



Board Meeting Minutes

June 28 – 29, 2016
Omni Mount Washington Resort
Bretton Woods, NH

DRAFT

Board Members Present: Alex Aldrich, Byron Champlin, Andrew Cornell, Amy Ellsworth, Geoff Hargadon, Jane James, Doug Keith, Ted Landsmark, Jeremy Liu, Ginnie Lupi, Kristina Newman-Scott, Julie Richard, Betsy Richards, Randy Rosenbaum, Larry Simpson, Ann Smith, Pam Tatge, Ted Wendell, Marco Werman, Carrie Zaslow

Staff Present: Anita Chan, Cathy Edwards, Steven Fenton, Sara Nash, Adrienne Petrillo, Jane Preston, Quita Sullivan, Kim Szeto, Sharon Timmel, Ann Wicks

Guests: Angela Brown, Barbara Murphy, Chip Newell, Frumie Selchen, Lisa Wong

Notetaker: Steven Fenton

CHAIR LARRY SIMPSON CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 1:07 PM

Call to Order & Welcome

Chair Larry Simpson welcomed the board to Mount Washington. Larry was pleased to see such a strong turnout and suggested moving the retreat into June was a success. Larry thanked Ginnie Lupi, Byron Champlin, Jane James, and Doug Keith for their assistance in identifying and recommending the great Mount Washington Hotel for a venue. Larry spoke briefly about the new board member orientation earlier that morning where they welcomed board nominees Barbara Murphy, Chip Newell, Lisa Wong, and Taylor Ho Bynum (*in absentia*). Larry led the room in a round of introductions.

Executive Director's Report

Cathy Edwards thanked everyone for making the trip to northern New Hampshire. She hoped the retreat would offer board members a chance to learn more about NEFA's critical issues. This marks her second board retreat since she became Executive Director. Since last July, she has learned and metabolized a lot about the board, staff, and organization,

Cathy announced NEFA received a grant of \$1.35m from the State Department for the fourth season of Center Stage program, which will take place in FY19. Cathy shared season three tours were underway and encouraged board members to attend performances throughout the region.

Cathy reflected on her first full year as executive director and NEFA's accomplishments in FY16. The board made major policy decisions and successfully integrated new membership and leadership. Cathy felt especially proud of the work to establish the Endowment & Reserve Policy and an identity statement for NEFA. The organization's newest initiatives, the Creative City program and the Rebecca Blunk Fund, are up and running and each made their second round of grants in FY16.

In 2016, NEFA engaged Metris Arts Consulting to perform an evaluation of the National Dance Project (NDP). It has been a vast amount of work to review and analyze 20 years of data. NEFA staff collaborated with Dawn Spears and the Northeast Indigenous Arts Alliance (NIAA) to cohost a native arts convening in April. And NEFA will soon launch a major creative economy research project and artist employment survey to assess the work and needs of creative workers in New England.

Cathy described some of the opportunities and challenges she foresees in 2017. The board has more work ahead, adding another new class of trustees and planning for leadership succession as more long-standing members rotate off the board in years to come. NEFA has significant development challenges ahead, including the arduous process of submitting proposals for grant renewals for the National Dance Project (NDP) and National Theater Project (NTP). Cathy also asked for the board's assistance in developing a strategy for resource development for the New England Programs to support their ongoing evolution.

In 2017, Cathy would like to use the evaluations of NDP, NTP, and the New England Programs to form the basis for an update to the current strategic plan. The plan was created in 2013 and with subsequent changes to NEFA leadership and the field, the organization needs a better road map for the coming two years. Part of that process will involve investing in staff trainings in equity, accessibility, facilitation, and

program services. The Executive Committee will appoint a taskforce from the board to revisit that plan and address these issues, and any board members with special interest are invited to share their interest with Cathy and Larry.

NEFA's reliance on a small group of funders entails some inherent risk. There have been leadership changes at two of NEFA's five major funders, which could result in shifting organizational priorities in those groups. So NEFA will undertake a risk assessment; and the organization must work to diversify funding sources. Cathy invited board members to offer additional challenges they see in the field. One member addressed the mounting resistance to globalization, and implored NEFA to continue efforts in cross-cultural work, because presenters and artists will need NEFA's support more than ever in this climate. Another commented on the importance of finding a seat at the table with policy leaders and the importance of inviting them into NEFA's sphere. Not only should NEFA invest in artists directly, but also continue weaving them and their work into case-making and advocacy work.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Larry Simpson presented the minutes from the Board of Directors meeting on March 2, 2016 and asked for any corrections. Board member Carrie Zaslow noted her name was not listed in the attendance.

Byron Champlin made a motion to approve the minutes from the Board of Directors meeting on March 2, 2016 with the noted correction. Randy Rosenbaum seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Larry Simpson presented the minutes from the FY16 Executive Committee meetings on June 25, 2015; October 17, 2015; and February 22, 2016 and asked for any comments. No comments were offered.

Byron Champlin made a motion to approve the FY16 Executive Committee minutes. Kristina Newman-Scott seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Trustees Committee Report

Trustees Committee Chair Jane James thanked her fellow committee members, Pamela Tatge, Betsy Richards, Randy Rosenbaum, and Ted Landsmark. Over the last year, the group assessed the composition of the board, determined a priority list for recruitment, and identified four nominees for the Class of 2019. Jane also recognized Ted Landsmark, Jeremy Liu, and Sandra Burton (*in absentia*), who will retire from the board. She thanked them for their years of service and led the group in a round of applause.

Board Officer & Class Nominations

Jane James requested a motion to approve the following nominations:

Officers: Larry Simpson, *Chair*; Andrew Cornell, *Vice Chair*; Geoff Hargadon, *Treasurer*; Ann Smith, *Secretary*; Randy Rosenbaum, *Executive Committee Member (at-large)*; Amy Zell Ellsworth, *Executive Committee Member (at-large)*

Class of 2017: Byron Champlin (*1-yr extension*); Jane James (*1-yr extension*)

Class of 2019: Taylor Ho Bynum (*1st 3-yr term*); Amy Zell Ellsworth (*2nd 3-yr term*); Barbara Murphy (*1st 3-yr term*); Chip Newell (*1st 3-yr term*); Betsy Richards (*2nd 3-yr term*); Lisa Wong (*1st 3-yr term*)

Randy Rosenbaum made a motion to approve the slate of officer and class nominations. Carrie Zaslow seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Corporate Officer Elections

Larry Simpson asked the board for a motion to appoint Cathy Edwards as Chief Executive Officer, Jane Preston as Assistant Secretary, and Anita Chan as Assistant Treasurer of NEFA with signing privileges on behalf of the organization.

Byron Champlin made a motion to appoint Cathy Edwards, Jane Preston, and Anita Chan as described and grant them authority to sign on behalf of NEFA. Kristina Newman-Scott seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Finance & Audit Committee Report

Director of Finance & Administration Anita Chan referred to the financial statements as of February 29, 2016. NEFA had a healthy cash balance of \$4.3m. Since then the organization purchased US-based treasuries in a variety of maturities. Anita pointed out NEFA's net assets are now subdivided between quasi-endowment and strategic reserves based on the endowment and reserve policy approved by the board in March. Anita explained the financials will explicitly list these balances starting with the FY16 audited financial statements.

Board Treasurer Geoff Hargadon mentioned some highlights from the investment summary. Last year, the Investment Committee adjusted allocations in equities and fixed income. Geoff cautioned the board to not read too much into the 2% drop represented on the summary. The committee brought the allocation in line with the new policy. He said NEFA's exposure to Europe is very limited, so while the Brexit vote may have taken some by surprise, it does not indicate bad news for NEFA and it would be a mistake to react with hasty reallocations.

FY17 Budget Approval

Geoff presented the proposed FY17 budget. The budget is up 41% because of an ambitious programming schedule, with added spending in Center Stage, piloting the New England Dance Fund, the creative economy employment report, and the arts & military convening in March 2017. Larry Simpson called for a motion to approve the proposed budget for FY17.

Randy Rosenbaum made a motion to approve the proposed FY17 budget. Ted Wendell seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Development & Communications Committee Report

Vice Chair Andrew Cornell announced the Board of Directors achieved 100% giving in this year's annual fund, an accomplishment Andrew had not seen in his eleven years on the board. Setting and meeting this important benchmark helps NEFA's funders understand the organization is steered by a board committed to its growth and success. Andrew felt this should be a board standard going forward. Andrew also spoke about attending a NEFA-supported event, a concert by Wu Man and the Shanghai Quartet at Wellesley in April. It was a great opportunity to meet the artists, see NEFA's work in action, and engage with the Wellesley community. He urged all board members to attend at least one event a year.

Reports from the Region

Board members each had a few minutes to speak about trends, challenges, or opportunities they have observed in the field. Several members expressed interest in NEFA's arts & military convening, and considered other thematic areas NEFA could be poised to explore or investigate through research, programming, or convenings. Some board members suggested the intersection of arts and health would be a topical and important area for NEFA to explore. Others identified NEFA's creative employment report as an opportunity to leverage data for advocacy and casemaking, both for financial support and equitable policy change.

NEFA Identity Statement and Messaging Platform

At the 2015 retreat, Ann Smith expressed a desire to speak about NEFA more specifically, authentically, and concisely, with appropriate tools to be an ambassador and steward of the organization. So the Development & Communications took on the charge to develop messaging materials to equip board members with tools to promote NEFA, its mission, and work. The committee met throughout the year, guided by Burt Glass from Hairpin Communications, to develop an identity statement and messaging platform for NEFA. Ann presented the recommended identity statement to the board for their feedback:

“The New England Foundation for the Arts invests in the arts to enrich communities in New England and beyond. NEFA accomplishes this by granting funds to artists and cultural organizations; connecting them to each other and their audiences; and analyzing their economic contributions. NEFA serves as a regional partner for the National Endowment for the Arts, New England's state arts agencies, and private foundations.”

There was some discussion about wording in the identity statement, but Ann reminded the board the identity statement and mission are not the same. She emphasized while the language in the identity statement is important, it's flexible and can be adjusted to suit the context. Ann described the message platform as a "frequently asked questions" document that can help guide board members on which aspects are most interesting or appealing to different sets of stakeholders. The board was enthusiastic about both the identity statement and message platform and congratulated the committee on its work.

Larry Simpson asked for a motion to adopt the identity statement and messaging platform as recommended by the Development & Communications Committee.

Julie Richard made a motion to adopt the identity statement and messaging platform as recommended by the Development & Communications Committee. Carrie Zaslow seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

NEFA Program Portfolio: Services and Strategies

Cathy shared one of NEFA's major tasks in FY17 will be applying for funding renewals for the National Dance and Theater Projects. So Cathy and the NEFA staff have been thinking about program design, learning from new and historical data, looking at emerging trends in the field, and evaluating the impact of dollars invested through these programs. Cathy hoped to use this conversation to share some of the preliminary findings of evaluations of NEFA's national programs, which will help situate the following morning's conversation about program strategies to consider the critical areas NEFA should build out.

Over its 20-year span, NDP has awarded \$32m in grants to 636 dance projects by 350 artists. NDP tours have traveled to all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The evaluation was an opportunity to assess the program's impact and ask dancemakers and cultural organizations about their priorities and needs. Metris Arts Consulting evaluated 20 years of data and surveyed the field, conducting interviews, and focus groups on equity and inclusion. 534 dancemakers responded to the choreographer survey, and 250 organizations responded to the presenter survey. The surveys asked artists whether touring is still relevant; and asked presenters why they present dance. NEFA also wanted to understand the program's impact, and explored whether NDP was providing sustaining support to a limited number of artists, or if it is serving as a catalyst to build the field and national dance infrastructure by funding new artists.

The feedback indicated overwhelming interest in the core methodology of NDP: 96% of artists surveyed stated NDP support was absolutely critical or very important to their work; 91% answered that NDP grants enabled them to obtain engagements; and 91% answered NDP grants strengthened their relationships with presenters. The Metris survey of grantees revealed a median of 2.3 awards per grantee, and an average of 2 awards per grantee, with some artists having received 6 or more NDP production grants. Cathy mentioned this was a significant finding and NEFA has asked for information on those artists to discover whether they are using NDP funds to continue similar tour patterns, or to tour in new communities. 5 of the artists and companies who received the most grants from NDP, are important dance companies led by artists of color.

In addition to providing some sustaining support to artists and companies, NDP has done good work adding to the network of dance. In fiscal years 14, 15, and 16, 40% of grantees were first time recipients and 22% were first time applicants. Cathy shared this was a testament to NDP staff going farther afield to promote the program. These findings demonstrated NDP is functioning as a both a sustaining source to veterans and as a catalyst to new artists.

As to the question about whether artists still want to tour: 83% of the 534 respondents said touring is a goal of theirs; and 74% said they currently tour work in some form. When asked why they want to tour, highly ranked answers were to: reach new audiences; and increase visibility for future opportunities. Artists did not consider touring a means to earn income for their companies or themselves. Going into the survey, the conventional wisdom was that touring is dying, or that there is no marketplace for dance. However survey data suggested tour sites have remained constant; artists tour to an average of 6.2 to 6.8

sites in 5-year periods; with a median number of 6 tours across every 5-year period. These results show NDP is a bulwark protecting the opportunity to tour.

Of the presenters who received grants to present artists over the past 3 years, 75% are repeat; and 25% of dollars went to new presenters. The presenter survey asked about the impact of receiving a NEFA grant. 35% answered without NDP support they would bring no or less dance to their communities; and 65% said NDP has an impact on what dance they present, because the grant allows them to take risks on new artists or more complex work. When asked about their motivations to present dance, presenters ranked audience demand low, but rated advancing their mission; their commitment to dance; and their desire to connect audiences to diverse cultures and dance forms as high priorities.

These results raise important questions about the future direction of the program. Some of those questions include: how to balance sustaining artists with diversifying grantees; how to do that in an equitable way; how to continue recognizing and awarding excellence and originality, that is relevant and inclusive; how and to what extent to require community engagement and recognize excellence and expertise in off-stage impact; and how to support grantmaking and the notion of touring.

A board member asked if the study surveyed applicants who had not been successful in receiving NDP support. Cathy explained those artists were also surveyed and they are an important group to break out as a separate research category. Doing so may illuminate barriers created by the program's criteria or application process.

The board reacted warmly to the positive results from the surveys, but expressed concern about the limitations imposed on the program by its reliance on two major funders. If NEFA and NDP are sustaining dancemaking and touring in the country, then NEFA has an obligation to sustain the program. Some recommended infusing the commitment to dance across all NEFA programs and others recommended further research on additional foundation support. Others mentioned the results of the report would make a compelling case for both institutional and individual fundraising.

Deputy Director Jane Preston shifted the focus to look at the National Theater Project (NTP). Because NEFA's original mission was to support touring of artists' work, NEFA's niche has been funding the creation of work and moving it around. In establishing NTP, NEFA identified that creating and touring theater poses different challenges from dance. In the pilot phase of NTP, NEFA engaged consultant Chris Dwyer to develop an appropriate set of questions and a framework to evaluate the impact of grants. The first 12 projects awarded by NTP are completing their touring now, 6 years later, reflecting the range of project timelines intentionally chosen for the pilot. One learning from the pilot phase of the program was a shift to fund projects when they are at a more developed stage such that within 18 months they have completed development of the project and begun touring.

Due to unique challenges facing touring theater, Chris' study focused more on artist practice, specifically how the creation of the work transitions into the touring stage. NEFA has supported many companies making work collaboratively, and creating hybrid work that invokes different forms and media. Companies often need to create differently scaled versions of their projects to get into touring sites. NTP artists are connecting with a variety of many networks across sectors.

The process of creating a new work, especially in collaborative practice, can be challenging and difficult to map onto a timeline. In many instances, the artists are working with each other in addition to participants in the communities. Relationships with local residents serve as anchors in the communities where artists are working and touring. Chris noted artists are seeking deeper support for community work. These practices are appealing to presenters as well, who actively seek opportunities to work with artists who engage the local community beyond the confines of a performance. These findings will be collected in a public report to be released in the fall.

The next part of the evaluation is to speak with artists who were not funded, but returned as stronger applicants in later grant rounds. In these instances, artists benefited from the technical assistance by the program advisors throughout the course of the application process. Over the life of the program,

conversations among the advisors and ensembles broadened from learning how to tour, to learning how to sustain relationships that develop through the tour process. Jane pointed to Double Edge Theater as an example. Their production of *The Grand Parade* initially toured to six sites. Following the success of that tour, they brought the work back to the region by connecting with three New England presenters who partnered for an application to NEFA's Expeditions grant. It was a lesson both in moving site-based work, and how to develop relationships within communities to sustain the practice and production of the work.

Larry Simpson adjourned the first day of the meeting at 5:57 PM

Day 2

Larry Simpson called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM

Larry Simpson welcomed the group back. He commented on a fun evening together the previous night and looked forward to digging back into discussion about NEFA's program strategies.

Discussion of NEFA Program Strategies

Cathy asked the board to break out into three groups that would talk through the critical questions facing NEFA's programs, which would then be reported back to the rest of the board. Cathy assigned a different set of questions to each group centered around three themes:

- Group 1: How should NEFA balance providing catalytic or sustaining funds?
- Group 2: What are effective methods to identify and support the needs of individual artists?
- Group 3: How can NEFA support place based work, while also engaging new diverse communities?

Group 1

Board member Betsy Richards reported her group saw value in diversifying NEFA's network of artists as a catalyst for new work, but they agreed NEFA should maintain its commitment to providing sustaining support for artists and the field. The group discussed ways to achieve and maintain this balance. They suggested NEFA consider reshaping funding structures to offer longer-term funding to new applicants and first-time grantees, and single-year funding for repeat grantees. They discussed establishing a special committee to identify ways to support Native artists more intentionally. Access to NEFA's touring programs would provide opportunity to tribal nations who are not able to access state funding. They would like to see NEFA recognize New England's changing demographics by adapting program structures to ensure all communities and art forms have equitable access to NEFA. The group felt the endowment and reserve policy offers an opportunity for NEFA to take more risk in experimenting with new services.

Group 2

Board Member Randy Rosenbaum's group discussed NEFA support for individual artists. They spoke about NEFA's newest program Creative City, which provides direct support to individual artists to create work in a specific place and time. They felt NEFA's mission to move work around is important, but there is value in creating work in discrete communities. NEFA could consider seeking out opportunities to exhibit site-specific projects in other settings. Creating a means to replicate or share the outcomes of site-specific work in other communities might encourage organizations to program new work. Organizations could act as mentors or project managers for artists who do not have the capability to create large scale works. Directly supporting this kind of relationship would empower artists to develop their skills. NEFA could play a role in providing technical assistance or training on building capabilities; and also promote state and local resources. They also discussed whether NEFA should prioritize funding the creation of new work or providing resources to artists to advance their careers. They felt NEFA is more inclined to support work where there is clear indication it will be seen in and engage multiple communities. Group 2 agreed with the first group's suggestion NEFA should consider expanding discipline scope, to incorporate art forms that more easily lend themselves to the movement of work.

Group 3

Board Member Alex Aldrich presented his group's conversation about where NEFA should place value in the question of supporting place-based work for the benefit of localized communities or reaching new

and more diverse communities through touring and other mechanisms. Alex's group spoke about the value of providing training and technical assistance to artists and the positive impact that can have on their own communities. Diversifying NEFA's outreach by supporting touring brings new work into communities and prevents fatigue. Both options represent important work. The group sensed there would be enormous value in bringing outsiders to work in local presentation context. NEFA should set community engagement and social justice as organizational priorities. This could be emphasized within the content and structure of NEFA's grant application forms; or NEFA could add weight to applicants who explore new resources and engage new communities. The group felt applicants should be equipped to articulate how their projects would fulfill or align with NEFA's organizational values.

The board discussed the overlapping ideas that emerged from these discussions. Each wrestled with definitions of equity, inclusiveness, and diversity; how to support artistic development; and whether resources should be prioritized for creating new work or sustaining practice. One observation that emerged from the group conversation was an agreement NEFA's role is not to personally shepherd artists through the business of art, but to connect them to resources that already exist, including at state arts agencies.

A board member asked what NEFA can do to enhance the work of the states versus what NEFA can do to distinguish itself? NEFA extends the work the states do on a regional basis by supporting artists to engage new audiences elsewhere in the region or country; and by promoting collaboration among presenters and arts organizations across state lines. NEFA's emphasis on connecting artists and their work across borders, and touring, is its most unique work. Cathy summarized she heard NEFA could better embrace its work and impact through a values first lens. She thanked everyone for their great ideas and insights.

Northern New Hampshire Arts Landscape

Jane Preston welcomed local guests Frumie Selchen and Angela Brown. Frumie Selchen is the Executive Director of the Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire, and Angela Brown is a musician and member of the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts. Frumie and Angela spoke about their experience presenting work in Northern New Hampshire. The northern part of the state has 54 towns with less than 10% of the population. Despite the numbers, the area has a strong cultural history and artists in the White Mountains play a major role in the development of the region. Angela pointed out that getting people in the doors of venues and events is a major challenge. Many people in the area work more than one job, so it can be difficult for individuals or families to prioritize time for the arts.

Frumie spoke about NEFA's New England States Touring (NEST) program and how it has benefitted the area. NEST grants enable Frumie and other presenters to bring artists to the area for several weeks and book them for public performances, school programs, and other community engagement opportunities. NEST funding allows Frumie and fellow presenters to pay the artists and still recoup their own costs. Frumie also spoke about NEFA's CreativeGround website and regional convenings, which provide important marketing opportunities for the area's creative workers.

NEFA Future Planning: Priorities for FY17

Cathy referred back to the list of proposed priorities for NEFA in FY17. She asked the board reflect on their two days of conversation and share which ideas, strategies, and opportunities felt most urgent.

The consensus around the room was the current strategic plan requires a refresh. Board members felt it would be in NEFA's best interest to have a plan with a more specific framework for NEFA's immediate future that would build off the learning and outcomes of recent and ongoing program evaluations. A strategic taskforce made up of board and staff members should be appointed to lead this effort. The plan should incorporate organizational values, especially concerning a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion at all levels of the organization. There was agreement NEFA should perform a risk assessment this year, which will identify current or potential gaps in resources and clarify fundraising priorities. This process will also help develop strategies for requests for funding renewals.

Closing Remarks & Adjournment

Larry thanked the board for two good days. He thought the conversations were more energizing this year, which he credited to outstanding leadership and new voices on the board. He welcomed any final comments.

Several board members mentioned they could have spent more time discussing the agenda topics and suggested NEFA consider shifting the scheduling of future retreats to extend longer on the second day or into a third. Cathy thanked the board for this feedback and agreed to reconsider the structure for 2017.

Cathy expressed her thanks to the board for being so generous with their time. She hoped board members felt like they learned more about NEFA, and that they are thinking about how they can actively participate by stewarding NEFA through future challenges and identifying opportunities. Cathy closed by thanking the New Hampshire board members who recommended meeting at the beautiful Mount Washington Hotel, Larry Simpson for his leadership, and the board committee chairs and staff for everything they did to help prepare for the retreat.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 PM

Next Steps:

- ***The Executive Committee will appoint a Strategic Plan Taskforce***
- ***Submit the minutes from this meeting for board approval on October 27, 2016***
- ***NEFA staff will revisit the proposed board meeting scheduling for FY17***