

Arts Council August 7, 2025 Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM on August 7th, 2025.

In attendance: Meredith Blair, Caroline Wall, David Wohl, Kristin Thompson, Bill Blizard, Kimberly Adele, Dylan Keith, Becky Hilstad, Rob Cushman

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Arts & Cultural Events Meeting of June 5th, 2025, were presented for approval. There was a brief discussion about whether there were any changes or corrections needed, but no issues were raised.

Motion to accept the minutes as presented was made by the Chairman David Wohl, seconded by Dylan Keith, and unanimously approved with all members voting "aye."

Old Business

No old business was discussed.

New Business

2025-2026 Season Update

Chairman provided an update on the 2025-2026 season, noting that the season had started earlier than usual with the Will Thompson Band performance at Fresh Fields. He estimated approximately 300 people attended, with attendance growing as the evening progressed. The Chairman noted the band's high quality, their tight performance, and excellent audience interaction. Several members commented on the band's versatility, playing covers of Fleetwood Mac, Michael Jackson, Steve Miller Band, and various disco and 70s-80s music. Despite the payment issues, there was consensus that they would be an excellent choice for a future indoor dance event where proper compensation could be provided.

Caroline reported on ticket sales for upcoming events:

- Charleston Jazz: 230 tickets sold
- Shaun of the South: 96 tickets
- Black Market Trust: 25 tickets
- Ranky Tanky: 88 tickets
- Andy and Friends: 23 tickets
- Dina Carter: 74 tickets
- Sound of Charleston: 37 tickets
- Axon Orchestra: 4 tickets

The Charleston Jazz event was scheduled for the following Sunday, and several members agreed to help with ticket scanning and other duties. For the September 4th Shaun of the South event at West Beach, Rob indicated it would be a simple setup with the performer being relatively self-contained, though assistance would be appreciated at showtime with tickets and merchandise.

Notes on Additional Proposals

The Chairman reminded the council that they were limiting the number of new events due to carryover funds and that the deadline for submissions was September 1st. He emphasized that January and February dates were priorities for new events since the current schedule is light during those months.

The current genre breakdown was reported as:

- 3 Americana/roots events
- 2 gospel/blues programs
- 5 classical events
- 3 jazz events
- 2 storytelling/comedy events

- 2 pop/rock events

The Chairman noted the popularity of tribute bands at venues like the Newberry Opera House, mentioning they were doing 10-12 tribute band shows. Kimberly reported that she was working on securing "So Good, the Neil Diamond Experience" for Thursday, February 19th, though the agent was currently on vacation and the booking was not yet finalized.

Gretchen mentioned she would be proposing the Charleston Symphony again but with a different format—a smaller orchestra with more sophisticated pops and jazz material. She noted that Charlton Singleton had expressed interest in performing with the orchestra for an event, and the Symphony was amenable to this collaboration. The event would be held at Holy Spirit with no additional charges for tent or setup, and would cost around \$20,000, significantly less than previous Symphony events.

The Chairman reported he was working with a Nashville rock and roll band featuring a Brazilian guitarist. Their regular Tuesday gig makes them available for Thursday through Saturday performances in January and February. The band would cost under \$5,000 and would be suitable for Turtle Point.

The council agreed to meet on September 11th (instead of September 4th when Sean of the South performs) to review proposals, with the possibility of the meeting running longer than usual to accommodate the discussion.

Update on Piano Bars and Film Series

Joan provided an update on exploring Seafields as a potential venue for Piano Bars. She expressed some concerns about the arrangement:

- The movie theater at Seafields seats 42-45 people
- The bar area has limited tables and can only accommodate about 60 people
- The dining room is larger and can fit over 100 people, with the piano being movable between locations
- Seafields staff would need to be paid to be present during events
- Seafields residents would likely take up a significant percentage of the available space
- The facility would not be available until November

The Chairman confirmed Joan's assessment based on his own tour of the facility, agreeing that the dining room would be the best space. He noted that Seafields was already announcing the Arts Council's piano bars in their presentations to the public, despite arrangements still being in the discussion phase.

Given the November timeframe for Seafields' availability, the council discussed options for September and October piano bars:

- Delaying until November
- Exploring the use of the Sand Castle, which would cost approximately \$2,000 to rent
- Holding a speaker series in the town hall as an alternative
- Using the municipal center lobby with a rented keyboard (\$1,800 for piano rental or less for a keyboard)

Caroline expressed concern about changing locations multiple times and suggested either pivoting the format or delaying until a consistent venue could be secured.

The council agreed to explore the Sand Castle option for September and October to help transition the audience to the future location at Seafields. The Chairman would contact Mayor Belt about this possibility. The council noted they had budgeted additional funds for venue costs if needed.

Review of Annual Survey

Rob discussed the annual survey, noting that the response rate (approximately 130-150 responses) was lower than desired, given that they have about 350 Instagram followers. He emphasized the importance of understanding audience preferences and suggested two approaches to gather more feedback:

- Send out the survey again in early September to reach people who may have been away during the summer
- Create QR codes for events that would direct attendees to a brief survey about their experience

Kimberly suggested also reaching out to people who don't attend events to understand what types of programming might attract them. She recommended including questions in the town's weekly newsletter to reach a broader audience.

The Chairman agreed that outdoor events like the Will Thompson concert at Fresh Fields would be particularly good opportunities to survey attendees who might not be part of their regular audience.

Event Marketing Timeline

Caroline presented a marketing timeline that outlined when and where event promotions would be posted. The schedule included dates for announcements: One month prior to events, One week prior, and the Day before (if not sold out)

The council discussed adding posts to various Facebook groups for Kiawah property owners and visitors. It was noted that some groups have as many as 5,000 members and include people planning to visit the area. The timeline was designed to avoid overlap in promotional efforts and to ensure consistent communication.

Correspondence

No correspondence was reported.

Chairman's Comments

The Chairman provided an update on the cultural facility design process. The town is conducting a design competition with six architects initially presenting, now narrowed to three finalists who will submit designs in 4-5 weeks. Two of the three finalists are collaborating with Theater Consultants Collaborative and Robert Long, who worked on the feasibility study.

The Chairman reported that there had been no negative feedback about the project. He mentioned ongoing discussions about specific design elements, with the Chairman advocating for more wing space while Mayor Belt was focused on recital hall aspects. The Chairman emphasized the importance of comfortable seating, good acoustics, sound, and sight lines, as well as an accessible lighting grid that doesn't require ladders.

Caroline mentioned she would be ordering a name tag for Rob and asked if anyone else needed one.

Kristin inquired about the status of the Bacon Brothers booking. Caroline explained that the agent was waiting on the filming schedule and that despite sending a heartfelt letter about coming to enjoy the island, they hadn't received a definitive answer yet.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by the Chairman, seconded, by Bill Blizard and approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Submitted by:

CWall

Caroline Wall, Arts and Cultural Events Program Manager

Approved by:

David Wohl

David Wohl, Chairman

9/26/25

Date