

Town of Westport Poet Laureate Program

1. Objectives of the Poet Laureate Program

The role of the Town of Westport Poet Laureate is to elevate poetry in the consciousness of Westport, Connecticut residents and to celebrate and continue the Town's vibrant literary history. The program will be administrated and managed by the Westport Arts Advisory Committee, serving by appointment of the First Selectman.

Objectives for the position include:

- **Promote Poetry as a form of communication, inspiration and entertainment in the life of town residents.**
- **Expand and promote the community's awareness and appreciation for poetry, spoken word, and writing in general.**
- **Advocate for poetry, literature, and the arts, and contribute to the Town of Westport's literary legacy through public readings and participation in civic events.**
- **Summon a spirit of celebration, reflection and healing.**
- **Utilize Westport's natural and human resources to promote poetry in the community.**

2. Selection Committee

- A. There will be a three (3) member Poet Laureate Selection Committee ("PLSC"). The Westport Arts Advisory Committee (WAAC) will manage the selection process, with one member serving on the committee as chair along with a representative appointed by the Westport Library and a representative appointed by the Superintendent of Schools. The PLSC members shall have knowledge of literature and poetry. The PLSC members shall serve without compensation for a two-year term. PLSC members shall continue to serve until their successors are appointed and take office.
- B. The PLSC shall review candidates and recommend to the Westport Arts Advisory Committee the appointment of a Westport resident to serve as the Town of Westport Poet Laureate.
- C. Upon recommendation of the candidate for Poet Laureate, the First Selectman may appoint him or her. If the First Selectman does not appoint the recommended candidate, then the PLSC shall convene and recommend a new Poet Laureate candidate.
- E. If the Poet Laureate is unable or unwilling to successfully perform his or her duties, the Westport Arts Advisory Committee may relieve him or her of the position and the PLSC shall convene and recommend a new Poet Laureate, who shall have a two-year term.

3. Qualifications and Responsibilities

- A. Eligible Candidates for Town of Westport Poet Laureate must be a poet with a wide range of experience and knowledge, a resident of the Town of Westport, above 21 years of age available and willing to collaborate with the library, school district and town cultural institutions to develop and present poetry related activities and events that address the objectives of the program.
- B. The Town of Westport Poet Laureate is an honorary, non-compensated position and shall serve for a term of two years.
- C. The Town of Westport Poet Laureate shall possess an enthusiasm for the community, be comfortable with public speaking, working with persons of all ages and backgrounds and have a strong public service orientation, with a demonstrated knowledge of poetry in its many forms.
- D. The Poet Laureate's responsibilities may include:
 - a. Proposing and leading community projects including a Town-wide celebration of National Poetry Month (April).
 - b. Serving as a judge for the local "Poetry Out Loud Contest" for high school students and serving as a mentor for the student winner, helping them to prepare for the State and National Contests.
 - c. Serve in an advisory role for the Staples High School literary arts journal "Soundings."
 - d. Participate as a guest Poet / Teacher in the Staples High School Reading and Writing Poetry Class under supervision of the Administrator in charge.
 - e. Coordinate a public Poetry Reading Series with the Westport Library.
 - f. Curate a collection and display of poetry books in the Westport Library.
 - g. Incorporate poetry into the programming for the annual WestportREADS celebration.
 - h. Host and curate readings at public town events, with original work created by the Poet Laureate.
 - i. Represent the Town of Westport in the CT Coalition of Poets Laureate.
<http://ctpoetlaureates.com>

4. Application and The Selection Process:

A. All candidates must submit two copies of the following information:

- a. A completed application form, downloadable from the Westport Arts Advisory website.
- b. A brief personal statement of personal philosophy that includes a description of how the candidate intends to approach the scope of the work and the objectives of this program.
- c. Samples of three works, citing sources where the work has been published.
- d. A resume or CV
- e. Two letters of personal recommendation.

B. Application Deadline: May 31, 2019

All Materials must be addressed to the Westport Arts Advisory Committee PLSC c/o Office of the Selectmen. All submissions must be received by 4pm on May 31.

**Westport Arts Advisory Committee PLSC
c/o Office of the Selectmen Westport Town Hall
110 Myrtle Avenue
Westport, CT 06880**

Search committee review of all nominations will be completed before June 17. The announcement of the Town of Westport Poet Laureate will be coordinated with the selected candidate's schedule with the first public event being the re-opening of the Westport Library in late June.

For more information

Contact:

Kelle Ruden, Westport Arts Advisory Committee
waac@westportct.gov (subject line: Poet Laureate)