

POET LAUREATE OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES
6.27.2024

Program Description and Mission: Poetry as Windex

The intent of the Poet Laureate program is to promote public awareness of poetry. The Poet Laureate will encourage the reading and writing of poetry by creating programs and holding events, such as workshops for writers, poetry slams, readings and similar events, throughout the Town and in the Schools. The Poet Laureate will:

- enhance cultural life in Needham;
- promote awareness and appreciation of the literary arts to a wide range of audiences;
- utilize the literary arts to celebrate community events;
- connect members of the Needham community through literary arts; and
- create programming in collaboration with the Needham Public Library, Health & Human Services, Park & Recreation, and the Needham Public Schools.

Poetry Improves language, sparks creativity, improves self-awareness, & expands world views.

"Poetry is so important because it helps us understand and appreciate the world around us.

Poetry's strength lies in its ability to shed a "sideways" light on the world, so the truth sneaks up on you. No question about it. Poetry teaches us how to live. Poetry is like the Windex on a grubby car window—it bares open the vulnerabilities of human beings so we can all relate to each other a little better." - Alice Osborne

The Town's Race Equity Statement commits us as individuals to be intentional in our efforts to learn and practice anti-bias and antiracism, transforming our thinking, attitudes and behaviors. Poetry will be our Windex.

The Poet Laureate will be appointed by the Town Manager with input from local cultural organizations, Town staff and public officials.

Program Guidelines

Administration

The Poet Laureate Program will be administered by staff at the Needham Free Public Library in cooperation with the Office of the Town Manager. The Library will:

- assign a staff member to serve as a liaison to the Poet Laureate;
- publicize events that feature the Poet Laureate;
- maintain an archive of the Poet Laureate's activities;
- facilitate the activities of the Poet Laureate by helping to make initial contacts with appropriate community members;
- assist the Poet Laureate with questions/concerns that may arise in conjunction with the position; and

- Provide the Town Manager with a report on the Program to be presented to the Select Board and Board of Library Trustees, as requested.

Eligibility

The Poet Laureate must:

- Live or work in Needham;
- have a demonstrated commitment to the community;
- have a deep understanding of the role of poetry in society;
- commit to the Town's Race Equity Vision Statement;
- have a substantial body of or more forms of literary arts, including poetry; and
- Have the ability and enthusiasm to fulfill the duties of the Poet Laureate.

All candidates are eligible regardless of age, race, gender, belief, national origin, sexual orientation, or physical ability.

Submission Requirements

Applicants should submit a letter of interest outlining their reasons for applying, vision for the position, ideas for and record of public engagement with poetry, along with a curriculum vitae and a selection of representative work. **Submissions should be sent to Allison Smith at neemail1@minlib.net by Friday, August 23, 2024 at 12pm.**

Term

Initially, the Poet Laureate will serve for a term of one year, beginning on or about July 1.

Duties/Requirements

At a minimum, the Poet Laureate will:

- Give appropriate readings or performances at two Town events in each year – the events will be determined by the Library staff and Office of the Town Manager.
- Lead a workshop for students in conjunction with Needham Public Schools.
- Attend and moderate the Library's poetry club meeting in April for National Poetry Month.
- Provide substantive input and guidance at the end of the term on how to improve the Poet Laureate of Needham Program.
- Attend meetings as requested to report on activities.

Selection Committee

The selection committee will consist of some or all of the following members, depending on availability:

- The Town Manager
- The Library Director
- The Reference Supervisor from the Library
- The Economic Development Manager
- A member or representative of the Library Board of Trustees
- A member or representative of the Select Board

- A member or representative of the Needham Center for Arts and Culture
- A writer or recognized authority on poetry and other literary genres

Selection Criteria

- Poetic merit of submitted representative work
- Ideas for community readings and student workshop
- Record of public engagement to promote poetry

Stipend and Budget

The stipend will be \$500 total for the year paid in its entirety in July (or the first month of the assignment, if different). The Office of the Town Manager and Needham Public Library will provide funding for any approved expenses associated with the program.

Creator-in-Residence Program

In the event that the success of the Poet Laureate of Needham Program outpaces the number of qualified and eligible applicants, the Program may be adapted into a Creator-in-Residence Program that expands the spotlight beyond poetry to include other literary arts as well as the visual and performing arts, science, innovation, and technology.