

Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District Minutes of January 20, 2022

Members in Attendance: Ed Abrahams, Eugene Carr, Jeff Gagnon, Robin Helfand, Kris Kanter, Sally Michael Keyes, Seth Keyes, Talya Leodari, Stacy Ostrow, Abi Rollins, Barbara Watkins, Karin Watkins

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

Not Present: Betsy Andrus, Jeff Caminiti, Richard Van Lê, Neel Webber

This meeting was conducted by remote participation as stated on the agenda, called to order by Ed Abrahams at 9:02a.m.

Minutes of December 16, 2021 – Seth K. made a motion to approve the December 16th Meeting Minutes. Barbara W. seconded. There were no objections or abstentions. The December 16th Meeting Minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Barbara W. reported that we currently have \$1,594 on hand, with an anticipated \$7,500 from MCC for FY22. We have recently paid an invoice for \$170 from Kwik Print for the Cultural District postcards.

Lamppost Banner Temporary Re-Location – Ed A. asked the group their preference between putting banners back up after DuBois banners come down or installing them at Carr Hardware for the time being. Ed suggested that they'll be more visible at Carr, and this could be a good test. He will ask the town if they mind delaying reinstallation on lamppost banners. Robin H. asked whether these options may impact our budget for banner maintenance. Ed will take this into consideration during his conversations with Mark Pruhenski.

New Business Welcome Letter – Laura B. included a copy of the New Business Welcome Letter in meeting materials for today's meeting. Ed and Seth have approved as co-chairs. She asked the group how they would like to ensure these get distributed effectively. Ed suggested that this could be included in each month's discussion of business openings and closures. Laura will send out a list of new businesses identified in recent months to get things started.

MOTT Travel & Tourism Recovery Grant update – Laura B. informed the group that she had recently submitted an application to the MOTT Travel & Tourism Recovery grant. The scope is county-wide collaboration of Cultural Districts, Chambers of Commerce, and a range of outdoor recreation venues cooperating in a digital retargeting and social media campaign in April, May and June of 2022. All partners will add a pixel (code) to their websites to aid in the digital retargeting. Partners will receive email addresses gathered during the campaign to do their own direct marketing after the campaign is complete. Notification of award will be announced in March. There is a possibility that MOTT may reduce the proposed budget, if we are successful as a regional applicant.

Ed asked Laura to remind the group about the opportunity to serve on the county-wide ArtWeek 2022 working group. Laura provided a brief description of the time commitment and type of work this committee performs. Chris R. has already volunteered to be one of the two representatives from Great Barrington. Barbara W. expressed interest and will check the schedule of meetings before fully committing.

Downtown Wi-Fi Status Update – Chris R. stated that the project is continuing to move ahead slowly. There has been some recent press coverage. A few property owners have signed easement agreements to have equipment installed on the exterior of their buildings. Ed

reported that the network is available at at least one location, and when you sign on, there is a brief promotional video provided to users.

Berkshire Busk – Eugene C. reported that they will be extending the timeframe to 15 weekends rather than 10. He has recruited a former staffer to serve as general manager and they are currently raising funds. They have reached about 50% of their goal. He is willing to fill out an application or provide materials if needed. Costs include administration, performance fees, and promotion. Social media promotion was very effective last year, but print advertising was less successful. They would like to shift to radio this year. Incremental dollars raised will allow for increased promotion. Gene made the point that this promotion has benefits not just for the festival but for the town as a whole. Ed asked for confirmation of the amount budgeted by the committee. Laura B. confirmed a previously budgeted amount of \$2,000. Karin asked whether we specified that our support be for artist fees/stipends. Gene guaranteed that is how the money will be used. Robin asked that, given the expanded timeframe and number of performers, do we have the flexibility to increase the commitment to \$2,500. Laura B. confirmed that loosely categorized “artist support” funds in the current year’s budget would allow for such an increase with the same sort of stipulation. Karin W. made a motion to increase the underwriting to \$2,500 for 2022. Seth K. seconded. Approved unanimously.

MCC Monthly Update: Business Openings/Closings – Laura B. reminded members of:

- A gift shop on Railroad Street, possible name of Home Love or Home Love Berkshires.
- Shire Grow & Glass, located on the east side of Main Street, just north of the District.
- Barrington Outfitters building’s second floor will soon be a furniture store, under Barrington Outfitters management.
- The Masonic Temple has been purchased; new owner has not announced plans.

Gene described that the new owner of the Masonic Temple has a background in restaurants. There is quite a bit that the building needs to be brought up to code and to overcome its limitations. Gene will continue a dialogue with him.

Kris K. brought up Green Branch Urban Farm as a new/pending, which will be located next to the River Walk in the former Pink Cloud. Leland Kent and Sarah Brown are co-owners of this apothecary and provisions business.

Robin H. shared a recent article focused on eateries in Great Barrington. Laura B. will post the link on social media and ask Wylie to incorporate it into the next e-newsletter.

Karin W. asked whether anyone has made contact with Hunt Slonem at Searles Castle. Robin H. has had lunch with him and taken a tour of the castle. Their conversations were centered on public art installations. The group discussed ways to encourage him to become involved in the District. Robin will make an outreach.

Adjourn – Karin W. made a motion to adjourn at 9:33 a.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 17th at 9 a.m. via Zoom.

Remaining 2022 Steering Committee Meetings, at 9a.m.:

February 17	July 21
March 17	August 18
April 21	September 15
May 19	October 20
June 16	November 17
	December 15

