

LOWELL COMMUNITY FESTIVAL AND EVENT PLANNERS RESOURCE GROUP



Mosaic Lowell

January 15, 2025 Meeting, 6:00 pm, LTC

This meeting featured visiting speaker Kylie Sullivan (she/her), Executive Director of Salem Main Streets.

Kylie has been with Salem Main Streets since 2013, coming to SMS after six years as a grants administrator at the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the state's arts agency. She has worked with a range of nonprofits, community organizations, and educational institutions, with a particular focus on volunteer management, program coordination, and cultural economic development. She received an M.B.A. from Simmons School of Management and a B.A. in music from Wesleyan University.

Kylie Intro

- Salem Main Street
- Salem Arts Festival
- Formerly affiliated with Lowell Folk Festival
- Started in 2002 volunteering for Lowell Folk Festival
- Transitioned to Mass Cultural Council, and other programs following
- Enjoyed Mass Cultural Council yet missed boots on the ground work
- Now 11 years in with Salem Main Street
- It is super helpful to run an arts festival with an arts background
- Main Street model is national
- Has a tackle and solve approach
- Every business we provide support
- At one point it was 1 staff + 300 volunteers
- Now it is 1 FT staff + 1 PT staff + volunteers
- Multiple events provide revenue and economic impact
 - Farmers market; arts festival; ice sculpture festival, pet parade, ice cream bowl
 - Smaller events may be 500 people in attendance while larger events are 15,000 people in attendance
- Nonprofit status with some support and funding provided by the City of Salem
- Similarities between Lowell and Salem were discussed
 - Cultural investment
 - Chances and historical similarities
 - Both have National Park Service
 - Both have arts and cultural events and movements

- Main difference is our October tourism
 - Our pet parade tries to bridge tourism with resident engagement
- Our 130+ volunteer ambassadors are educated on how to speak about our city; they have an understanding of what is going on and buy-in to what is going on in the city
 - This program is truly a resident engagement program
 - For example: if a tourist asks where to eat - ask what kind of food interests and then provide 3 nearby restaurant choices
 - For example: if a tourist asks about restroom locations - be able to provide the nearest facilities
 - For example: ensure volunteers understand mechanisms behind what is happening in the city, like why a road is closed, what goes on in planning an event, local and regional event and art collaborations, etc.

Q: Jess O’Hearn - What stands out to you on major challenges in event planning and its solutions?

A: Kylie - Notes below:

- Immediate hurdles financially including permitting, paying artists what they are worth, supply costs
- many of the same businesses/donors are tapped by everyone so limited funding availability
- police, fire, permitting costs have increased
- City had recovery money grant and 1/3 went to Salem Main Street to reenergize festivals
 - 1/3 of those funds were mini-grants to local events and festivals
 - 1/3 of those funds were to assess on how to best run an event - referred to Lowell’s event planning guide as a resource utilized to model after
 - 1/3 of those funds were used to create an equipment library to help offset costs for event equipment like tables, chairs, AV, etc.
 - Our library continues to grow
 - We have a mutual google sheet with a list of organizations that have various forms of equipment they are willing to lend at no cost or a small fee and continue to set up structures around how to run this library so we can reduce event costs
 - One requirement is language used on programs and fliers to include Destination Salem as proof tourism dollars are spent locally to produce local events
- There was a realization of a great inequity on who is charged fees
 - Was this really accessible to local community event planners?
 - Learned that it was considered illegal to offer discounts on public spaces for nonprofits, ie. offering a for-profit and non-profit rate was considered illegal
- Banks are streamlining their capacity to fund events and programs
 - Prior one organization could get a grant or donation for their organization, and then also for separate events and programs that organization produces
 - Now an organization can only be funded one time
- Artists prices have increased and rightfully so and are more capable of advocating for themselves which is a positive
- City of Salem still needs to update municipal codes and licensing procedures for permitting

Q: Mary Hart - What do you see as pivotal to making things work? And who pays your salary?

A: Kylie - Notes below:

- Salary is paid through some funding from the city for business support

- Some from corporate sponsorships
- Make a point to ensure events raise more than the events cost to run
 - For example: Pet Parade is largest revenue maker at \$5 per pet entry plus numerous business sponsorships which brought in \$11,000 and this event has little cost
 - Crazy ideas tend to work that have a “why” that aligns with what we’re doing
 - Family Friendly Event sponsors include pediatric dentists, roofers, energy companies, vets, pet training, etc...
 - Many grants out there
 - Artists are now viewed as their own small individual businesses which help with grants
- Canva is beneficial to set up with templates of your own branding and then send out to partnering organizations and sponsors to customize with their logos to be utilized for media campaigns
 - Canva offers a nonprofit membership fee
- Large volunteer force
 - We require every volunteer to have an email they can access
 - We use Signup.com
 - Benefits include uploading a waiver, sign up, switch shifts
 - For smaller events we often use an excel sheet
- Give Butter
 - Donation platform
 - We also use as a CRM for donors, businesses, sponsors, volunteers, city councilors
 - Can use tags to identify categories
 - E-newsletter option
 - We use this for free currently
- Funding platforms or platforms that can do some of the work for you like donor management and volunteer management are beneficial
- October gives extra boost
 - Volunteer Ambassadors wear buttons that say “Ask me - I’m local” Buttons create a sense of local pride and resident engagement
- Similar challenges that NPS might manage a volunteer list for Folk Festival
 - Salem plays a game of “tell me what you can do” with the NPS so they work better together
 - For example: if event is held on park property, we have to move to city property like a nearby city sidewalk to collect event ticket fees
- Volunteer Appreciation Events
 - Volunteer Bingo is fun and gives volunteers a chance to remember a variety of events and happenings throughout the year that they might have taken part in some way
 - “Did you volunteer for x event?”
 - “Did you meet a neighbor at an event?”
 - We also offer future sign up opportunities during this event

Note: Jess will compile a list of similar platforms. Examples below:

- Give Butter
- Trello Boards
- Asana
- Slack

- Sign Up
- Give Back Time

Q: Amy Beauregard - Where do you see Salem going?

A: Kylie - Notes below:

- More time to continue growing resident engagement programs
- Figuring out how to get people and businesses to re-imagine how they run events and businesses
- Multiple entities play different roles in the city
 - Chamber of Commerce - Civic
 - Destination Salem - tourism/marketing
 - Salem Partnership - macro economic
 - Planning Department
 - Creative Collective - business membership model, arts - local and regional
 - Universities
- Trickiest part for partnering on events is understanding event responsibilities and separate the tasks transparently, fairly, and appropriately

Group Questions:

Q: Jes- Are there any challenges that currently exist? (unsure who asked this question)

1: Mary Hart - Discussed need for legible, colorful, and artistic hand-held map showcasing local artists, arts, culture, restaurants, galleries, attractions

A: There may be grants through local CVB

A: Pay to play an option for these kinds of maps are important

A: Grants could help with costs

A: Mosaic has online map, mobile friendly, and can be filtered by activity that remains up to date

A: Handheld maps are outdated as soon as they are printed

A: There is value in both digital and print maps

2: Meg Smith - Poe in Lowell key learnings

- Building partnerships is important
- Any festival must amplify voices of the community
- Important to give space to and illuminate space for youth
- Partnerships with downtown Lowell businesses
- Accessibility is important with different levels of accessibility and inclusion in mind
- Must consider opening horizons to all with accessibility needs
- Has used linktree to provide any information that someone might need to know to include local guides, maps, modes of transportation - buses, commuter rail, parking, restaurants, etc.
- Should consider finding places your ideal demographic might congregate to further promote
- Always consider that there is something new to learn and new challenges to face

Q: Kylie - Do you have any language services?

A: Mosaic has list of translation services

A: MAPS

A: LCC has separate resource fund for translation and accessibility services if your group also receives funding from LCC

Meeting ended with group announcements to include:

Mosaic Lowell

- Professional Development Announcement - Accessibility - Social Media

MLK celebration - January 23 - 5pm to 7pm Holy Ghost Society

CMAA Remembrance Events (April and May) multiple events and locations tba

March 29th - Mill City Skill Share event (March 3rd deadline)

March 8th - Lowell Celebrates Kerouac event

March 8th - Women Recognition Event (unsure of name) - at Fusion Theater