

Board Chair Priorities – Initial Thoughts

First, I'd like to thank Doug Jeffery for his leadership as Chair last year, including the proactive approach he took toward laying out priorities for the coming year. I'd like to extend that approach this year while inviting a collaborative discussion up front among the entire Governing Board and senior staff of the Center. I hope we can begin that discussion tonight and continue it throughout the year.

As I reflected on priorities for the coming year, I found myself returning repeatedly to the Center's Strategic Plan. Rather than suggesting a new direction, I'd like to focus on how we, as a Governing Board, can help advance the goals that are already reflected there while continuing to build on the strong foundation that has been established.

I'd also like to recognize one of the initiatives Doug laid out last year that I believe should be extended into the coming year. That is building stronger physical connections between the Center and downtown McLean, particularly by addressing the need for a more pedestrian-friendly physical crossing of Route 123. Implicit in that effort was the opportunity to build greater organizational connectivity between MCC and other McLean organizations, like the McLean Revitalization Corporation, McLean Project for the Arts, the McLean Citizens Association, Friends of MCC, and others. In the coming year, one of the major priorities I'd like us to embrace as a Board is continuing to strengthen those physical and organizational connections on behalf of the Center and the broader McLean community.

Another of Doug's initiatives from last year that I thought made great progress was improving the quality of Board-level data and reporting, particularly around our user base and attendance at events and in our programs. Those improvements give us a stronger factual basis for understanding where the Center is succeeding today and where opportunities exist to strengthen our impact in the future.

The improved data reinforces what I know many Board members have sensed from within the community. First, the residents who regularly attend our events and participate in our programs consistently find them to be high-quality and rewarding. This is a testament to the truly outstanding staff of the Center and its leadership, as well as the commitment to continuous improvement reflected in both our surveys and our Strategic Plan. The Center consistently delivers programs, events, and services of exceptional quality.

The second observation is more implicit. The Center has an opportunity to be even better by finding ways to expand our reach within the community, whose residents provide the majority of our funding through a dedicated, supplemental property tax. The Center will never touch every resident, but as Board members we should champion a mindset of

continuous renewal—building on our strengths while exploring new opportunities to expand our impact within the community.

Those opportunities need to be reflected in the work of each of our committees, whose efforts will be supported by and depend upon the expertise and judgment of our staff. My hope is that the Board asks good strategic questions while continuing to trust, support, and empower the professionals who carry out the Center's mission every day. With that in mind, I'd like to encourage each committee to consider how its work in the coming year can help advance both the Center's Strategic Plan and our shared goal of expanding the Center's impact throughout the community.

First, I'd like to encourage the Programs and Community Engagement Committee to think broadly about ways to expand both our offerings and the ways we connect to and communicate with our community. I'd also like the committee to work on how we measure performance, developing better ways to assess our impact within the community rather than only within our current user base. We've expanded the time for this committee to do its work in the coming year to encourage collaboration and innovation across all aspects of Programs and Community Engagement. I'd encourage every Board member, whether a committee member or not, to attend these meetings and contribute their expertise and energy. Success here will help us become more visible, welcome more of McLean into the Center, invite discovery, and continue to showcase excellence.

Second, I'd invite the Capital Facilities Committee to continue its important work on both physical and organizational connectivity between the Center and the rest of McLean. I also encourage the committee to work on improving reporting around space utilization, providing further transparency to the community while identifying opportunities to increase availability for interested community groups. Together, these efforts strengthen both our commitment to welcoming the broader community and our responsibility for good stewardship of the Center's facilities.

Third, I'd ask the Finance Committee to make time for a longer-term, more strategic discussion of the Center's financial future. As new opportunities emerge through the work of the Programs and Community Engagement Committee, how do we ensure the Center has the financial flexibility to support new programming and new forms of community engagement while continuing to be responsible stewards of our resources?

Finally, I'd like to recognize the strong work of our previous Elections and Nominations Committee in organizing a very successful election. Last year's emphasis on increasing the number of candidates yielded an outstanding slate of choices for our voters. I'd encourage the committee to continue that emphasis while also considering ways to increase voter

participation in future elections, helping more residents become aware of—and engaged with—the important role the Center plays in our community.

These are my initial priorities, informed in part by one-on-one conversations with several of you, as well as Betsy and other leaders within the Center. They are intended as a starting point for discussion rather than a final list. At this point, I'd love to hear from my fellow Board members. Do these sound like the right priorities? Are there other aspects of the Center's operation that you believe deserve additional attention in the coming year?