



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – Sept. 28, 2022 Agenda Item 1

Voting Session

Resolution Appointing Takoma Park Poet Laureate

Recommended Council Action

Approve the resolution.

Context with Key Issues

The Arts and Humanities Committee, having solicited applications for poet laureate from the Takoma Park community, has forwarded the name of Mr. Taylor Johnson for consideration by the City Council as the next Takoma Park Poet Laureate.

The Takoma Park Poet Laureate program was established in 2005 to honor the achievements of a local poet who serves as the City's ambassador in promoting public appreciation of poetry and literature, supporting a creative community of local poets, and encouraging people of all ages to write their own poetry.

To be considered for appointment an individual must live or work in Takoma Park; be a published poet recognized by the literary community; and be engaged in teaching or public speaking relating to poetry. Previous Poet Laureates include Donald Berger (2005-2007), Anne Becker (2007-2011), Merrill Leffler (2011-2018), and Kathleen O'Toole (2018-2022).

Mr. Johnson, if appointed, would serve as Takoma Park Poet Laureate from Oct. 1, 2022 to Sept. 30, 2025. Additional information about Mr. Johnson's credentials and plans for the Poet Laureate position are available in the accompanying recommendation from the selection committee led by outgoing Poet Laureate Kathleen O'Toole.

Council Priority

A Livable Community for All

Environmental Considerations

N/A

Fiscal Considerations

The Poet Laureate receives a \$2,000 annual stipend from the Arts and Humanities Division budget.

Racial Equity Considerations

Mr. Johnson is Black. We do not believe this Council action will disproportionately impact any particular group.

Attachments and Links

- Resolution appointing the Takoma Park Poet Laureate
- Committee Recommendation for Taylor Johnson

Introduced by:

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
RESOLUTION 2022-
APPOINTING THE TAKOMA PARK POET LAUREATE**

WHEREAS, the Takoma Park Poet Laureate program was established in 2005 to honor the achievements of a local poet who serves as the City's ambassador in promoting public appreciation of poetry and literature, supporting a creative community of local poets, and encouraging people of all ages to write poetry; and

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

WHEREAS, the Takoma Park Arts and Humanities Committee voted unanimously at its meeting on Sept. 6, 2022, in favor of the appointment of Mr. Taylor Johnson, a respected poet and Takoma Park resident, as Takoma Park's next Poet Laureate.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Takoma Park hereby appoints Mr. Taylor Johnson as Takoma Park Poet Laureate for a three-year period beginning Oct. 1, 2022 and ending Sept. 30, 2025.

Adopted this ____ day of _____, 2022.

Attest:

Jessie Carpenter, CMC
City Clerk

TAKOMA PARK POET LAUREATE SELECTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Committee Members: Outgoing Takoma Park Poet Laureate Kathleen O'Toole and local poets Emily Kombe and Dine Watson

The Poet Laureate Selection Committee reviewed applications from nine poet laureate candidates and interviewed three finalists in August 2022. It is the largest pool of candidates in the history of the [poet laureate program](#) with a diverse field in terms of race, age, culture, life experiences, and poetic expression.

We wholeheartedly recommend [Taylor Johnson](#) to be the next Takoma Park Poet Laureate. He is an award-winning poet with extensive experience in presenting and exploring poetry for all ages in community settings. He has received many fellowships and awards for his published work, and he has served as the [inaugural poet-in-residence](#) at the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

The committee was equally moved by Taylor's ideas for engaging and attracting new audiences and participants (especially young people) for the City's poetry programs, including the [Takoma Park Arts series](#), bilingual readings, sidewalk poetry project, and other literary events.

Over the past several years, the City of Takoma Park's Arts and Humanities Division and the Arts and Humanities Committee have opened new doors for residents and visitors to explore poetry and broaden our reach. More than 100 poets from across the D.C. area, representing a wide range of poetic styles and cultural diversity, applied recently to take part in upcoming poetry readings in the *Takoma Park Arts* series.

We feel that Taylor offers the best opportunity to build on that solid foundation, and in his words "reflect a more diverse range of contemporary voices in poetry with a focus on local poets." We believe Taylor has the heart, vision, and skills to collaboratively weave poetry into the fabric of Takoma Park and harness the power of the arts to help build community.

We're grateful to Arts and Humanities Coordinator Brendan Smith and Arts and Humanities Intern Paula Barrios for their work in this effort and to all those who applied.