

# LOWELL COMMUNITY FESTIVAL AND EVENT PLANNERS RESOURCE GROUP



July 2 Meeting, 6:00 pm, LTC

## **Festivals/Events/Nonprofits Represented**

- DIY Lowell
- Mosaic Lowell
- Lowell Folk Festival
- Coalition for a Better Acre
- Lowell Celebrates Kerouac
- By Annie Powell
- Community Members

**Focal Conversation:** The process and inclusion of Food & Alcohol at Lowell Events; Updates; How we want to move forward with this particular group for future sessions

**Icebreaker:** What is your favorite kind of music at Folk Festival?

- **Responses:** Food; Golf Carts; New Things; Roots; Gospel; Bluegrass; Contemporary Folk Singers; Radio Chatter during Folk Festival; New Age; Zeitico?, African-Dominicano; Eclectic; Blues; Family Polka Band

**Hand-outs:** Lowell Folk Festival Rack Cards

## **Food & Alcohol Permitting:**

- Finding food funding can be a challenge

## **Funding and Institutional Support:**

- Concern with Enterprise changing to Rockland Trust
  - o Will access still be given for the water access to fill water weights for tents
    - Same facilities person will still be present
    - Mosaic Lowell agreed to send out information regarding the access for water weights
- Lowell Cultural Council will have an open grants cycle
  - o MCC has relaxed their rules
  - o You can now submit food related reimbursements now (this is new)
  - o Alcohol reimbursements are not provided
- Is funding still consistent or has this been impacted by current administration
  - o We're still seeing robust engagement on the state side
  - o It appears the state budget appears to be similar
  - o Historically Lowell has done well from allocation from the Massachusetts Cultural Council grants
- Mosaic Lowell is working with Lowell Cultural Council on specific workshops that will help address priorities for upcoming funding cycles
  - o This usually will be announced in August; open in September; close in December?

- Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) has been very responsive on feedback
  - o Mosaic Lowell will include the MCC Grant Cycle Information in an upcoming email

## **Upcoming Festivals and Events**

- Open Streets Lowell - testing this festival / event
  - o Target date: October 4th
  - o Close portion of Merrimack St. from Noon to 4pm
  - o Still awaiting quote from city
  - o If we meet a certain threshold of fundraising - we will close the streets
    - If we do not meet a certain threshold of fundraising - we will continue the event, yet do it in side areas and on sidewalks
    - We could have this be a launching moment to raise funds to develop funds to close the streets and create a pedestrian street scape
  - o Partnering with local colleges to encourage students to come downtown
    - Looking for vendors - resource tables, promotional tables, nonprofit tables, small business, crafts, etc.
    - Community driven event
- Fundraising
  - o Finding ways to connect with people
  - o Finding ways to educate people on what we're doing within DIY Lowell
  - o Multiple facets of involvement
- DIY Lowell 10th Annual Gala
  - o Still awaiting venue confirmation
- Events - Vendors / Venues
  - o Difficulty with timely communication
  - o Hard to receive confirmations to move forward with planning and budget planning
  - o Many are experiencing these issues
  - o Many places are facing staffing shortages
- Hispanic Festivals
  - o Would love to see more Hispanic Festivals
    - El Salvador Festival (August 26?)
    - Puerto Rican Festival (August 3?)
- Folk Festival
  - o Merchandise sold online and at the event
  - o Pricing TBD
  - o Seeking Long-Term Office/Admin volunteer currently
    - Mosaic Lowell suggested student volunteers yet this doesn't address consistency
    - Internships might be possible - yet are not always reliable
    - CASE suggested speaking to Lowell Senior Center for potential volunteers that could provide a better consistency in coverage
    - Doesn't need to be the same person, just needs to be consistent in coverage
    - Pre-event work is not exciting or easy to recruit volunteers
    - Mosaic Lowell suggested Levi with Community Connections perhaps
    - Mosaic Lowell agreed to introduce Folk Festival to Community Connections
    - Lowell Senior Center agreed to share volunteer opportunities
  - o Recruiting Planning Committee Members
    - Our board is great at what they do
    - Yet - not necessarily great at recruiting new members

## **Lowell Fest Force and Volunteer Needs**

- Lowell Fest Force

- Volunteer platform for community events & festivals
- Creation of Lowell Fest Force Ambassador volunteer position
- Approximately 50 to 60 people on the list
  - Currently receive virtual badge for volunteering
- We're seeking more festival and community events that want to be listed within this platform to develop a robust series of events volunteers could take part
- Has its own stand-alone website currently
- Mosaic Lowell could list on their website
- There are needs for volunteers for other events - we need these event organizers to join the Lowell Fest Force
- Call to Action: Event organizers list your event on Lowell Fest Force page
  - Send a one paragraph description of your festival and a link to your volunteer opportunities
  - Newsletter will go out monthly with upcoming volunteer opportunities
  - Send a graphic/logo for your event if possible
  - Lowell Fest Force will table at your event to check in volunteers or a QR code can be provided for volunteers to be required to check in at the event
- Many events have a strong need for planning committee members
  - This is hard to fill these roles as most planning committee members are long-term and at some point burn out or need to move on yet planning committees are hard to backfill
  - Potential training for board members that learn about how to volunteer with planning committees
    - A matchmaking training opportunity for local leaders/board members/volunteers to learn how to work on an event planning committee
    - Board Diversity Training - provided by Lowell Plan might be something to model off of for this
  - Having multiple ambassadors that represent the diversity of Lowell to better access new volunteers
  - Many planning committees also volunteer in other ways; yet not always
  - What is the appropriate level of commitment for planning committee members?
  - How do you get new people involved?
  - Succession Planning is so important
  - People want to know what they can do and give them opportunities to grow
    - If volunteers want continued involvement, encourage more intrinsic and long-lasting opportunities to help grow the event
  - Ensure there is a wealth of different volunteer opportunity types available for various community events and festivals
  - The Time Exchange was a local platform that helped promote volunteer opportunities before that no longer exists
  - How to promote opportunities
    - Market opportunities with existing volunteer quotes, video clips, and other insights to encourage involvement
- Revolutionary Valley is working with a new volunteer software that may be something that aligns well with this current platform
  - This software provides a method to sub-divide into different categories or program offerings
  - This software is data-driven
  - This might help address the data problem, calendar problem, and volunteer problem that has a lot of overlap
  - Having a software that can help manage the volunteer data would be helpful
- Lowell Celebrates Kerouac
  - How do you maintain continuity on one hand and also remain innovative

- Our meetings are open to all
- People come and go
- There is no magic formula, yet there is a balance
- New members should have a stake in it; so that they are motivated
- Yet current and long-lasting members also need to be willing to maintain continuity and open to innovation
- Succession Planning is so important
- People want to know what they can do and give them opportunities to grow
  - If volunteers want continued involvement, encourage more intrinsic and long-lasting opportunities to help grow the event

#### **Other Ideas and Thoughts: Lowell needs more parades!**

- CASE says Lowell is not a parade friendly city because the city streets are not adequate for parades
- CASE says Lowell has a lot of existing parades yet these are hard to plan

#### **What do you want to see in September at this meeting?**

- Upcoming events
- Upcoming in 2026
- Bicentennial planning in 2026
  - What are others doing?
  - How do individual stories fit into the larger collective?
  - What is the city doing? What are the various themes that are being represented? How does the city want to present ourselves overall for the Bicentennial?
  - CASE is not involved due to constraints
  - Mosaic Lowell mentioned that there will be a website that will help promote the bicentennial

#### **Action Items:**

1. Mosaic Lowell will send out information regarding Enterprise/Rockland Trust water access for tents
2. Mosaic Lowell will send out information regarding Massachusetts Cultural Council Funding Priorities and Workshops; Grant Cycle Information
3. Mosaic Lowell will introduce Folk Festival to Community Connections for potential volunteers
4. Lowell Senior Center will share Folk Festival volunteer opportunities (Office/Admin)
5. Lowell Event Organizers are encouraged to send DIY Lowell (Chris Hayes) an email to have their community event or festival listed on Lowell Fest Force
  - a. Include one paragraph event description
  - b. Include graphic/logo if possible
  - c. Include link to volunteer opportunities
6. September meeting planning for 2026 Event Season
7. Mosaic Lowell will include Bicentennial Website and Planning Information
8. Share Upcoming Events