

**Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District  
Minutes of May 18, 2023**

**Members in Attendance:** Betsy Andrus, Ben Elliot, Robin Helfand, Kris Kanter, Seth Keyes, Talya Leodari, Carli Scolforo, Barbara Watkins, Elissa Haskins-Vaughan, Karin Watkins

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

**Not Present:** Sally Michael Keyes, Jeffrey van de Visse, Wylie Goodman (BRPC)

This meeting was conducted by remote participation as stated on the agenda. Seth Keyes called the meeting to order at 9:03 am.

**Approval of Minutes of 04/20/2023** – Barbara W. made a motion to approve the minutes. Kris K. seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Update regarding The Triplex Cinema** – Robin H. reported that there is a purchase and sale agreement in place, so the property is off the market. The community-based organization that is working on buying the theater is still working on the details of financing. Robin suggested inviting the group’s leadership to speak with the Cultural District steering committee at a later date. The tentative plan would include operation as a permanent home for BIFF, as well as community space, first-run movies, and concessions. There is a strong sentiment that it would not be prudent to temporarily shut down during the transition.

**Social Media Update from Dennis Iodice** – Dennis I. provided an updated PDF summarizing social media metrics. Laura B. provided that document to committee members through the Chat feature via Zoom.

**Update on Walking Tour / Walking Tour App** – Committee members received an attachment with a draft script, map, and link to a video overview of the project’s current status prior to the meeting. Laura B. shared that Mindy Miraglia specifically asked for guidance from the group regarding how to incorporate mentions of merchants within the downtown during the tours so as not to unfairly spotlight specific retailers or restaurants. Karin commented that the script does not yet include a land acknowledgment, which she feels should be incorporated. Robin H. facilitated sharing the video for the group to view together, which included a layout of the proposed route, which begins at the gazebo behind Town Hall. After reviewing the explanatory video from Mindy, the group held a discussion of suggested revisions to the proposed route and narrative. Karin expressed enthusiasm as it stands so far and added that there is a kiosk in front of the Berkshire Bank parking lot regarding the African American Heritage trail that could be pointed out. She also suggested going through Rubiner’s outdoor alley rather than the enclosed atrium, so that the District’s banner project could be highlighted. Robin echoed the idea of highlighting the banner project, and also felt that attendees should be made aware of the efforts made by restaurants and businesses to create outdoor dining which has become part of the downtown fabric and provides a “third space” for residents. Carli S. offered a correction regarding the timing of street closures for Berkshire Busk. Chris R. indicated that he had provided links to the Cultural District website and social media accounts for inclusion in any materials. The committee agreed that no commercial businesses need to be highlighted,

even on a rotating basis, during these specific tours. Chris R. pointed out that the directory of businesses on the District's website is now up to date. Robin H. asked where invoices should be sent, and Chris R. confirmed that they should be sent to the Town. Betsy A. asked whether William Stanley history will be included, both near Searles Castle and at the other end where the facility was located. Ben E. added that the tours would go past the Major John Talcott monument, and this could open discussion to indigenous history including recent concerns regarding the commemoration's accuracy or appropriateness. Chris R. suggested sharing the historical walking tour brochures with all attendees.

At Robin's suggestion, Laura B. will provide Mindy with a link to the recorded meeting so she can hear suggestions directly. Karin added that Mindy might want to connect with Talya L. regarding indigenous history. Talya replied that she would likely refer questions to Bonney Hartley, the tribal historic preservation manager for the Stockbridge-Munsee community. Talya will reach out to Bonney in advance of connecting Mindy with her.

**Treasurer's Report** – Barbara W. reported that the Silo Media bill approved at the previous meeting had been paid. We also formally encumbered \$3,000 for social media subcontracting. The available balance now stands at \$22,408.50.

**Bills to Approve for Payment** –Chris R. reported that we had received the first invoice for social media subcontracted work (\$750), as well as an invoice from Berkshire Busk for the \$3,500 sponsorship. Betsy made a motion to approve both of these invoices, and Seth seconded. A unanimous vote approved these payments.

**ArtWeek Berkshires 2023 Update** – Laura B. shared that a lot of progress has been made regarding preparations for ArtWeek, including getting a landing page drafted on [www.berkshires.org](http://www.berkshires.org) and developing a new and improved enrollment form for participants. She invited people to an in-person brainstorming session the following week, which will be held at the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts in Pittsfield, for the purpose of refining the visual identity and messaging for ArtWeek moving forward. The next virtual meeting of the planning group will be on June 1<sup>st</sup>. The group hopes to open registrations soon for participants. Karen Carmean joined a previous planning meeting and will be a helpful ambassador to the Guild of Berkshire Artists, which has over 200 members. Kris K. suggested checking with the Alford Artists as well. Dai Ban is a member. She also suggested the Common Folk Collective in North Adams. Laura B. reiterated the goals of making sure individual artists are not overshadowed and that ArtWeek events are in some way interactive.

**DEIA-B Update from Subcommittee** – Karin W. announced that Dr. Eden-Renee Hayes will facilitate a workshop with the Cultural District steering committee, during a regular meeting already scheduled for June 15<sup>th</sup>. Karin asked that everyone make every effort to attend and participate, and also shared that the presentation needs to be within a 90-minute session. The group agreed to start at 8:30 to allow the session to close by 10 am. Laura B. will issue a new Zoom link and poll the group regarding a brief business meeting later in June.

**MCC FY23 Reporting Check-In: Business Openings/Closings** – Familiar Tree has moved to the top of Railroad. RA (Reid Anderson’s Resident Artist) is also now open.

**Artist to Highlight in May and June Newsletters** – Laura asked for ideas to be sent directly to Wylie. Chris R. mentioned the finalists for the DuBois sculpture contest.

Talya shared with the group that she will be leaving the Great Barrington Libraries at the end of June, but indicated that someone from the staff will replace her on the Cultural District Committee. The group thanked her for her participation in the formation and ongoing work of the District. Seth also thanked Ben Elliott for joining the committee from the Select Board.

**Adjourn** – The meeting adjourned at 9:53 am.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher Benoit". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

