



**CELEBRATE MANSFIELD FESTIVAL COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
Tuesday, February 21, 2023 at 5:00 PM**

MINUTES

Attendance: Chair Emily Wicks, Christine Ballestrini, Louis Goffinet

Absent: Colby Trembley, Virginia Walton

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm, Kathleen Paterson, Joshua Stern

1. Call to order

Chair Emily Wicks called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

2. Public comment

There were no public comments.

3. Approve Minutes from January 10, 2023

Christine Ballestrini made a motion to approve the minutes of January 10, 2023. Emily Wicks seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Review Suggested Festival Priority Activities and Policy Discussion

The Committee discussed a list of ideas for the Festival that had been assembled based on the brainstorming session from the previous meeting. Below is a list of the ideas discussed and (**in bold**) which Committee and staff members will follow up on them:

- Increasing activities at the booths and focusing more on giveaways from them (if appropriate), such as balloon sculptures, goodie bags, or plants:
 - **Ms. Ballestrini suggested working with UConn's Botanical Conservatory. She will reach out to them.**
 - Louis Goffinet said activities with balloons might not be possible due to sustainability initiatives in town.
 - He noted that the Mansfield Public Schools gave away STEM circuit kits at their booth at last year's Festival and said they would likely do so again.
- Chalk drawings – **Mr. Goffinet will follow up with Noah Yilmaz about chalk drawings.**
- A demo from Frog Bridge Gymnastics
- Ms. Wicks wondered if the climbing wall could be brought back, possibly organized by one of the booths.
 - Ms. Ballestrini suggested an agility course in place of the wall.
 - She added that there could be activity stations for different age groups, possibly run by PE teachers or E.O. Smith students volunteering for their senior projects. She also likes the idea of a leaderboard with prizes.
- Ms. Wicks noted that the clown hour and the scarecrow contest were both popular at last year's Festival. The Committee is interested in bringing back the scarecrow contest but noted that it would need to be planned in advance.
- Ms. Wicks suggested that the cornhole tournament be sponsored by a booth; the Committee discussed which booths could run it.
- Ms. Wicks would also like to arrange for more puppets in the kids' area.
- The Committee discussed the possibility of hiring a comedian and decided that an MC to introduce the musical acts – possibly a student from UConn's School of Fine Arts – might be easier to recruit. **Kathleen Paterson will look into an MC.**

- A performance from CRT – **Ms. Wicks said she would contact CRT Managing Director Michelle Polgar about a performance.**
- Involvement from UConn Athletics, specifically sports that are not in season in the fall such as baseball, softball, or rowing:
 - **Mr. Goffinet will follow up with E.O. Smith Crew about having a booth and a rowing machine.**
 - **Ms. Paterson will reach out to Partnership Board President Kyle Muncy about UConn athletics involvement.**
- Ms. Wicks noted the desire for more restaurant involvement:
 - She said some restaurants gave out food samples at last year’s festival. Joshua Stern noted that doing so may require approval from Eastern Highlands Health District.
 - Ms. Wicks said a food truck area, possibly in the kids’ zone, would likely be popular. Mr. Goffinet said food trucks could help fill the niches that are not covered by the downtown restaurants.
 - **The Committee decided to contact the restaurants in the downtown to gauge if they would be interested in participating, similar to prior years. If there is limited interest, the Committee will pursue food trucks.**

The Committee also discussed ideas that had been proposed to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Festival. These ideas included:

- Recording stories about what people love about Mansfield, possibly with involvement from WHUS, UCTV, or others
- Ms. Ballestrini said sustainability efforts in Mansfield could be highlighted and that students and teachers from the new elementary school would like to have a booth.
- Ms. Ballestrini and Ms. Wicks also suggested a mural or display of panels to showcase what people love about Mansfield.
 - Ms. Ballestrini suggested making “Why I Love Mansfield” panels for the pickleball court fence.
 - **Cynthia van Zelm will follow up with the Public Works Department.**
- Ms. Wicks also hopes to invite more performance groups to be involved in an opening ceremony for the Festival. **Ms. van Zelm offered to contact choir directors in the area about a choral performance.**

The Committee does not plan to include a parade or beer garden at this year’s Festival, but Ms. Wicks suggested that a beer garden could be a separate event.

Ms. van Zelm said she and Ms. Paterson will work on a list of which Committee members will reach out to which businesses and other entities, and a timeline for decisions to be made regarding Festival main tasks.

5. Adjourn

Mr. Goffinet made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Ballestrini seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 PM.

Minutes prepared by Joshua Stern