

ALEXANDRIA POET LAUREATE GUIDELINES

“Call to the Community”

Introduction:

In 1979, the Alexandria City Council voted Jean Elliott, a 78-year-old Alexandria resident, as the City’s first and only Poet Laureate of record who served until, she passed in 1999.

In May 2006, the city re-established the Alexandria Poet Laureate Program. The Poet Laureate Program was created to publicly confirm the value of literary art and enhance the quality of life in Alexandria. The Poet Laureate serves as an official resource available to commemorate for present enjoyment, as well as posterity, the City’s history and historic events, installations, groundbreakings and public dedications, as well as many of the City’s annual celebrations, parades, and cultural events. The Poet Laureate brings poetic art to the City’s libraries and schools and serves as a bridge to the City’s diverse communities who might not otherwise be exposed to this cultural experience. In difficult times, the Poet Laureate offers appropriate words of reflection, inspiration, and healing.

The Office of the Arts, Alexandria’s designated local arts agency, administers the Poet Laureate Program as one of the City’s Literary Programs.

Purpose of the Alexandria Poet Laureate:

The Poet Laureate publicly elevates the value of literary arts, encourages creative writing and reading of literature, and enhances creative life in Alexandria.

Term of Office: April 2025 through April 2028

Honorarium: \$500 each year, \$500 for offering two workshops per year.

Poet Laureate’s Roles & Responsibilities:

- Promote the appreciation of poetry as an art form, encourage reading, creative writing and literacy through poetry.
- Present an original work of poetry at the City of Alexandria’s annual USA/Alexandria Birthday Celebration.
- Present original works of poetry at other community events such as the ALX Jazz Festival, the Party for the Arts, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial program as requested
- Submit an original poem and serve on the panel to review submissions for the annual “DASHing Words in Motion” project.
- Annually, write and present 2-4 poems for significant occurrences or milestones of the City of Alexandria as requested
- Be an ambassador for poetry and literary programs in the City of Alexandria that celebrate and reflect on the richness and diversity of the community,
- Collaborate with the Office of the Arts in responding to invitations from outside agencies to participate as a guest speaker/presenter.
- Communicate regularly with the Office of the Arts staff through email and/or in-person meetings about the Poet Laureate projects and programs.
- Organize and facilitate two community workshops each year.
- Serve on the City’s Literary Task Force to select the future Poet Laureate.

The Poet Laureate is often invited to speak at area schools, libraries, social service organizations, and many other events and venues. It is the sole discretion of the Poet Laureate to determine which other events and programs they participate in or attend.

The selected Poet Laureate will be asked to grant copyright permission to the City of Alexandria to market and promote poems written as Poet Laureate.

Specific criteria for selection of Poet Laureate:

- Meets all eligibility requirements and entry rules.
- Demonstrates excellence in writing and reciting poetry.
- Exhibits enthusiasm for sharing poetic art with people of all ages and backgrounds.

Eligibility:

The eligibility requirements are as follows:

- The applicant is active in the field of poetry through a body of work (poems, chapbooks, or full-length collections). Could be self-published or published by literary journals and presses.
- Only individuals who have lived, worked, or studied full-time in the City of Alexandria for a minimum of 1 year prior to applying are eligible. If selected, the Poet Laureate must live, work or study full-time in the City of Alexandria through the 3-year term of service.
- Applicants must be able to fulfill Poet Laureate expectations as noted above including the ability to organize workshops and poetry readings for diverse ages and audiences.
- Applicants must be at least 21 years of age.
- Applicants must not have been previously appointed as Alexandria’s Poet Laureate.
- Members of the Alexandria Commission for the Arts, Office of the Arts, or any of its Task Forces, and City of Alexandria staff and their families are ineligible to apply.

Entry Rules:

- Submit exactly 10 poems written in English. The poems can be any style, form, or length.
- Submitted poems can be either published or unpublished.
- Applicants must apply online. Hard-copy applications will not be considered.
- Each numbered poem must be uploaded as a PDF document. Font size should be 12-point.
- Do NOT upload photocopies from books or magazines, or scan pages from blogs, screenshots or submit weblinks.
- Do NOT place your name, address, or citations on poetry pages.
- All entries must include an essay of up to 500-750 words answering the questions:
 - Why is poetry relevant today?
 - What audience do you most want to reach as the City’s Poet Laureate?
 - How can you enhance the role of Poet Laureate for the City of Alexandria?

Deadline: Friday, January 10, 2025, 5 p.m.

Notification: Winner will be notified in March 2025.

The Poet Laureate applications will be juried by the Literary Task Force established by the Office of the Arts. The Task Force will provide a recommendation for the selected Poet to the Office of the Arts.

Selection Process:

- (1) Literary Task Force reviews all entries and chooses finalists for a panel interview.
- (2) Literary Task Force holds interviews with finalists. Finalists will be asked to read some of their work and answer questions about how they would carry out Poet Laureate activities.
- (3) Literary Task Force will choose a Poet Laureate from among the finalists.

For more information call the Office of the Arts, Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities at (703) 746-5565 or visit www.alexandriava.gov/arts.