

Pappathan named director of Newburyport Art Association

By Amanda Getchell agetchell@newburyportnews.com 7 hrs ago



BRYAN EATON/Staff file photo Jessica Pappathan will take over as director of the Newburyport Art Association.



NEWBURYPORT — After several months of searching, Jessica Pappathan, the director of the Custom House Maritime Museum, was named executive director of the Newburyport Art Association.

The position opened up after Executive Director Elena Bachrach announced her resignation at the end of 2018. After spending eight years with the association, Bachrach said she was ready to explore the next personal and professional chapter in her life.

Pappathan, who has an extensive background in arts and management, was hired in May 2018 as Custom House director, so her move to the NAA will open that position again.

Pappathan said she is excited to join the Art Association's team and develop new initiatives in the coming year, including educational programs. Pappathan noted she has a "lifelong passion" for art and looks forward to helping artists promote their work and share their creativity with the public.

"I'm hopeful I can draw upon some of my experience in launching educational outreach programs and incorporate that into what they're doing," she said Thursday. "I'm really enthusiastic about the potential to partner with other organizations and really, hopefully, draw in more people of all ages and inspire them to pursue art."

Nicole Nadeau, president of the NAA board of directors, said she received applications from near and far, including one from Germany, noting the interest was a testament to the culture, arts and history found in the community. Nadeau said Pappathan will work with the Custom House to put together a transition plan.

Pappathan said she is eager to bridge the relationship between the Custom House and the Art Association in addition to reaching out to other local institutions. During her time at the Custom House, Pappathan said she "loved it," but noted that jobs connected to art and nonprofit work are "difficult to find."

Pappathan, who focuses on oil and acrylic painting, has a rich background in art, according to her resume.

She began her career as a registrar at the Currier Museum Art Center in Manchester, New Hampshire, and moved on to become assistant curator at the St. Anselm College Chapel Art Center, also in Manchester. Pappathan spent four years at McGowan Fine Art in Concord, New Hampshire, where she worked directly with the artists for gallery shows and sales, according to her resume.

As the first full-time executive director at the Aviation Museum of New Hampshire, Pappathan said she built its educational and outreach programs and doubled museum engagement.

In her time at the Custom House, Nadeau said Pappathan has been instrumental in increasing the staff and developing and implementing public programs, including exhibitions, museum fundraisers and community outreach programs. She received her master's in arts administration from Boston University, according to her resume.

Some major duties of the NAA executive director include keeping up with gallery exhibitions and educational arts programs with program evaluation and recommendations, supervising staff to ensure quality of operations, calendar of exhibitions, receptions and education programming, finance administration, communications and fundraising, community outreach, and engaging volunteers, Nadeau said.

In addition, the executive director must maintain the 13-member board of directors and build board involvement with ongoing and long-term operational goals, according to the job description.

Doug Muir, president of the Custom House's board of directors, said he is disappointed Pappathan will be leaving her current position, but added that she has done "a very good job with us."

"One of her strong points, and I think this was certainly a great asset for us at the museum, Jessica is a person that can keep a lot of balls in the air at the same time," Muir said. "Both executive director positions have been multidimensional ones with a lot of expectations and requirements. We're excited for Jessica's future at the Newburyport Art Association. I think she'll be a great asset."