

Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District Minutes of October 28, 2021

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

Members in Attendance: Ed Abrahams, Betsy Andrus, Jeff Gagnon, Sally Michael Keyes, Seth Keyes, Talya Leodari, Abi Rollins, Barbara Watkins, Karin Watkins, Kristin Westerman Kanter

Also Attending: Laura Brennan (BRPC), Wylie Goodman (BRPC)

Not Present: Jeff Caminiti, Robin Helfand, Chris Rembold (Town of Great Barrington), Richard Van Le, Neel Webber

The meeting was called to order by Ed Abrahams at 9:08 a.m.

September 23rd Meeting Minutes – Ed A. made a motion to approve the September 23rd minutes. Seth K. approved. Barbara W. seconded. There were no objections. The September 23rd Minutes were approved without formal roll call.

Treasurer's Report – Barbara W. reported a \$2,864 balance in the Cultural District's account with no new expenditures. Laura B. shared an invoice from the previous day from Silo Media for the lamppost banners for \$525 that was within the expected budget. Karen W. made a motion to approve payment to Silo. Seth K. seconded. There were no objections. The payment was approved.

FY22 MOU – Laura B. reminded attendees that she still needs signatures on the MOU for the FY22 from some members of the Steering Committee. She will send direct email reminders to those individuals to complete this task.

District Funding Discussion (follow up after Oct. 7 Annual Meeting) – Laura B. followed up on a topic raised during the Annual Meeting by Eric Bruun regarding the Cultural District pursuing additional grant funds beyond its MCC allocation to increase impact and expand on successful projects, such as Berkshire Busk. The Steering Committee discussed the issue and concluded they had been successful as volunteers supporting projects within their modest budget and would not individually or jointly have capacity to take on additional grantwriting responsibilities. Alternatively, the group could pay someone to write grants or encourage outside groups that find grants of interest to approach the Cultural District Steering Committee to explore a collaboration or support, with the outside group handling grantwriting. If the latter, the group felt it was important to seek clarity about the purpose or mission of the project to ensure it was aligned with the DGB Cultural District's mission. Ed A. said he would reach out to Eric B. to share the group's discussion on the matter. Laura B. and Wylie G. will continue to alert the committee about grants of interest that can be shared with local artists as well as being included in the monthly newsletter.

Lamppost Banners Project Final Update – Robin, Richard, and Neel were not present to share about their experience with the banner installation or post-installation press. Group members agreed the banners looked lovely and inquired as to what could be done with them when they come down. Sally K. had the idea to find a venue where they could be safely displayed as a group closer to street level (wall or inside store windows). The banners will next be replaced by W.E.B. DuBois banners, which remain up for one month. Seth K. believes banners are rotated out seasonally. Group members discussed a potential gap in banners between DuBois and BIFF. Ed A. will find out the street banner schedule from Chris R. and report back with Sally K. at the next meeting.

Website Updating Status Report – Chris R. was not present to share more about the website's updating. In his absence, Laura B. noted that Silo Media did a great job with the new lamppost banner and artist biography page. Laura B. will share the link so people can learn more about them. Abi R. wished there was a map on the website showing where each banner was in the town, so visitors could easily find the ones that most interest them.

Downtown Wi-Fi Status Report – Chris R. was not present to report on project status, but Ed A. shared that the town hit some snags regarding legalese in the easement business owners must sign and operational challenges involving a steel plate in Richard Stanley's building that are both being addressed.

ArtWeek Berkshires Post-Mortem (Artist Survey) – Wylie G. shared the results of an ArtWeek Survey involving 22 respondents who reported generally positive experiences with ArtWeek. Respondents saw a modest increase in visitors and small increases in sales. The time of year worked for most artists and marketing efforts, particularly Facebook ads, Instagram, billboards, and *Berkshire Magazine* advertising were well received. Five artists asked to be added to the DGB's e-newsletter list. Ed A. suggested looking at ways to increase the response rate to future surveys. Ed A. and Laura B. suggested it would be helpful to have a representative from the Cultural District visit each artist to show support and promote a sense of belonging to the Cultural District. Laura B. reiterated the success of Berkshire County's cultural districts overseeing this event during COVID, noting the increase from 30 events when the State managed the event to 114 this year when Berkshire County alone was solely responsible.

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

Members shared notable business openings, closings, and relocations, among them:

Barware store moving (name TBD)
Carrie Chen Gallery opening * Suggested lead story for next e-newsletter
Pixie Boulangerie in Flying Church
Subway closed
Jamie Goldenberg craft store
Kristen Westerman will send information about her new business TBD

Ed A. also relayed Gene Carr's recent verbal and video presentation about Berkshire Busk to the Select Board. Overall response to Gene's survey was positive from both musicians and audiences.

Seth K. noted that Gene has been invited to attend this and the previous Steering Committee meeting with an eye for him to potentially join, but he has a conflict on Thursday mornings.

Adjourn -- Barbara W. made a motion to adjourn at 9:25 a.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 18th at 9 a.m. via Zoom. The next meeting will take place on November 18th due to the Thanksgiving holiday. Neither Seth K. nor Sally K. will be able to attend.