

Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District Minutes of September 23, 2021

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

Members in Attendance: Ed Abrahams, Betsy Andrus, Sally Michael Keyes, Seth Keyes, Talya Leodari, Karin Watkins, Jeff Gagnon, Abi Rollins, Robin Helfand, Kristen Kanter

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

Not Present: Jeff Caminiti, Richard Van Le, Barbara Watkins, Neel Webber

The meeting was called to order by Ed A. at 9:07 a.m.

July 15th Minutes and August 19th notes – Ed A. made a motion to approve the July 15 minutes. Seth K. so moved to approve. Talya L. seconded. The minutes were approved. Ed A. made a motion to make the August 19th notes part of the July 15th minutes. Talya L. so moved. Jeff G. seconded. The notes were approved to be included with the July 15th minutes.

Treasurer's Report – Chris R. reported no change in the budget since the last report with \$3,144 still available and unencumbered. Chris received a bill from photographer Dylan Kubis for \$450. Jeff G. shared the photos with Karen W., Laura B., and Chris R. to verify the work was done. Karin W. made a motion to approve payment to Dylan Kubis and Seth K. seconded. There were no objections. The Cultural District has a remaining balance for the fiscal year of \$2,864.

FY22 Budget – Laura B. shared the proposed budget for FY22 showing how the Cultural District might allocate \$7,500 predicted to be awarded in FY22 and \$2,864 being carried forward. Laura B. has assumed in the budget the full \$7,500 being received. MCC's application will open in October. Laura B. showed the group the proposed draft budget for FY22, with the caveat that items can move if the group decides to re-allocate. Ed A. asked if people had questions. Abi R. asked how the budget compares to the last FY and if there are any major differences. Laura B. shared the FY21 budget to explain that some money from the prior year had been carried forward as well. She noted that the lamppost banners was a significant investment in FY21, but that this line item will not be carried over in subsequent years. The only other change in FY22 could be sponsorship of downtown free Wi-Fi and \$1.5K included as a placeholder for not-yet-defined programming. Robin H. asked about Berkshire Busk costs that may increase in the next year. She recommended that the \$2K allocated in the budget for them be raised next year to cover rent for headquarters and costs that will go up to pay artists. Seth K. explained Berkshire Busk's organizer would potentially work at St. James Place and not have to pay rent. Ed A. noted that the Cultural District's efforts are generally to promote events, not sponsor them. Seth K. asked about the organizer's plans to expand. Betsy A. said that a re-done Visitor's Booth downtown might be a place for him to locate, as well. Seth K. confirmed that St. James Place would remain an option as a place for him to store materials for free. Seth K. made a motion to approve all budget items including Wi-Fi sponsorship. Betsy A. seconded the motion. The budget was

approved by all in a roll call vote except for Sally K. who arrived after the discussion and abstained.

Annual Meeting – Laura B. has been working with Ed A. and Chris R. on the presentation for the October 7th Annual Meeting at 9 a.m. Stakeholders are encouraged to attend to be updated on the group's activities with the potential that people who attend may be interested in joining the Steering Committee. In terms of new leadership, Seth K. agreed to co-chair alongside Ed A. while Karin W. will be stepping down but remain on the committee. This will be celebrated during the Annual Meeting. The meeting will also include a review of last year's successes while setting forward the agenda for FY 22. Talya L. offered to advertise the meeting on the library's website. Betsy A. similarly said she would include mention of it in the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce's e-newsletter.

Lamppost Banners Project – Robin H. shared that the banners are in production with Larkin and all is going smoothly. Payment to Larkin was confirmed by Chris R. The hope is that the banners will be finished soon after BIFF's banners come down. Robin H. will follow-up with Larkin about when production will be finished and coordinate the banners going up. Chris R. would like to put photos and bios of the artists on the DTGB Cultural District's website. Robin believes that Neel W. and Richard L. would have that information to share with Chris R. Ed A. asked about drafting a press release. Sally K. stated she could draft a press release and can share with Betsy A. to share with the Chamber. Robin H. will share the exact date the banners will go up with Sally K. The plan is for the banners to stay up until January/February.

Website Updating: Photography for the District – Chris R. informed the group that Silo Media has built pages on the website so that Dylan Kubis' photos can be posted. Ed A. asked if a photo of tables set out at night on Railroad Street could be put up. A person known to Chris R. who lives in Egremont took photos of Berkshire Busk and outdoor dining and sent them to the Gmail account. Chris R. will ask him for permission to use them on the site. Dylan's photos have been used with photo credit to promote ArtWeek. Betsy A. also helped connect with *Berkshire Magazine* for a segment focused on Great Barrington in their next issue that will feature photos by Dylan with credit given to him and the Cultural District.

Downtown Wi-Fi – Chris R. provided an overview of the free Wi-Fi network project, a collaboration among the town with Berkshire Fiber Connect and a few business owners. A few property owners are willing to host the panels on their buildings; panels are the size of a sheet of paper and will provide coverage across downtown. There will be a total of 8-10 panels once completed. The network will be run by Berkshire Fiber Connect and will be free to run and install; the only cost is for the panels. The first one is going up imminently at the Triplex.

Discussion of the 2021-2022 MOU – Laura B. shared her screen to review a description of the roles and responsibilities in the Cultural District; this MOU was not done in the previous FY. Laura B. highlighted items for the group to discuss that they may want to change in FY22. Item #1 involves adding new members, which has been challenging in the past. The change would involve no longer requiring a 2/3 vote to approve new members and instead requiring a simple majority; no vote can be taken without a quorum. Seth K. noted that Article II has a typo related to St. James Place and the Mahaiwe that needs to be changed. Item #2 involves sub-committees,

which have historically been project-based versus thematic, even though the original structure was intended to be the opposite (i.e., marketing/communications, fundraising/development, special events). Laura B. suggested changing the language to say sub-committees will be formed as needed to manage projects. Item #3 involves the role of a Clerk or Recording Secretary among Officer roles, even though historically that work has been done by BRPC staff. Ed A. suggested removing the position of Clerk since there is a Co-Chair to provide backup. Karin W. identified a typo on pg. 1 and asked that Berkshire Opera be changed to Berkshire Opera Festival. Laura B. will send out a revised version for people to review after the meeting. Laura B. will also add a place for Karin W. to sign for Mahaiwe. Robin H. pointed out a change to Richard's last name from Le to Van Le. Ed A. took a group vote to ensure all attending were in favor of the MOU. By voice vote there were no objections.

Berkshire County Cultural District Collaborations: ArtWeek Berkshires, Sept. 16-26, 2021– ArtWeek Berkshires is underway through 9/26 with 16 municipalities hosting event(s), including Great Barrington; in total ArtWeek Berkshires 2021 featured 110 events over 10 days. Laura B. thanked everyone for helping to promote while the festival is still ongoing. There is a post being shared daily on the GBCD's Facebook page that people can share or create their own. The event has received positive attention from MCC.

Annual Report due to MCC by August 1 – Attendees shared a number of businesses that opened or moved recently. Wylie G. will follow-up with Chris R. after the meeting to confirm. They include:

Opened

The Pilates Space - <https://www.thepilatespacegb.com/>

Fluff Alpaca - <https://fluffalpaca.com/>

Back to Heart Center - <https://www.backtoheartcenter.com/> (reiki and yoga)

Familiar Trees - <https://familiartrees.com/password>

Depart Wine and Beer - <https://www.departwine.com/>

Moved / Changed / In Transition

Workshop is now Railroad Street Collective - <https://www.workshopgb.com/>

Glassware/barware shop moving locations (he was next to SoCo)

Griffin - <https://www.griffingiroux.com/> (moved in 2018?)

Eileen's Hey Day - <https://www.facebook.com/EileensHeyDay/>

The old Snapchat is now two separate stores so there will be a new business opening soon.

Pixie Boulangerie (about to open – not seeing a website yet) and three other stores will be opening there including a coffee shop.

Rob's Records (?)

Closed

??

Wylie G. will send the Google spreadsheet to Kris K. so that she can share information about her space. Laura B. noted new businesses could be featured on social media or in the next e-newsletter to welcome and highlight them. Seth K. suggested new businesses that opened in the

last year be showcased at the annual meeting to point out positive change. Spotlighting the Wi-Fi project was also discussed as a possible annual meeting subject.

Following the formal agenda, there was discussion regarding the following items:

1. Public responses to storeowners asking patrons to wear masks. Response was generally positive within the Steering Committee with Karin W. and Seth K. noting mostly positive reactions to requests or required mask mandate. Robin H. shared that some business owners outside the Steering Committee have received negative responses.
2. Chris R. thanked Talya L. and Seth K. for assisting the town in applying to Mass Humanities for the Smithsonian Museum on Main Street program. If selected, St. James would be the host venue for a 6-week installation about the changing nature of small towns in the U.S. There will then be multiple opportunities for programming in Great Barrington. Some of the potential collaborations could include Housatonic Heritage, Simon's Rock and others.
3. Laura B. stated that she would look back to see how Co-Chairs are nominated to see if there needs to be a formal vote taken. She reiterated that if people know of others interested in joining the Steering Committee, they should come to the Annual Meeting to get an overview of the group's work then come to a follow-up meeting. Karin W. thanked Seth K. for taking over and taking on Co-Chair responsibilities.

Adjourn - The meeting adjourned at 9:51 a.m.

Next meeting: Thursday, October 21, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom.