

**Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District  
Minutes of April 20, 2023**

**Members in Attendance:** Ed Abrahams, Robin Helfand, Kris Kanter, Jeffrey van de Visse, Barbara Watkins, Elissa Haskins-Vaughan, Karin Watkins

**Also Attending:** Wylie Goodman (BRPC), Dennis Iodice (social media subcontractor), Chris Rembold (Town of Great Barrington),

**Not Present:** Betsy Andrus, Talya Leodari, Carli Scolforo, Seth Keyes, Sally Michael Keyes, Laura Brennan (BRPC)

This meeting was conducted by remote participation as stated on the agenda. A quorum was reached at 9:01 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes of 03/16/2023** – Barbara W. made a motion to approve the minutes. Ed A. seconded the motion. Elissa V. and Karin W. abstained. The minutes were approved by roll call vote.

**Discussion and Vote to Support Efforts to Renovate and Revitalize The Triplex Cinema, 70 Railroad Street** – Robin H. introduced Luke Parker-Bowles who presented Cinema Labs' efforts to purchase the Triplex from Richard Stanley in a deal which he stated is about to be finalized and announced soon following a six-month process. Luke emphasized his company's community-oriented focus for The Triplex, which includes a place to host cultural and historical exhibitions, dedicated space for a tourism kiosk, reduced rates for municipal entities, revolving art exhibits, including from youth artists, an extended home for Berkshire Busk, internships for youth and people with disabilities, and a venue for BIFF. They plan to hire 16-20 individuals and will ensure a focus on families and family films and events/activities. They plan to partner with local restaurants, breweries, and the local candy store, and create tie-ins and personalized items for the new entity with other businesses. He was later joined by his partner, Brandon Jones, who talked about his experience opening movie theaters and planning exhibitions for over 20 years, including pioneering in-theater dining and doing consulting work around marketing for movie theaters. The two believe their soon-to-be-announced deal will address the hopes of the parallel community group interested in a nonprofit model. Robin H. shared that a group of local business owners has been involved in advising Cinema Lab and have put in money and sweat equity to ensure the endeavor addresses the needs of the community. The group did not take a formal vote on supporting Cinema Lab, given the pending announcement.

**Brief Update on Walking Tour / Walking Tour App** – This item was tabled as Mindy Miraglia was not in attendance. She will be invited to present at the next meeting. Robin H. stated Mindy M. is excitedly working on her tours.

**Treasurer's Report** – Barbara W. reported nothing new with the group's budget, which stands at \$25,700.

**Bills to Approve for Payment** –Chris R. reported that there was one bill to approve to Silo Media for \$291.50 for website fixes. Ed A. made a motion. Karin W. seconded. Through a roll call vote the payment was approved. Chris R. expressed his satisfaction working with Silo Media. Karin W. noted that there are business changes that should be made and will share them with Chris R. for updating.

**ArtWeek Berkshires 2023 Update** – Wylie G. shared notes conveyed by Laura B. that the Cultural Districts agreed on \$3K contributions from each Cultural District. The groups also made preliminary decisions about budget expenses and are in the process of confirming pricing for planning committee priorities. We received feedback via an online survey from previous participants to reinforce the “experiential” element of events and the low- or no-cost expectation. The idea of curating or adjudicating entries was not as well received, due to concerns about shutting out emerging artists. WAMC has signed on as a media sponsor with an underwriting package valued at \$3K. This is new this year and will help significantly in promotional reach.

**Social Media Goal-Setting Update from Subcommittee** – Dennis I. shared a PDF he created related to social media analytics that he plans to share monthly. He reiterated that he posts on Facebook and Instagram and that his job description focuses on sharing versus creating original content. *See his full PDF for details on views, likes, and shares.* He also compiled age and gender data about visitors. He noted that we have a high number of viewers from Pittsfield and New York City. He designed a postcard he plans to give to businesses and organizations to encourage them to use certain hashtags with links to our pages. He encouraged steering committee members to use these hashtags as well to broaden our reach, particularly to younger audiences. There was a discussion later in the meeting regarding the demographics the group is reaching/appealing to now and whom we want to reach in the future, based on interest in expanding our audience to younger viewers, primarily by creating more original content and being more active on Instagram. Wylie G. suggested Dennis I. share visuals in our next meeting to educate everyone about what posts get the most positive response. To the extent steering committee members can share content with Dennis too, so he can post “as if” it is original to the District, that was recommended. Robin H. suggested the Chamber as a good model of what we might want to do vis a vis Instagram. Dennis I. suggested that much of what we do (e.g., the website) skews older and that this should be discussed in more detail.

**DEIA-B Update from Subcommittee** – Karin W. noted that the sub-committee had not had a chance to meet again since last month, but Karin W. said the sub-committee could reach out to the potential consultant to schedule a workshop on Unconscious Bias soon. The group discussed when that should happen to be most viable, given the steering committee members’ schedules. There was agreement that members would prefer the training take place at the same time as the regular monthly meeting. Wylie G. will check with Laura B. about whether this can be done rather than scheduling a second meeting in the month.

**MCC FY23 Reporting Check-In: Business Openings/Closings** – Robin H. shared about Refill GB, a new business outside the district that recently opened, focused on sustainable/refillable household and personal care products. The Attic just opened above the Co-op offering housewares and home goods.

**Artist to Highlight in April Newsletter** – Robin H. suggested we profile Mindy Miraglia. Earlier in the meeting she also shared about a local woman entrepreneur who received a \$5K MCC grant to create a new video about the connection between farmers and those who eat intentionally (Katie Sparks, Chef/Culinary Consultant), who potentially could be featured in a future e-newsletter.

**Adjourn** – Kris K. made a motion to adjourn. Barbara W. seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:58 am.

*Christy L. R. H.*

