

Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District Minutes of April 15, 2021

This meeting was conducted by remote participation (video/teleconference) as stated on the agenda.

Members in Attendance: Jeff Caminiti, Jeff Gagnon, Robin Helfand, Kris Kanter, Sally Michael Keyes, Seth Keyes, Abi Rollins, Barbara Watkins, Karin Watkins, Neel Webber.

Also Attending: Chris Rembold (Town of GB), Laura Brennan (BRPC)

Not Present: Ed Abrahams, Betsy Andrus, Tate Coleman, Richard Le, Talya Leodari

Karin W. called the meeting to order at 9:02am.

Minutes of 3/18/2021 meeting – Barbara W. made a motion to approve, Seth K. seconded. Approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Barbara W. informed the group that the balance currently stands at \$10,855.00, after receipt of the MCC grant for FY21 in the amount of \$7,500.00. There are two bills to approve: \$260 for Chamber membership and \$255 for website hosting through Silo Media. This does not include any edits to the website. Approval of these bills will leave the balance at \$10,340.00. Karin W. made a motion to approve, Barb W. seconded. Approved unanimously.

Berkshire Busk – Karin W. indicated that there is another proposed expense to consider, she has forwarded the group a sponsorship proposal from Gene Carr. Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires is acting as the fiscal sponsor for this program. The proposal is for \$2,000.00 to help subsidize artist fees/stipends. This is a portion of the budget of \$12,000.00 for artist stipends overall. Robin added that the overall cost estimate for the program is \$50,000.00. There are currently commitments for approximately \$40,000.00. She stated that this support of such a program is well aligned with the purpose of the Cultural District. Karin W. added that the Cultural District will also put promotional effort behind the program in addition to financial support. Seth asked whether such performance underwriting has been done by other cultural districts, and Laura B. replied that this is similar to the Lenox Loves Music Series last summer, in which the Lenox Cultural District provided musician stipends. Robin H. asked Chris R. whether there was any Town funding to further support Berkshire Busk. Chris R. clarified that the grant she had in mind is the LRRP grant which is for technical assistance to the town only, and does not allow for expenditures along these lines. Chris R. confirmed that the Cultural District has set aside \$2,000.00. The Town may be able to provide additional support, and Chris R. will talk to Mark Pruhenski about that possibility. Karin W. explained that stipends will be issued via Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires as the fiscal sponsor. Karin W. made a motion to approve the expenditure, Robin H. seconded. Approved unanimously. Chris R. will work out contractual details with Gene Carr. Laura B. shared that Katie Orenstein, social media intern, has already begun supporting Berkshire Busk with social media posts, and encouraged everyone to share the posts on the Cultural District accounts. Robin H. added that Katie O. also has posters and is actively distributing them to store and restaurant owners.

Lamppost Banners – Neel W. gave an update regarding his recent conversation with Larkin, final dimensions will be 30" x 36". He will be conferring with Richard to adjust the templates accordingly. There is a two-week turnaround for production. More images are needed, so he is reaching out to students, and in some cases asking for multiple submissions from the same student. He has also received submissions from Montessori, Waldorf, from the middle school, and from CATA. Some submissions have strayed from the list of requested topics. Robin H. suggested also contacting some recent graduates. Karin W. asked for Neel to share a list of themes and venues that are still needed. She will also ask her stepson to contact Neel. The group discussed how selections will be made. Laura B. suggested a small committee rather than having the full Steering Committee participate in voting. Volunteers included Abi R., Jeff G., Barbara W., Robin H. and Jeff C. Robin also asked for Richard Le to be included. Discussion followed regarding notifying the

media that we are still seeking submissions. Robin H. and Neel W. recently did a brief radio interview to promote the project. Sally K. had offered extensive support prior to the interview, and the group thanked her for her efforts. Neel W. will be setting up a timeline working back from the production timing to determine a final deadline for submissions. Moving forward he will be making specific assignments to be sure we have all topics and themes covered.

Website Updating – The group had previously authorized \$500 for updates and enhancements. Silo Media is available to make updates as needed, which will not use the full encumbered amount. Previous discussions also included the goal of swapping out the old logo for the new sign graphic, and this should fit within the available budget. Chris R. asked Steering Committee members to look at the website to proofread carefully and provide edits to him by April 30th.

LRRP Project – Chris R. provided an intro regarding the technical assistance grant which Great Barrington recently received. This program is focused on downtown areas, and the study area for this project aligns with the borders of the Cultural District. One of the first steps is a business survey. Everyone who has a downtown presence is encouraged to complete the survey prior to the end of the day on the 16th. The link has been shared via social media, e-newsletters, and flyers. Responses will help clarify the types of businesses operating within Downtown Great Barrington, as well as the types of projects that would be of interest. BRPC has been assigned by the state to assist the Great Barrington LRRP program. Laura B. is the lead Plan Facilitator assigned to Great Barrington from BRPC. Laura B. added that we have about 30 survey responses so far, and BRPC has also been doing extensive data collection. Survey and data collection summaries will be presented to the community on May 20th at 5pm. During that meeting, some project ideas will also be shared, with a focus on quick, lower cost interventions. She reminded the group that there is no implementation funding yet secured, but if we can identify some key projects with strong community support, we should be able to seek implementation funding immediately after the planning phase is complete. She encouraged members of the group to suggest projects by emailing either herself or Chris R., and also to participate in the session on May 20th.

Berkshire County Cultural District Collaborations – Laura B. updated the group on the recent convening of the five county Cultural Districts. The group agreed to expand the county-wide ArtWeek from September 16th through the 26th, a ten-day span similar to what the state-wide festival had been. We are partnering with 1Berkshire to present a full digest of Artweek Berkshires on their website, www.berkshires.org. An initial mention of ArtWeek Berkshires was included in a recent e-blast from the Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District, and Aston Magna has already responded to say they are interested. All Steering Committee members are encouraged to find some way to participate. This can be free or ticketed, and can take any form as long as there is a cultural focus. There will be a registration form so that we're sure we have all the necessary details gathered from participants. Laura B. encouraged everyone to consider what they will be doing for ArtWeek and to keep an eye out for the form.

The five cultural districts have also agreed to work with a designer to create a shared graphic to use whenever they are working together on something. The graphic designer from the Lenox Chamber of commerce will provide this service gratis. Inspiration will come from the signage issued to cultural districts by MCC.

Misc. – Laura B. had received an email from Joe Grochmal with the Town of Great Barrington. He is looking for artists to participate in a street art project for which he is currently seeking funding. She asked anyone who may have leads to please contact Joe G. General discussion followed regarding upcoming programming at various venues.

Adjourn - The meeting adjourned at 9:54 am.

Next meeting: Thursday, May 20, 2021 at 9:00 AM via Zoom

Laura Brexman (LB)