

Culture Connections Committee Minutes

Location: City Hall Auditorium

Date/ Time: 2/25/2026 12:00-1:00PM

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:00PM by Chair Iraida Muñoz.

2. Roll Call and Introductions

Roll Call and introductions were conducted by Chair Iraida Muñoz at 12:01PM.

3. Attendance- 20 people

- Members in Attendance (In-Person): 10

Barbara Costa, Bob Cioppa, Donna Marceau, Iraida Muñoz, Xiannglan Zhu, Lynne Boyer, Elizabeth Berry, Meta Vornehm, Daniel Healey, Elizabeth Berry

- Non-Members in Attendance (In-Person): 6

Angela Mercado, Julia Stryzhenko, Emily Vassar-Rivas, Joslyn Kuchinski, Carlos Salinas, Irvin Perez

- Members Attending via Zoom:1

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- Non-Members Attending via Zoom: 3

David Holt, Ali Sikon, Claudia Decker

4. Approval of the January Meeting Minutes

Approval of the January meeting minutes was postponed to the next meeting because a committee quorum was not present on site.

5. Introduction and Meeting Kickoff by the new Chair Iraida Muñoz, introduced herself by sharing her role. She also brought two brief questions as an ice breaker exercise to interact with other members.

6. Iraida reported back on her check-in call as part of our on-going engagement with localities participating in Certified Welcoming cities and recognizing the complex and evolving landscape we are all working in.

7. The status of the 2026 Nashua Multicultural Festival

Iraida reported on the preparation for this year's Multicultural Festival.

- Early preparation will begin in March to ensure adequate planning time for all components of the event.
- A dedicated workgroup will be created to organize the festival. Members interested in joining may reach out to Iraida or Zhu.
- The event is scheduled for September 12 2026, from 12-5 PM. The committee plans to alternate between Saturday and Sunday each year to better engage different groups in the community.
- A reservation has been made for the downtown, Water Street / Renaissance Park area as the primary event location.
- An indoor backup location is being considered in case of rain or severe weather.
- Efforts are underway to involve more local students in volunteering and cultural activities.
- The event format—online, in-person, or hybrid—has not yet been finalized and will be determined as planning progresses.

8. Discussion on Organizational Purpose

Iraida clarified *the purpose of the Cultural Connections Committee is to facilitate communication between the ethnic community and city government. The Committee works to encourage understanding and appreciation of ethnic diversity in the City of Nashua, serve as a sounding board for ethnic community concerns, strengthen communication among various ethnic groups and government entities, and assist in developing and sustaining community programs and publications.*

Several members raised concerns about the broader national and federal enforcement environment.

- Barbara noted that the Nashua Police Department maintains its original position but must cooperate with federal agencies when required.
- Emily shared her concerns based on her experiences, underscoring the importance of understanding how enforcement climates affect community members.

9. The Value that the committee should bring to the community

Joslyn commented our organization plays a vital role in strengthening the community by embracing diversity, expanding opportunities to share resources, and creating spaces that expose culture in meaningful and accessible ways. She noted that in a city shaped by many backgrounds, languages, and lived experiences, our work helps ensure that every resident feels seen, supported, and connected.

- Diversity enriches the community by bringing together people with different histories, culture, talents, and perspectives. Our committee helps highlight this richness, making it a visible and celebrated part of community.
- Sharing resources allows us to bridge gaps between communities, local institutions, and families. Whether through information, services, or connections, we help residents access what they need to thrive. This strengthens trust and builds a more resilient, supportive environment for everyone.
- Exposing culture—through events, performances, storytelling, and community engagement—creates opportunities for neighbors to learn from one another. These experiences reduce misunderstanding, foster curiosity, and build a sense of belonging across cultural lines.

Together, these contributions help create a community that is not only welcoming but also vibrant, interconnected, and forward-looking. Our organization and committee serve as a bridge—linking people, elevating voices, and ensuring that the full spectrum of cultures in our city is recognized as a shared asset.

- Emily (Mayor's office) reiterated the importance of resource sharing, noting Donna's practice of distributing partner event information through community emails as a strong example of how we can keep residents informed and connected.
- Meta (Interfaith Community) reinforced the value of awareness and highlighted the role of public-facing events—such as the Multicultural Festival—in exposing culture and strengthening community understanding.

10. Main issues faced by ethnical community

The committee discussed several key challenges currently affecting ethnic and immigrant communities:

- Julia (ALC) identified immigration legal status as a primary challenge for newly arrived immigrants, noting that some individuals may be required to leave due to expiring protections or limited pathways to remain.
- Joslyn (Rivier University) highlighted declines in international student populations, which are affecting educational institutions and campus culture.
- Emily (Mayor's office) and Claudia Decker (Nashua School District) raised concerns about student safety, emphasizing the need for continued attention to the experiences of immigrant and minority students.

- Ali from NH Housing compared Nashua's welcoming-city identity with Manchester and Concord, urging the committee to define local priorities clearly and strengthen targeted outreach to specific communities.
- Barbara Costa from Nashua Police Department proposed establishing a resource hub for newcomers and immigrants seeking services, advocacy, and agency contacts. Donna Marceau (NRPC) and Lynn Boyer (YMCA) shared information about existing organizations—such as the YMCA, the Soup Kitchen, United Way, and others—that already offer programs supporting new comers.

11. Community Announcements

- Donna highlighted the monthly meeting of the Nashua Community Transportation group.
- Barbara shared information about the Nashua Citizens Academy, an eight-week program beginning April 1. The program includes weekly three-hour sessions featuring specialty unit presentations, mock trials, and facility tours. It is open to both residents and interested non-residents.
- Meta announced several upcoming activities: a sacred music concert on March 22, a book club session on April 13, and the next International Café taking place next Friday.
- David Holt announced the March 12 Welcoming New Hampshire table meeting on Zoom, which will feature speakers from the Maine Immigrant Refugee community.
- Joslyn shared updates about the International Café and International Women's Day events at Rivier University.
- Iraidia announced a Bad Bunny halftime cultural conversation and Zumba session scheduled for Saturday at the Arlington Street Community Center.
- Elderly support groups continue to meet on the third Thursdays of the month at noon.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00PM.

Next meeting will be on Wednesday, Mar 25th, 2026 at noon- Nashua City Hall Auditorium with a virtual option for nonmembers as needed.