



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – July 11, 2018 Agenda Item 2

Voting Session

Resolution Appointing Takoma Park Poet Laureate

Recommended Council Action

Approve Resolution

Context with Key Issues

The Arts and Humanities Commission, having solicited nominations for poet laureate from the community, has forwarded the name of Ms. Kathleen O'Toole for consideration by the City Council as the new Takoma Park Poet Laureate.

The Takoma Park Poet Laureate program, established in May 2005, honors the achievements of a local poet and is designed to provide literary leadership in the community. The designation of a poet laureate is intended to not only support and promote Takoma Park poets but to stimulate interest in poetry among residents of the city, encourage young and old to strive for greater expressive abilities, and encourage a wider appreciation of poetry and literature. To be considered for appointment, an individual must be a resident of Takoma Park, a published poet recognized by the literary community, have demonstrated achievement over an extended time period, and been engaged in teaching or public speaking or otherwise involved in the community. Serving in this capacity in the past were Donald Berger (2005-2007), Anne Becker (2007-2011), and Merrill Leffler (2011-2018).

Ms. O'Toole, if appointed, would serve as Takoma Park Poet Laureate through June 30, 2020. Additional information on Ms. O'Toole's credentials and a narrative outlining the project she proposes to undertake during her tenure as Poet Laureate are included in the accompanying materials. Ms. O'Toole, an award winning poet, essayist and educator, is a resident of Ward 3.

Council Priority

A Livable Community for All

Environmental Considerations

N/A

Fiscal Considerations

The Poet Laureate will receive a \$2,000 stipend, distributed over the two year appointment. An additional \$500 has been budgeted in support of their proposed community project.

Racial Equity Considerations

We do not believe this Council action will disproportionately impact any particular group.

Attachments and Links

- Resolution appointing the Takoma Park Poet Laureate
- Nomination Materials – Kathleen O'Toole

Introduced by:

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

RESOLUTION 2018-

APPOINTING THE TAKOMA PARK POET LAUREATE

WHEREAS, the Takoma Park Poet Laureate program was established in May 2005 as a means of honoring the achievement of a local poet, while encouraging young and old to strive for greater expressive abilities and creating a wider appreciation of poetry and literature; and

WHEREAS, a poet laureate is a symbol of the important role the arts play in our civic life and creative expression and can be a source of pride and public pleasure for all Takoma Park residents; and

WHEREAS, the Arts and Humanities Commission has forwarded for Council approval its recommendation for the appointment of Ms. Kathleen O'Toole, a respected poet and a resident of Ward 3, as Takoma Park's Poet Laureate.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Takoma Park hereby appoints Ms. Kathleen O'Toole as Takoma Park Poet Laureate for a two-year period beginning July 1, 2018 and ending June 30, 2020.

Adopted this _____ day of July 2018.

Attest:

Jessie Carpenter, CMC
City Clerk

Kathleen R. O'Toole

May 9, 2018

Takoma Park Arts & Humanities Commission
7500 Maple Avenue
Takoma Park, MD

Dear colleagues:

I am honored to have been invited to apply for the position of Takoma Park Poet Laureate by two former Poets Laureate, Anne Becker and Merrill Leffler. As a part of my application, I'm attaching my CV with publications, and three recent poems.

My proposal for a public project is described below. I believe that it captures both my professional life as a community organizer, and my belief in poetry as an antidote to the distraction and divisions that pull us away from our creative selves and each other.

Proposal for a Public Project: *Moments and Multitudes*

An interactive session to be offered to targeted audiences of students and seniors, which focuses on the power of poetry to help us NOTICE the astonishing and the particular, as well as the ability of poetry to, in the words of Walt Whitman: "contain multitudes." I would first offer a series of "poetry encounters" to students aged 10-16, and to elders (either in a residential setting or organized senior clubs), that could be tailored to the group, but would include the experience of poetry and an invitation to write:

- 1) *Moments*. In my experience with English language haiku, I've found it to be a tool for inviting young people especially (but not exclusively) to focus on fleeting moments of awareness in the human or natural world, and as a result not to miss either the wonder of the natural world or the nuances of relationships.
- 2) *Multitudes*. Similarly, I've used the incantatory and all-embracing poems of Walt Whitman and more contemporary poets in the spirit of Whitman (tailored to the audience) to encourage participants to suspend judgement, and embrace the multiple realities (beautiful and ugly, happy and sad, all kinds of diversity) in our lives and communities.

At the end of two years, I would hope to either host a celebration of the fruits of these sessions, or to produce a simple compilation that could be shared with the larger community.

Sincerely,

Kathleen O'Toole

Kathleen R. O'Toole

Curriculum Vitae

Education

M.A. 1991 Johns Hopkins University, Creative Writing
B.A. 1974 Catholic University of America, French
Junior Year of Studies, Universite de Caen, France
18 credits toward Masters in Divinity, Emory University

Academic Honors

Graduate: Awarded full tuition scholarship to Candler School of Theology at Emory;
attended Johns Hopkins Writing Seminars on teaching fellowship
Undergraduate: Graduated Summa Cum Laude (1st in class); attended Catholic University
on Full Academic Scholarship

Employment History: community organizing, training/ teaching, writing

2014-present Capacity Building Specialist, Catholic Relief Services
2008–2013 Senior Organizer, V.O.I.C.E. Virginians Organized for Interfaith
Community Engagement, Industrial Areas Foundation
2001-2008 Sr. Associate, National Church Outreach, Bread for the World
1999-2001 Senior Organizer, Interfaith Action Communities, Education
organizer, Maryland Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF)
1992-2001 Adjunct Faculty, Language & Literature and Humanities Divisions,
Maryland Institute College of Art
1992-98 Lead Organizer, BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership
Development), Baltimore, Maryland
1991-92 Instructor, Johns Hopkins University Writing Seminars, Johns Hopkins
Center for Talented Youth Organizer/Consultant - Maryland Industrial
Areas Foundation
1989-92 Associate Organizer, BUILD
1982-89 Director, Eastern Communities Training Institute, Philadelphia, Pa.
1981 Organizer, Staff & Leadership Development Specialist Coalition for
Action, New Orleans, La.
1977-81 Executive Director, Wilmington United Neighborhoods, Wilm., DE
1976-77 Community Organizer, Wilmington United Neighborhoods
1974 “Surveillante” and substitute English teacher, Institute de la Sainte Famille,
Mons, Belgium

Publication History

Books

- *Meanwhile* 86 pages, February, 2011 by David Robert Books
- *Practice* 25 page chapbook in 2005 by Finishing Line Press
- *Waking Hours* 27 page chapbook, 2017 Franciscan University Press
- *In the Margins*, 2017 collaboration with Higgins, Lolordo, Mysko *Charry Grove Collections*

Poems Published in Journals and Magazines – A Selected List

- *America*: “Meanwhile”, “The Magdalen, A Garden, and This”
- *Antiphon* “Riff: What it Takes”
- *Asphodel*: “Awaiting My Aunt’s Death, I Take a Walk”
- *Atlanta Review*: “Waking Heaney in Edgartown, Massachusetts”
- *Beltway*: “Demolition in a Time of Penitence”, “Leaves at 100”
- *Blueline*: “This Far”, “Cross Quarter, Catskills” “Sabbath, Eagle Lake”
- *Broadkill Review*: “An Asteroid Brushed By”, “Their Voices”, “Watching Jeopardy at Lorraine’s Grill, Tangier Island”, “Watershed”
- *Christian Century*: “Statio”, “Terce: February”, “Reckoning” “Beyond Doubt”
- *Comstock Review*: “Sarah, Siren”
- *Connecticut Review*: “Rebecca”
- *Delaware Review*: “Homeland Security”, “Those Reels”
- *Grist*: “Grit”
- *Hunger Mountain*: “Medium”, “Starlings”, **Finalist, / Runner Up, Ruth Stone Prize*
- *Little Patuxent Review*: “Behold the Birds”, “Mindfulness”, “Mo-Bay, December Blues”, “Seen, Unseen”, “Riff on a Sunny Rock” “Vespers, Hunting Creek”
- *Margie*: “April is National Poetry Month”, “Reading Obituaries”
- *Natural Bridge*: “Practice”, “Real Presence”
- *New Millennium Writings*: “At Kelly Ingram Park”
- *Northern Virginia Review*: “Heist” * *Winner, N. Virginia Prize*
- *Notre Dame Review*: “Lives of the Saints” “Mi-Careme”
- *Passager*: “Her Bungalow”, “Small Comfort”
- *Poetry*: “County Antrim Archeology” “*Poetry East*” “Lumen de Lumenae”, “Reliquary”
- *Potomac Review*: “Nothing But Gifts”, “Sustenance”
- *Prairie Schooner*: “Salado Markings”
- *Presence*: “Vigil, Day Three”
- *Runes: A Review of Poetry* “Storm”
- *Sligo Review*: “Gite”
- *Smartish Pace*: “Roots, Exposed”, “Terrestrial” * *3rd Place, Benlab Rose Poetry Prize*
- *The Cresset*: “Lauds, Aberdeen Creek”

Awards

- Northern Virginia Review Prize, 2014 “Heist”
- 3rd Prize *Image/NY Encounter Poetry Contest 2017* “At the mariner’s chapel, Auvillar”

Poems Included in Anthologies

- *Adrienne Rich: A Tribute Anthology*: “Bop: The Truth and Nothing But”, “Mindful”
- *DC Poets Against the War*: “Lent, No Ashes”
- *Nothing In the Window: 3023 Red Moon Anthology of Haiku*: “The Gleaners” (haibun)

Essays, Articles and Contributions

- “Small Comfort, Writing Across Race” *Vox Populi*, October 2015
- “Afterward: An Echo in Time” *Nick Virgilio: A Life in Haiku*, Turtle Light Press, 2012
- “The Haiku Eye in the Cantos of Ezra Pound” *Modern Haiku*, 2009
- “Zen & Zorba: The Life and Work of Nick Virgilio” in *A Haiku Path: 20th Anniversary anthology of the Haiku Society of America*
- “Judge Reardon Sums it Up” *The Irish Edition*, Philadelphia, Pa.

Editing

- *A Few Stars Away* – Towpath Haiku Anthology, 2010 co-editor
- “From the Lily Pad” - newsletter of the Nick Virgilio Haiku Association
- *1990 Conference Report for Women & Immigrant Leaders & Organizers*
- *The Community of St. Matthew: A Jubilee History* (1949-1999)
- *A Heart in Camden for One Hundred Years*, a 200-page oral history of Sacred Heart parish in Camden, N. J.

Fellowships, Residencies, Post Graduate Poetry Study

- Anam Cara Writers’ Center, Eyries, Co. Cork, Ireland, (2013)
- Blue Mountain Center (residency, 2007)
- Bread Loaf Writers Conference (2002)
- Community of Writers at Squaw Valley (2011, 2009, 2005, 2003, 2001)
- Martha’s Vineyard Writers’ Retreat (2013)
- Virginia Center for the Community Arts (residency, 2013, 2002)/ VCCA France 2016
- Vermont College Post Graduate Program (2001)
- The Poets House, Portmuck, County Antrim, Ireland (1991)

Teaching, Workshops & Creative Presentations

- *Moment, Place & Music in Nick Virgilio’s Haiku*, American Literary Association, May 2015
- Nick Virgilio: A Life in Haiku – Featured Panel, Haiku North America, Ottawa, CN, July 2010
- Nick Virgilio, American Haiku Master – Guest Lecturer, Seikei University, Tokyo, Japan, April, 2008; Haiku North America Conference, Ottawa, ON, August, 2009
- “Haiku Eye” writing workshops for high school students, using the writing of haiku poetry to sharpen perception and craft (1992-1998)
- “Whitman Alive” – poetry workshops for children & young adults developed for the (1992) Centennial Celebration of the poet’s death and conducted in Camden, NJ, Harlem, NYC, Baltimore, MD