MINNESOTA DANCE ADVOCACY TASK FORCE
MEETING Notes
Friday, February 20, 2026 – 9-10am- Virtual

In attendance:
Mathew Janczewski, Scott Artley, Kim Konikow, Halie Bahr, Ray Terrill, Bao Phi, LaTia Childers, Alys Ayumi Ogura, Sarah LaRose- Holland, and Linda Lee Soderstrom

Summary:

The meeting convened to translate the Wilder Research dance-community findings into a time-limited operational structure. After reintroductions, Mathew Janczewski and Kim Konikow framed the Wilder report as the end of a listening phase and discussed moving to action without creating a new permanent 501(c)(3), favoring collaboration with existing organizations and fiscal sponsorship to accept funds while preserving mission alignment.

Participants proposed a one-year (through 2026) five-person transition team with monthly online meetings and representation across Minneapolis–St. Paul and Greater Minnesota. Brainstormed activities included hiring writers for press placements, developing web improvements or a statewide resource platform (possibly building on DanceMN or Springboard), and hosting two funder-driven town halls biannually. Budget estimates were revised to about $32,500 for outreach, gatherings, web work and paying fees to the transition team. Key concerns included the need for clear reporting, a public call for transition team nominees, and a compact commitment timeline. The meeting closed with general agreement to continue shaping task-force membership, build/define necessary partnerships and clarify fiscal and reporting roles.

Chapters & Topics:

Introductions and participant roles

Several participants introduced themselves and summarized backgrounds in arts administration, teaching, accessibility, and community engagement: providing context on local producing, presenting, and community-building efforts. These introductions illustrated the group's geographic spread and range of roles in Minnesota dance.

Meeting purpose and history of the task force

Mathew Janczewski framed the Minnesota Dance Task Force as an outcome of community organizing after the Cowles Center dissolution and described the task force's role in collecting community input through Wilder Research. He emphasized that persistent, recurring issues had been documented and that momentum must be translated into action. Mathew and Kim Konikow met on Feb. 8th to discuss these ideas for forward action.

* The Wilder Research convening is considered the conclusion of the listening and assessment phase and the basis for moving to action.

* The task force model is being reconsidered as a temporary mechanism that should evolve into a different format for ongoing engagement.

Proposal for next steps, structure, and funding pathways

Kim outlined a proposed action plan that avoids creating a new nonprofit, recommends exploring fiscal sponsorship with mission-aligned organizations (DanceMN, Springboard, etc), and emphasizes broad engagement across artists, audiences, funders, and affinity groups. She proposed forming a five-person volunteer transition team through 2026 with monthly online meetings and regular reporting and noted representation goals including the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota. Representation goals for any new structure should include geographic balance, and attention to age and affinity groups.

Transition-team candidate brainstorming

The meeting proposed forming a five-person transition team to move Wilder report recommendations into action. Kim and Mathew reviewed candidate “criteria” (education, gender, BIPOC identity, dance styles) and named potential candidates including Ananya Matewos, Rebecca Katz-Harwood, and Nieya Amezquita as possibilities. They emphasized that no one had been contacted yet and framed the list as initial brainstorming. They are open to other nominations and willingness to participate. Discussion ensued on how to cast a broad net for interest and establish these trusted individuals with steps forward.

Funding approach and immediate follow-ups

The team proposed following up with McKnight and other grantors to request additional funds tied to defined tasks and a timeline and noted remaining grant funds ($2,500) that could seed initial work. They discussed guaranteeing ongoing candidate suggestions until the transition team is settled.

Communications, press, and platform proposals

Proposals included web enhancements, hiring two to three writers to draft press releases and feature articles on Minnesota dance history and contemporary shifts in the MN Dance community, with regional and national placement. The group discussed building a statewide resource platform, potentially by assisting to expand DanceMN or Springboard by cultivating a strong partnership..

Outreach, engagement metrics, and Greater Minnesota focus

The group raised questions about platform discovery and usage metrics, discussed audience expansion into Greater Minnesota via regional partners, and proposed collecting engagement data through codes or response tracking. They recommended one task force member might focus on Greater Minnesota relationships. Two biannual, funder-driven town hall meetings were proposed, with the first town hall targeted for June.

Budget snapshot, screen share, and timeline

Kim shared a quick budget snapshot and timeline, noting modest estimated costs for stipends, writers, outreach, and two gatherings totaling about $32,500. The timeline proposed transition-team identification and monthly meetings beginning in March, funder conversations in April, platform decisions in April–May, and a first town hall in June.

Affinity groups and operational structure concerns (DanceMN)

Mathew suggested funding affinity groups for administrative coordination. Sarah and Yumi flagged DanceMN's limited fiscal/administrative capacity and recommended considering partners with existing organizational infrastructure.

McKnight funding context and strategic implications

Bao Phi provided context on the constrained funding climate and McKnight's limited discretionary budget this year, advising that the initiative cannot rely solely on McKnight. He recommended a multi-source funding strategy and prioritization given current fiscal constraints.

Partnership framing and support for DanceMN

Participants emphasized forming a partnership that supports DanceMN without increasing its volunteer burden and considered funding uses to strengthen resources such as website assistance. The idea of collaborating with Springboard for the Arts and recognizing DanceMN's community reach was noted.

Progress and immediate activities (calendar, pop-up touring, press)

Attendees reported ongoing actions including pop-up touring conversations, developing a community calendar magazine printed and distributed by Lavender Magazine (pending MRAC grant), and early outreach to presenters with 26/27 season performance dates to enable scheduling and budgeting for easy statewide pop-up performances in line with premieres. A gap in dance journalism was identified, and a working group of writers was proposed to educate and increase preview/review coverage for dance in print and on-line.

Steering committee selection and governance questions

The group debated how to form a steering committee, weighing nomination systems, consent, trust, and the need for a thoughtful selection process that allows self-selection and rotation. Kim recommended small preparatory conversations to define nomination, commitment expectations, and vetting before broader presentation.

Structure, size, and leadership style (formal vs. messy)

Participants discussed alternatives to a formal steering committee, including distributed leadership and smaller energetic teams, while acknowledging a minimal container is needed for fiscal and stipend purposes. Suggestions included an open call with clear expectations and allowing sub-teams or buddies to collaborate on specific goals.

* There is some debate between creating a defined steering committee and enabling distributed, informal leadership; a container is needed for fiscal reasons but flexibility beyond that is acceptable.

* Remaining project funds ($2,500) could be used as initial stipends of $500 each for five participants or for

outreach distribution.

Drafting outreach, stipends, fiscal partner, and communications

The group agreed to draft the public call describing goals, timeframes (12–18 months), stipend possibilities, and the need for a fiscal partner. They will circulate it for feedback, and prepare a press release to announce the transition to action-oriented work. Volunteers were identified to help draft and review materials and to participate in initial outreach.

* The task force size was proposed as five to seven people to balance capacity and coordination overhead.

* The group should create a public draft call that defines goals, expectations, and commitment timelines for a small working group.

* The Wilder Report will be used as the evidence base for outreach, grants, and a press release announcing the move into an action phase.

Scheduling next meeting and initial next steps

Kim proposed setting a follow-up meeting and emphasized the need to hear who "we" are and where the effort stands while noting hopes for a call to assemble the committee. Kim also mentioned hopes that a call, partner outreach, and a press release would be ready to go.

* Kim urged the group to clarify who comprises the "we" in a Task Force, and to form a clean, advisory-capable structure.

* Mathew was asked to review administrative/funding options and offered to look into them.

Confirming date and member availability

The group confirmed Friday, March 20th at 9am will be the next Virtual meeting.

* Sarah raised concerns about the shifting committee, volunteer bandwidth, and the burden on DanceMN's unpaid treasurer when task force finances route through Springboard. She outlined DanceMN's fiscal setup (LLC with Springboard and a volunteer treasurer), highlighting constraints around finances and insurance.

* The group discussed transparency about DanceMN's initiatives to avoid duplicated efforts across the community. They discussed the possibility of Arena or another nonprofit acting as fiscal sponsor, and the potential perception issues that could arise from sponsorship choices.

Closing consensus and next steps

Kim offered advisory support while urging new, younger members to take active roles; participants reiterated the need to clarify the task force's shape, responsibilities, and community communications before broader outreach.

Action Items:

* Kim Konikow and Mathew Janczewski will initiate conversations with DanceMN, Springboard for the Arts, and Regional Arts Councils about possible partnership models.

* Kim and Matthew will ensure defining the responsibilities of task form members, and continued candidate outreach until a five-person transition team is identified and vetted.

* The transition team will provide regular reporting back to the dance field about progress and decisions.

* The team will determine a platform option (expand DanceMN, Springboard, or another database) for a statewide resource and define engagement metrics for that platform.

* The transition team will schedule the first funder-driven, invitational town hall for June.

* The transition team will hopefully be identified and vetted by March and begin monthly meetings in April.

* Kim and Matthew will draft a public call for the task force/group that outlines goals, expectations, time frame, and stipend information and circulate it to meeting participants for feedback.

* Mathew will talk with Ananya Matewos to write or help write the press release announcing the action phase tied to the Wilder Report.

* The group will start partner outreach conversations to identify potential collaborators for the task force.

NEXT MEETING -
Friday, March 20
9:00AM - 10:30AM (8:45am new visitors welcoming)

Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81420296582?pwd=XTzwpGpbvX2rbH827IrgBruggbya3z.1

Meeting ID: 814 2029 6582
Passcode: 716896