

Maine State Cultural Affairs Council

Maine Arts Commission
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Maine Library Commission
Maine State Museum Commission
Maine State Archives
Maine Historical Society
Maine Humanities Council

131th Maine Legislature

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

February 13, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Peter Merrill, Chair of the Maine State Cultural Affairs Council.

The Maine State Cultural Affairs Council was established in 1991 to ensure a coordinated, integrated system of cultural resource programming and projects and to ensure the support of cultural heritage institutions and activities of the State. It is unique among the fifty states and was created to ensure that the cultural agencies are independent, that they are not subsumed within a larger bureaucracy, but that their activities are coordinated and complementary.

The members of the Council are the Maine Arts Commission, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, the Maine State Library, the Maine State Museum, the Maine Humanities Council, the Maine Historical Society, and the Maine State Archives. Each agency has a Board of Trustees or Commission. The Chair and Vice-Chair (or designee) of each board serves on the Council. The chair of the Council is appointed by the Governor from among the members. The agency directors and a representative from the Governor's Office are *ex-officio* members. The Maine Historical Society and the Maine Humanities Council are not state agencies.

The Council has three items in the budget.

First is a General Fund appropriation of \$39,445. This is not much money, but it is important. Currently the agencies use the money to support their missions. The agencies can speak to how they use the funds but here are two representative examples: At the Maine Historical Society, which I represent on the Council, the funds are used to support the Maine Memory Network, a web based repository of Maine's oral history. At the Maine Humanities Council, the funds are used to support humanities projects at non-profit organizations statewide. It is also important to keep the account active. Over the years we have received more than \$6,000,000 from general obligation bonds and general fund appropriations and we hope receive more again in the future.

The second item is an Other Special Revenue allocation of \$65,424. These funds came from a portion of the revenue generated by the sale of the Bicentennial license plates. These are one time funds. To date we have funded publishing a collection of essays on Maine history and supported Maine History day. A major project was scuttled by COVID. We are currently discussing other projects.

Our third item is in Part NN. This sweeps the funds that remain from the Bicentennial celebration. These funds were designated for projects that we were not able to complete due to COVID. In our last financial order we identified funds that were not likely to be used; Part NN returns them to the General Fund.

Those are the Council's budget items. We appreciate your interest and support.