

Minutes

Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District Steering Committee

June 13, 2019

Committee Members Present: Ed Abrahams, Barbara Watkins, Karin Watkins, Jeff Gagnon for CATA, Tate Coleman for the Cultural Council, Seth Keyes, Talya Leodari, Betsy Andrus.

Others Present Kate Burke, Chris Rembold

Call to Order, Introductions: Karin called the meeting to order at 9 AM.

Minutes of 5/16/19 meeting. Ed moved to approve, Barbara seconded, all were in favor

Treasurer's Report: Barbara said there is no activity to report since the last time

Steering Committee Membership:

CATA is the required organization "representing working artists." They are moving out of the district but they are not moving until January 2020, so Jeff will sit on the committee until then.

New draft Steering Committee MOU for year 2 will be discussed at the next meeting. Betsy, Karin, Chris and Laura Brennan will talk about a draft and answer questions and present to the committee next meeting. Some questions include how to add new groups like the Farmers Market or others from food community to the Committee, and also BCC too.

It was noted we do not have a replacement for Tristan to represent the BPL yet. Hopefully Casey who is the new director can serve.

It was discussed that Chris or a rotating note taker would serve as a secretary for each meeting.

Outreach:

Kate Burke (Selectboard member, but here also for the Farmer's Market) joined the meeting. There was discussion about how the cultural district can make more events more accessible and more affordable to the community, and get more people to the events.

There was discussion about ensuring the events attract diversity and serve a range of income levels, so everybody feels welcome. Promoting free events was mentioned.

Tate said events that are accessible via public transport also matters because sometimes people can't get to events. Seeing that downtown is accessible by transit, we could consider how to make our venues free and more welcoming, such as free tickets held at the library.

Karin said if we had our own website I could envision a website that lists free and affordable things to do. How can we tell people about those free events and discount tickets? Communication of it is important.

It was mentioned that WIC can communicate to WIC families to tell them about free events. This is a way to reach an audience not usually reached.

Maybe a monthly flyer could be printed and handed out at food pantries and senior centers?

Tate said the Cultural Council struggles with this as well. We sponsor around 20 events but we don't have a good way to get a word out.

Kate said if we as individuals are not familiar with a demographic, it is tough to reach out to them. We don't know where they are or how they get their news. Can we use social media? Doctor's offices? Food pantry?

Jeff said CATA often uses other facilities, not their own, so it is always important that they have a "know before you go" strategy. People are told where to park, how to get there, etc.

There may be a social discomfort that keeps people from taking the first step, e.g., buying a ticket and going to an event. Can we talk to the events to have 10 free tickets or vouchers set aside? We can each contact an event and get those, and communicate that to Kate or WIC to distribute the tickets. Or if you can have SNAP and WIC logo on the event sign people know they can get in.

Talya said accessibility is the main mission at the library – everything they do is free. They are just limited as to when they can be open because of staff hours. Talya said we can use the Library as a jumping off place for free events. Maybe there can be another board in Library that says "free stuff." Seth said he suspects the food pantry also may be amenable to a board there for free stuff. Kate said we can have free event board at the Market too. It was noted that somebody needs to be in charge of updating all those boards regularly. We will discuss more at the next meeting.

Calendar:

Karin said there's no movement getting the Berkshire Edge public calendar link, and this seems that it might not happen. Maybe we just need to stick with social media. Can we just create events on FB and list them. Without Catherine it will be tough.

Can we pay somebody a few hours a week? Tate might be able to.

It was discussed to look into website design soon. Ed and Karin will meet with web designers about this. They'll update us at the next meeting.

Google Calendar: Karin asked everybody please look at it and load events onto it.

There was a discussion of how to use it to push out events.

There was a discussion about event coordination (car show / Mahaiwe example). How do we get people to check our calendar so as not to double book a night?

Karin said the calendar will show also where we have too much or if we have gaps, and need events.

Karin said we need to have an all-district meeting once per year. We need to figure out when and what. It was decided to target the end of September (after Chamber business person of the year event).

Tate said BCC has workshops, from guitar to language to photography, and not many people know about them. He said BCC would probably love to work with us. It was noted BCC was involved in this district discussion early on. If their events are on Facebook we could push them on our page.

Committees:

Walk-around assignments were discussed. Barbara and Betsy will do Main Street from Iredale to Yellow House Books.

Seth said Ken Roht of Bard College / Daniel's Art Party will join the subcom. for special events

NEXT MEETINGS:

July 11 at 9:00

August 15 at 9:00

Minutes prepared by:

