



Arlington Poet Laureate Committee

Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2022

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: over zoom at <https://brandeis.zoom.us/j/2022729258>

Present: John Burt (Chair and Secretary), Lidia Kenig-Scher, Stuart Deck

1. **Composition of the Committee** The membership has become a little unclear and the committee will need to be reorganized. The Town By-Law specifies that the committee should have 5 members:
 - a. Appointed by the Library Board of Trustees: Currently John Burt. The Library appointed Amy Hampe to this position on July 1. This might mean that John should rotate off, but in that case the committee would no member who had served on an Laureate search. Lidia suggested that John ask the Town Manager, Sandy Poole, to appoint him as the Town Manager's representative (to be confirmed by the Select Board), to replace Jane Howard.
 - b. Appointed by the Arlington School Committee: Currently Stewart Deck
 - c. The Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture: Currently Lidia Kenig-Scher
 - d. The Town Meeting: Currently Carol Band (She wishes to continue, but was unable to make this meeting)
 - e. The Town Manager (Confirmed by the Select Board): Currently Jane Howard, who hasn't attended since the pandemic began and who has not responded to mail and email contact. Probably she is not interested in continuing.

John agreed to continue to serve as Chair, but asks that someone else be appointed Secretary at our next meeting.
2. **Recognition of Steven Ratiner's Contributions as Laureate.** Steven has done a fantastic job as Laureate, especially under the circumstances of the pandemic. With energy, optimism, intelligence, and inventiveness he has served our town and served poetry, and his contributions have reached far beyond the limits of our town (as far as Turkey, for instance). Among his contributions have been:
 - A. To conduct monthly poetry workshops at Robbins Library – the Beehive sessions. For most of the first year, this was done in-person and, since Covid, virtually. This has also included individualized assistance to some of the poets who are attempting to publish manuscripts or who have personal dilemmas related to their writing
 - B. Poems commissioned and performed at public events – including Heights Haiku for the Arlington Heights community (which included a special session

to instruct/inspire some of the poets who were unfamiliar with haiku); Martin Luther King Memorial celebration; other arts events (Arlington International Film Festival, Food Bank benefit concert);

- C. Continuing the Red Letter Poems project in response to the Covid crisis and the national reckoning on issues such as race, inequality and civic engagement. The work includes: soliciting participation from both Arlington-area poets as well as prominent writers from across the country and abroad; curating poems for quality and content; producing and distributing a weekly poem via mailing lists and in partnership with seven town cultural and social organizations and their newsletters/blogs or on-line presence.
- D. A six-week poetry residency program for Hardy Elementary School including workshops, field trips, an anthology and poetry display;
- E. Meeting with the Arlington School Superintendent, trying to encourage increased use of local poets and artist in school settings;

John will write a letter of commendation to Steven, to share with him, and to post on the Town Website and other appropriate venues

Steven should name a co-webmaster to pass on the Laureate's communications

- 3. **Laureate Position:** Because Steven's formal appointment ended at the end of the fiscal year (on June 30) the Committee will organize the search process for a new Laureate, who will receive a \$750 stipend. Lidia will ask the ACAC and the Town to give the next Laureate a three year appointment (the length of appointment served by the Somerville Laureate), but it may be that only a two-year term will be agreed to.
- 4. **Selection Process:** John will set up a Google Doc with drafts of our announcement and of our application, sending links to the members of the committee (including Carol and Amy), so that we may have versions ready to go at our next meeting.
 - a. By October 1 we wish to send the announcement to the Town twitter account, Steven's extensive email list, YourArlington, the Arlington Advocate, Wicked Local, the Arlington List Facebook page, our email list of local poets, the ELA head of the Arlington Public Schools, ACMI The Boston Globe MetroWest section calendar and the Massachusetts Poetry Society) with a link to an online application form at the town website.
 - b. Applications will open on October 10, and close on October 31.
 - c. We plan to have a shortlist of three finalists by November 10,
 - d. After interviewing the finalists, hope to make final decision by November 30.
 - e. The new Laureate formally taking the position on January 1.John will contact Liza Halley to get the Password for the Committee's email list, and the Laureate's Facebook page. (The current owner of the latter seems still to be Cathie DesJardins.)
- 5. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be at 7 PM on September 21, on zoom at <https://brandeis.zoom.us/j/884218578>
- 6. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 PM.

