RE: Proposal for an Arts Council in New London

March 2019

Initial Partners:
Marquee Gallery, Spark Makerspace
City of New London Office of Planning and Development
City of New London Sustainable CT Committee
Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition

What do Arts Councils do?
An organization whose primary purpose is to stimulate and promote the arts, increasing access to the arts through services, programs, and/or funding within a specific geographic area; create opportunities for artists; some present arts bookings, some produce arts programming, and some function under the aegis of (are owned by) a local government. Arts councils typically do not focus on a single art discipline. The goal is to enrich a community through a variety of arts experiences.

Arts councils generally serve two main functions:
The first function of an arts council is to provide the “big picture vision” for the arts in a community. This includes understanding and responding to the community’s needs, developing long-term strategies, defining goals and objectives, building a strong support network and taking on other visionary responsibilities, such as:

- Raising awareness regarding the value of the arts
- Enhancing the artistic quality of local arts activities
- Preserving diverse cultural and artistic traditions and assets
- Connecting creative community
  - Creating resources and opportunities that enable local artists to flourish

By providing this type of leadership, the council becomes the arts community’s collective “voice.”

The second function of an arts council has to do with implementing strategies. These can include:

- Completing the legwork necessary to plan, organize and manage arts programming
- Making grants to local artists and arts organizations
- Providing central administrative services that benefit the arts community as a whole (such as maintaining mailing lists, artists directories and a community box office)
- Other “nuts and bolts” tasks

How an Arts Council could benefit the City of New London:
For Artists, Galleries, Arts Organizations, Creative Community, etc.

- A voice for artists in the New London area to lend towards the needs and aspirations of local area artists with regards to events and opportunities as well as considerations and protections in dealings with city initiatives (ie: unbridled development and gentrification)
- Increase opportunities for artists
The Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition fosters region-wide economic growth in New London County by optimizing existing and new arts and cultural activities to assure that cultural sector and creative business assets are central to the vitality of the region.
- Serving as liaison to the council and the city
- Promoting art programs in the city and regionally

A representative of the Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition would serve on the council as a liaison. The Cultural Coalition’s role on an arts council would include:
- Sharing information about and providing connections to regional and statewide projects, programs and opportunities
- Receiving information about New London arts projects, initiatives, and needs
- Providing expertise, technical support and connection to resources to New London arts initiatives where appropriate
- Promoting New London arts programs, events and activities
- Serve as liaison to Cultural Coalition and CT Office of the Arts

Representatives from the arts community (artists, business owners/representatives, community arts organizations, etc.) would fill out remaining seats and serve on the arts council. Representatives must be New London residents, business owners and/or artists. Number of positions, election process and procedure for filling seats, functions, and terms to be determined through a shared visioning and stakeholder engagement process.

**Proposed Next Steps:**
City of New London, City of New London Sustainability Committee, Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition, and Marquee Gallery host a “Community Conversation” in April about an Arts Council in New London.
- Presentation of vision and outline
- Discussion to further shape and develop potential goals and functions of an arts council
- Discussion of positions on an arts council (number, representation, process)
- Q&A to gauge interest, additional ideas and consensus

A second draft of the outline would be developed and distributed in May more publicly for broader support and engagement.

Goal: If desired by the arts community in New London, an arts council would be established by August or September 2019.