beyond just giving money. Executive Director May-Salazar can write an acknowledgement and appropriate display proposal.

APPROPRIATE \$ AMOUNT: *Question from Executive Director May-Salazar: What do we think is the appropriate amount?*

**\$50K symbolic amount that ties to our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** and is on par with sponsorship of McLean Central Park Playground. \$35K is in the budget. Funds are available in the FY2025 budget.

**ACTION:** Executive Director May-Salazar will come back to the Governing Board with a proposal for \$50,000 to share with to MPA for consideration. If it's ready, we can bring it to the board this month (March). Or, we can wait until April.

**COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH** *\*remarks by PIO Sabrina Anwah*

We have welcomed Mary Beth Woody (part-time admin) -very capable and lovely to work with! She has been catching up on finances and posting to free websites; organizing all our distribution lists and going around town delivering posters, etc.

Current efforts: Public Hearing on FY2027 Programs (news release; social media; paid advertising). Governing Board election: Phase I – call for candidates: news release; website announcement; boosted social media; weekly stakeholder newsletter; two direct mail postcards to tax district residents; paid advertising in local newspapers; outreach to tax district high schools. We hope the students are seeing ads. We have an online ad and we also advertised in the *Highlander*. We also reached out to the high school counselors and sent the video. And we also reached out to PTA's.

*Comments by Youth board members:* Something in school announcements would be good. It's not clear how much freedom we would have or what would be permitted to place in morning announcements. They do have an afternoon news show also.

NEXT STEPS: Aaron Stark will speak to his principal. The school tends to put it out on the later side; but they do have “The Saxon Broadcast” during study hall. Sonya Thott can probably announce it there. She can use the social media toolkit sent to the Youth Ambassadors last week. The Youth Ambassadors talked about it again today.

Deputy Director Melendez has some additional connections at individual schools. The FCPS School Board member from McLean also does some outreach. Some candidate packets have been distributed so far. At this point it is more word-of-mouth. Talk it up! The board members realized at this point they must encourage more people to run.

Promotions underway: Fiesta del Sol; spring performances; summer concert series; 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary promotion; Summer Program Guide; videos; Sabrina’s transition/retirement. Executive Director May-Salazar expressed thanks to Sabrina for all her hard work! Sabrina really appreciates the support expressed by this committee.

#### **OLD /NEW BUSINESS**

Chair Bartosiewicz opened the floor to any matters of old or new business.

About Governing Board election: *What happens if no one actually returns a candidate packet?*

*Comment by Executive Director May-Salazar*: For the Adults, we can go without one position being occupied on the board; but two positions vacant would require action to fill them. We would need to research how that relates to the Youth board seats.

*A question was asked about the age range for Youth candidates*. The youth must be between the ages of 15 and 17 years old on Friday Night Rides (May 16) – when voting opens. It’s quite complicated to figure out each year!

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

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Bartosiewicz thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted – Holly Novak, Executive Assistant