

MRC Governance Meeting

2025.09.05

Attendees: Paul Vinsel, Betsy Fitzgerald, Maggie McLoughlin, Tess Parks, Pat Kimball, Chasity Tuell, Elizabeth Fortier, Brendan O'Neil, Grayson Havens

*Note- not all spelling of names will be correct

Intros

Discussion on Amendment to Statute of MRC

- CT: deep appreciation but feedback on proposed amendment. Stating meeting in private and not mentioning executive session and deliberation may raise red flags. Spoke with Rep. Craft (Lydia). With Holly currently on council, don't want it to be perceived as a conflict. Lydia not on Council now but was in past and therefore brings legitimacy to the request via ability to speak to the need.
- Brendan has received information that his office prefers he does not work on this.
- PV: Questions regarding what the AG feels about this more broadly, BO suggests that that would happen when it is live and comes from the AG. PV asks if appropriate to reach out now via email, BO says that is always permissible
- An alternative direction would be to bullet out our goals rather than craft the amendment itself. Then partner w revisors office to get the right language to meet goals.
- Pat: This is time sensitive. We don't need the content so much as a title and sponsor.
 - o Once we open this statute, they can change other things in it, so need to be careful what we are asking for. Lydia would be a great sponsor.
- Must happen by Sept 26. Don't need full bill. Need bullet points.
 - o She could decide she doesn't want to do it, but needs at least bullet points to make that distinction
 - o TP: In terms of process, as we are in Y2 of the 132nd legislature. New bills needs to be voted in with the majority of the legislative council
 - Oct 23- when they meet
 - o Need bill by then, can always get amendments later
 - o TP: If we do this wrong, a future MRC could abuse the statute, need to talk about our duty to protect transparency.
 - o BF- the right to know advisory committee to the judiciary committee might be useful to consult. Sen. Anne Carney chairs that. They've talked about this very issue. Another perspective might be helpful there.
- PK: shares Tess' concern. Goal is narrow- grant scoring in exec session, but will that have unintended consequences? When listening to the evaluation, everyone was deeply uncomfortable w scoring aspect of the grant.
- PV: when Paul was scoring, he was doing that solo, not a public issue
- PK: After the individual scores, then the group discussion to agree/create consensus on awardees, that's the challenge. If got info at that meeting you could change your score. Ex: meeting with whole council, things on wall, etc.

- BO- Point on the process- flags that there is a different process by which the council takes a position on something as an individual vs the Council itself. A vote-related process is recommended; the Chair is most likely the best fit for this role.
- PV- Concerned it wasn't transparent enough, particularly round 2 scoring
- PK: Would have suggested that round 2 go on hold, we didn't have enough time to discuss it. Felt rushed in decision.
- What are our goals?
 - o Sensitively handle any potential grantee's institutional capacity information.
- PK: We don't have an appeal process, would that help the public build trust in our process?
 - o Doesn't think that will lead to large no. of appeals
- MM: Appeals may raise false hopes regarding the ability to "gain" funding if you appeal, as we would have allocated all the funds. Suggest moving a discussion to the grants committee to think through how to build trust in the grants process.
- TP: Processing in real time, agrees on the discomfort. Talking about public dollars, triggering public conversations, raises it to a higher level of scrutiny and it should be there. Is there a way that we can improve the scoring process? Never was there the first time, not a scorer.
- State RFP clarifies why an award was granted. Needs to be safeguards.
- PV: wants to be very cautious, concerned the timeline will not allow for a thoughtful process.
- PK: agrees, will be new governor, legislators, don't want to lose the mission of the council. Changing statute not bylaw. Bigger risks. Can get legislators to listen to us in future.
- MM: Consequence is risk that we wouldn't be seen as listening to the applicants' feedback, which also could contribute to reduced trust
- PV: possibly waldo... article... lost OSF money
- Penobscot County: No one thought anything of it, just didn't think to notify the public, trying to have initial conversations, lesson learned if you don't think about transparency from the public.
- TP: the scores can be there and public and sensitively stated
- MM: less about the score and summary, more about the discussion about generating the consensus score/awards.
- CT: Some scored really well, if an expert scored it they struggled to speak to it. Challenges sharing information. People self censored.
- TP: News coverage on Presque isle city council. Airline carrier exec session. Heart of that debate is having public conversations about the merits of the airline.
- PK: Risk is real, but an example of if you know they are about to lose their certification.
- MM: They are our neighbors, have to factor in this is different than critiquing national airlines.
- PV: This is going to require more discussion. Bringing it back to measure how we can make it transparent yet sensitive.
- PK: Decision to continue discussion/bring to council is consensus-driven, so don't need vote.
- PV: Appreciate everyone, appreciate goals to address feedback from applicants.
- BO: Worth picking up the thread Chasity indicated re conflict of interest. On the one hand, it prevented those with useful knowledge of what was happening on the ground from making that knowledge available to the council. On other hand, would that be prejudicial as not part of the application? State RFP reviewers may have that knowledge or don't.
- PK: Elizabeth- do we have consensus on date of public forum?
- EF: Not yet, but likely Nov 14.