

## **Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District Minutes of April 24, 2020**

Participating: Ed Abrahams, Jeff Caminiti, Jeff Gagnon, Julie Hannum, Robin Helfand, Kris Kanter, Seth Keyes, Talya Leodari, Chris Rembold, Ken Roht, Barbara Watkins, and Karin Watkins

Also attending: Laura Brennan (BRPC)

Not present: Betsy Andrus, Kate Burke, Tate Coleman, Casey McShain, Bridgette Stone

Karin called the meeting to order at 9:05am. Shared comments with the group about the current uncertainty regarding plans, intention to find ways to help the downtown community during this time.

Minutes of 3/12/20: Robin moved approval of the minutes, Talya seconded. No discussion. All in favor.

Budget Discussion/Treasurer's report: Chris Rembold shared a budget report prior to the meeting. Group discussed whether this addresses what funds are committed and what remains. Agenda includes potential increase in payment to Silo Media for work on website.

Laura B. reported on conversations with MCC, specifically bi-weekly check-ins with Cultural Districts. Convenings generally include information about access to emergency funds for non-profits and individual release funds, which Laura has shared via social media and the Cultural District's e-newsletter. Discussions also include examples of what cultural districts around the commonwealth are doing virtually, including online photo contests, etc. as well as the ArtWeek at Home initiative. Laura B. will share more information about ArtWeek plans with the group and with stakeholders.

Chris R. indicated that plenty remains in the budget, due to some projects not being able to move forward as planned. This may allow for accommodation of the request for additional funds by Silo Media. We have not yet paid out the full original contract. Deposit was paid out of the previous year's grant funds.

Marketing/Communications: Karin W. moved discussion on to the issue of additional funds for Silo Media, noting that over \$5,000 is available through the end of June. Ed A. shared that he is still finding issues with some aspects of the new website, and asked whether Silo is asking for more money for completed work vs. funds for future work. Members of the Marketing and Communications committee have put in a lot of time catching errors and noting things that needed to be fixed. Karin noted that the group was also careful to gather comments and provide to Silo Media at one time, rather than piecemeal. The original not-to-exceed content was \$2,000. Their current request exceeds this by over \$1,000.

At this time, work on the initial website is deemed to be complete by Silo Media, but Laura B. pointed out that a few people would still need to be trained in how to make edits and adjustments in the future, which should be included within the original scope. Robin H. emphasized that we will need to ensure that we do have editing access moving forward, especially with the current uncertainties. Ed asked if we should reconvene after re-reading the original contract and the group agreed. Chris suggested that he, Ed, and Laura have a discussion first to formulate a recommendation to the group.

Karin indicated that if additional functionality needed to be added to the website such as video presentations, going back to Silo Media would be very reasonable in the future, with the assumption that additional fees would be involved. Karin asked the group how they felt about the appropriate way to launch the website. Ed suggested that we expand the reach of how the content is framed, to encourage participation in virtual activity and encourage people to visit at a later date. Laura B. will send a link to some suggestions based on what other cultural districts are doing.

Special Events: ArtWeek is canceled, June walking tour is postponed but does have a date set in 2021.

Mahaiwe and Saint James Place are both approaching things by canceling one by one as needed, neither has a “season” that would need to be canceled in its entirety. Fall events are still on the calendar but there is hesitancy around the appropriateness of announcing things such as fundraising galas.

CATA has made their gala virtual. The Library is gearing toward curbside pickup through the summer if necessary, but is also looking at virtual programming for demonstrations and performances, and Talya L. indicated that they would be happy to share that technology with the Cultural District if appropriate.

Ken R. had created a music video originally planned to be a part of ArtWeek. Planning to do a small drive-in movie theater using portable devices in cars for audio and visuals on a makeshift screen. This may be a model for the Cultural District to think about as a way to bring people together safely. Also has access to a large quantity of paper/cardboard if there is some way to conduct a public art event under current restrictions. He has also partnered with the Medical Reserve Corp to provide reading services to homebound seniors by phone. Robin H. suggested that live-streaming art creation might be possible using empty storefronts or store windows. An alternative may be to collaborate in a large space with each participating artist allowing for 3 days before entering after the previous artist. Robin added that finished art might be distributed to areas of town where all residents can and still need to go ie. Gas stations, grocery stores, etc. Karin pointed out that with virtual activity, things can be recorded or broadcast from well outside of the district borders without confusion. Continued conversation is needed about how things can be done and how to push our messaging and virtual content out further. Cross promotion is a key part of this in order to keep people engaged.

20 Railroad aims to reopen on May 8<sup>th</sup> with curbside/ delivery, and is exploring Zoom dinner parties. Also partnering with Mark Leventhal at the pantry to help those in need. Storefront window is available.

Evergreen would be celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this month, anticipates being closed until June. Priority is keeping people safe. Is not set up to do online sales. Hesitant to sell gift cards.

Robin H. interested in pursuing the drive-in idea. Shares Barbara’s perspective that it is inappropriate and unsafe to be open currently.

Ed suggested that arts organizations discuss ways to collaborate and co-promote. Karin emphasized the CATA virtual gala as an important first step in this mutual support. Jeff G. shared that a film has been prepared for this free event (RSVPs required), and registrants will receive text messages encouraging participation and ways to support.

BCC awaiting announcements from the state regarding re-opening. Face-to-face events through the early part of the summer have been canceled, looking at other options. ArtWeek project may still be done virtually, TBD.

GB Arts Market is working to promote online platforms of individual artists and is working closely with the farmers market as they develop their plans.

Meeting ended at 10am due to time restrictions on BRPC Zoom account.

Next meeting: May 1, 2020 at 9am via Zoom

