



Legislation Text

File #: 16-421, **Version:** 1

City Council Meeting Date: September 20, 2016

To: Mayor and City Council
City Administrator

From: Teresa Jensen, Director of Library & IT Services

Consider Grant Application process for 2017 SEMAC Grant by the Northfield Public Library

Action Requested:

Staff recommends a motion authorizing staff of the Northfield Public Library, in partnership with the Arts and Culture Commission, to develop and submit a grant application to the Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council for the funding for programming related to City of Northfield Poet Laureate initiative.

Summary Report:

Northfield demonstrates an ongoing interest in poetry, evidenced in writing groups, the Sidewalk Poetry initiative, the Poem in Your Pocket event in Poetry Month, and ongoing poetry programming sponsored by the colleges. However, there is no public coordination of literary arts in the community, e.g., via a literary arts calendar, and no leader/representative of poetry events, and as a result poets are barely visible in Northfield, compared with other arts such as theater and music.

The Public Library and Arts and Culture Commission (ACC) consulted with Emilio DeGrazia, poet laureate of Winona, regarding how a poet laureate might provide a focus for and leadership for poetry and literary arts in a community, especially in helping to publicize poetry and poetry resources and in developing new audiences. As the City endeavors to advance the goal of Northfield as an “arts town,” a primary aim is to make better use of existing resources and interests. Current events on the college’s campuses, for example, are not perceived as open to the general public, and poetry readings and competitions are generally perceived as being for only a particular group of practicing poets. The Laureate will thus be part of an overall effort to improve access and to advance the quality and appreciation of poetic arts, whether in schools, among practicing poets, or among new audiences. While the project will support the efforts of all practicing poets to create a poetry-supportive community, the project also aims to create new audiences. Just as the Sidewalk Poetry project introduces pedestrians to poetry every day, the Laureate will help bring written poetry and spoken poetry to new audiences, including senior centers. Particularly in April, Poetry Month, new programming and performances will be encouraged.

Creating these annual events has elevated the visibility of poetry in Northfield, and the Poet Laureate will be a means for creating new annual events (e.g. a genre competition) that will meet the needs of teachers and arts organizations to cultivate the making and appreciation of poetry. Project evaluation will include interviews with participants and surveys of public perceptions of poetry prior to the project events and after, providing realistic measures of project impact.

Evaluation will also include review of audio and video documentation to identify best practices for sharing with other projects.

Poet Rob Hardy has been named, through a selection process that included representatives from St. Olaf College, the Northfield Public Schools (NPS), the Northfield Public Library and the Northfield community, to be the first Poet Laureate of Northfield. He will, along with NPL staff and ACC input, help to write the application process to SEMAC, and in that way help to shape the role of the first Poet Laureate.

Financial Impacts:

FUNDING	AMOUNT (IN DOLLARS \$)
SEMAC Grant Request	7000
In-Kind City/Library Staff	1000
Library Programming Funds	500
Carlton College	400
Total Project Funding	8900

Tentative Timelines:

The Poet Laureate position is a three year assignment, beginning in September 2016. The SEMAC grant application is due October 1, 2016, and if successful, will fund a period of January-December 2016. The Capstone event for the Poet Laureate is tentatively scheduled for April 2017.