

## **Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District Notes of August 19, 2021**

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

Members in Attendance: Ed Abrahams, Betsy Andrus, Jeff Caminiti, Seth Keyes, Barbara Watkins, Neel Webber, Robin Helfand

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

Not Present: Tate Coleman, Kris Kanter, Sally Michael Keyes, Abi Rollins, Karin Watkins, Jeff Gagnon, Richard Le, Talya Leodari

**The meeting was called to order by Ed A. at 9:05 a.m.** The meeting did not reach quorum with only seven members attending. The items below are designated as notes rather than minutes as a result.

**Minutes of 7/15/21 Meeting** – The minutes from the 7/15/21 were neither voted on nor approved due to lack of quorum.

**Treasurer's Report** – Barbara W. informed the group of recent expenses paid by the Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District including: \$96 for Constant Contact (6 mo. to Feb'22); \$350 to 1Bershire for annual dues; and \$3,380 to Larkin for costs re: to the lamppost banners; expenses since the last meeting total \$3,826. This group also paid \$425 out of \$800 set aside for Silo Media. With \$1,000 already committed for ArtWeek, this leaves \$3,314 as an unencumbered balance.

**Cultural District Annual Meeting October 7** – Laura B. noted that the group had in the previous meeting discussed hosting an in-person annual public meeting. Now with the rise in the COVID-19 delta variant, the group agreed (not by formal vote) to have the meeting via Zoom instead. The meeting will take place at 9 a.m. on October 7<sup>th</sup> to accommodate people opening businesses at 10 a.m., which has worked well in the past. Laura B. is working on putting together a PowerPoint presentation for the meeting that will recap the last year's activities and lay out plans for FY22. Between now and October 7th, the group can further discuss how they want to apply any remaining funds, gather more information from MCC, and set tentative goals for the year ahead. A slide show of banner artwork was discussed as a strong visual component to add to the presentation. Later in the meeting, Wylie G. suggested inviting local college students and professors to the meeting, including arts management interns (B-Hip), to engage a younger audience.

**Lamppost Banners Project** – Robin Helfand/Richard Le/Neel Webber – Neel shared that Richard and he have been gathering final images for the remaining banners. Richard has 23 images ready to send to Larkin with 24 in total needed. The layout/dimensions for the banners on Railroad Street and Main Street have been clarified and drafted accordingly. The sub-committee

plans to meet today to finalize outstanding images. Because some images are new, the sub-committee will check to ensure everything is correct in terms of spelling. The goal is to finish the mechanicals by Friday to get to Larkin soon. Ed A. confirmed that he does not need to review images a second time and trusts the sub-committee to make the final decisions.

**Website Updating / Photography for the District** – Chris R. confirmed that Silo Media has been updating the group’s website. Changes include adding the logo and listing current committee members names. Chris R. now has the ability to make small text changes to the website when needed. A new page will be uploaded that features photographs and listings of storefronts. This will exist on a business listings page. The lamppost banners will be displayed on a separate feature page. There is also an existing member resources page and the group discussed but did not decide on whether to publish links to past e-newsletters in this area.

**Berkshire Busk Update** – Seth reported that the event has attracted large crowds overall, although the area south of Castle Street has had a harder time garnering a crowd, even for the town park with the gazebo. There will be a sponsored event on Saturday from the new wine store on Railroad Street. Gene is happy with the event’s response as are downtown businesses. Robin H. noted hearing of some ADA sidewalk accessibility concerns in some locations.

**Downtown Wi-Fi** – Chris R. shared that Ed A. and some downtown business owners and Fiber Connect are working to plan and build out a free downtown Wi-Fi system (mesh network) that will allow people to travel around the district and ensure they always have a Wi-Fi signal is under development. The system involves pulling fiber optic to a certain point and then connecting to Wi-Fi transmitters mounted on strategic locations throughout town to ensure good coverage. Signs downtown will explain to people how to access the network. The network’s installation cost is being underwritten by Berkshire Fiber Connect, but each transmitter panel itself costs \$2K; there will be a total of 10 to 12 transmitters once completed. The panel fee is a one-time expense, with Fiber Connect maintaining the system going forward. The town is asking businesses to consider sponsoring transmitters to offset the cost. The town will sponsor one this year, and Chris R. suggested the DTGB Cultural Council consider sponsoring one next year if the budget allows. No vote was taken as to whether to find funding to sponsor a transmitter in FY22 due to lack of quorum.

**Discussion of the 2021-2022 MOU** – Laura B. checked with those in attendance to ensure they were clear about responsibilities of membership on the DTGB Cultural District Steering Committee. Laura B. has a draft she is readying for Year Four. Karen W. has made it known she is open to stepping down as co-chair and is seeking someone new to replace her in that role, as she has been in the role since the group’s inception. This could be done at the Annual Meeting. Laura noted that the M.O.U. cannot be finalized until a decision around who will be co-chair is determined. Ed A. reassured those on the call that the role of co-chair is not onerous and that activity between meetings is manageable. Currently the MOU states that one of the co-chairs be a select board member, but there is no reason that needs to remain in place; it is not required. Laura B. did recommend that there be two co-chairs to ensure someone is always available. Robin H. suggested reaching out to new artists who have moved to town recently to gauge their interest in joining the committee. They include: [Bernay Fine Art](#), [Stephen J. Donaldson Photography](#) at the Flying Church and [Hunt Slonem](#) who recently bought Searle’s

Castle. The GB Cultural Council has also traditionally had a seat on the Steering Committee, but former member Tate Coleman is no longer on the Council. Chris R. and Laura B. will speak to Ed A. offline about the effort to recruit new members and outreach to those who do not attend regularly.

**Berkshire County Cultural District Collaborations: ArtWeek Berkshires, Sept. 16-26, 2021**

– Laura B. shared that, to date, over 80 events have been registered with eight being in Great Barrington. There is still time to add additional events as the final date for submissions to be promoted is Sept 3. A full-page ad is planned for *Berkshire Magazine*. There will also be three billboards posted in each part of the county – south, mid-county and north. Berkshire Magazine’s sponsorship also includes a free digital ad on the *Berkshires Magazine* website. Press releases will be sent out after September 3rd. Festival Latino has not yet connected w/ArtWeek, but ideally, they should be listed if they agree.

**MCC Monthly Update: Business Openings/Closings and Newsletter Events Template –**

Wylie G. shared the online template where members can regularly update on events of note taking place in the nonprofit and for-profit sector as well as attendance at events so that this can be documented on a more ongoing basis for annual reporting.

**Adjourn** – The meeting adjourned at 9:48 a.m.

**Next Meeting** – The next meeting time was changed to avoid conflict with Yom Kippur. The next meeting will be held on September 23 at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom.