

Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District Minutes of March 16, 2023

Members in Attendance: Ed Abrahams, Robin Helfand, Kris Kanter, Sally Michael Keyes, Seth Keyes, Talya Leodari, Carli Scolforo, Jeffrey van de Visse, Barbara Watkins

Also Attending: Laura Brennan (BRPC), Wylie Goodman (BRPC), Dennis Iodice (guest/subcontractor), Chris Rembold (Town of Great Barrington), Mindy Miraglia (guest presenter, Berkshire Camino)

Not Present: Betsy Andrus, Elissa Haskins-Vaughan, Karin Watkins

This meeting was conducted by remote participation as stated on the agenda. A quorum was reached at 9:00 a.m.

Approval of Minutes of 2/16/2022 – Barbara W made a motion to approve the minutes. Robin H. seconded the motion. The minutes were approved. There were no abstentions.

Brief Presentation by Mindy Miraglia re: Walking Tour/Wayfinding – Mindy offered a 5-minute presentation discussing the opportunity and her proposal for a walking tour in Downtown Great Barrington. *Note: Mindy's PowerPoint, which she sent as an attachment after the meeting, provides complete details about her proposal to pilot six walks on Fridays/Saturdays in coordination with Berkshire Busk that would accommodate up to 20 people with no pre-registration required and no fees.*

Seth Keyes suggested that on Fridays the tour end at Town Park to align with concerts that start at 5 pm at the gazebo. Mindy also proposed, based on the pilot response, expanding to holiday weekends; Robin H. and Carli S. noted that Berkshire Busk is similarly considering expanding to holiday weekends. Jeff V. noted the historical significance of the gazebo and suggested that Mindy investigate rest stops at local businesses. Sally K. asked whether the tour would be accessible for children. Robin H. said it would be and was designed to accommodate people with strollers to avoid steps. Seth K. asked about whether the last budget discussed provided the funds needed to meet Mindy's request for \$3.4K for planning and running the tours. Laura B. said there would be funds if other items were reduced or not used. Barbara W. asked how the tour would be promoted. Robin H. said Mindy is a very effective social media promoter but would also ask that other businesses and groups in town assist on their own social media platforms. Jeff V. said WBCR can help as well. Chris R. noted the Town and Berkshire Busk could also help. Ed A. wanted to ensure that the tours be used to whet people's appetite to go into stores and attend events downtown to foster economic development. Wylie G. asked whether the tour would remain free and thus need to be budgeted for in future years. Robin H. confirmed that the plan was for it to remain free to visitors. A question was asked about comfort station/restroom options outside of restaurants/businesses which would be unlikely to be able to accommodate large groups. While Town Hall would not be an option, the library is open until 6 pm on Friday evenings. Talya L. asked about the diversity of cultural/historical subjects that the tour will highlight. She noted that the library has self-guided maps that have a multicultural focus. Robin H. responded that Mindy will be looking to the group during the development phase to offer guidance on the subject matter. Wylie G. asked about the interplay between the self-guided tour she is working on with Malcolm Fisk and Mindy's efforts. There was a general agreement they would not be in conflict. Mindy M. has asked that the group decide between now and the April 16th meeting whether they would like to move ahead with her proposal.

Treasurer's Report – Barbara W. reported that the group has not allocated any funds since the last meeting and has \$19,200 in the bank with an additional \$6,500 expected from MCC that will bring its total budget to \$25,700.

Bills to Approve for Payment –Chris R. reported that there were no pending bills to approve. There are some work requests out to Silo Media. Dennis I. was told that he can invoice Chris R. directly via email for social media work.

FY23 Budget Revisions Finalization – Laura B. shared the budget worksheet reflecting discussions from the last meeting. A new row was added in the amount of \$3.4K for the potential investment in the walking tour. Laura B. discussed the revision to the ArtWeek budget from \$5K to \$3K in line with the lower amount agreed to by the other Cultural Districts. At the last meeting, the social media management budget was increased from \$3.5K to \$4.5K. DEIA training had earlier been proposed to be \$5K. Following the DEIA discussion (see below) Seth K. made a motion to allocate \$2,150 for DEIA training, \$3,400 for the walking tour, and the remaining money moving to contingency. Kris K. seconded the motion. All members stated that they were in favor. None were opposed. The FY23 budget was finalized.

ArtWeek Berkshires 2023 Update – Laura B. shared that Betsy A. has been joining ArtWeek planning meetings, and all are invited and encouraged to participate. The next meeting will take place on April 6, at which time the group will finalize the budget and discuss marketing. The dates of ArtWeek have been moved from late September to October 14 through the 22 due to a strong slate of cultural activity in early Fall seen last year and to avoid larger institutions overshadowing smaller, individual artists. ArtWeek 2024 may shift to Spring to capture the earlier shoulder season when visitor numbers are typically lower. In time, a landing page will be built for ArtWeek, and venues and artists will be encouraged to submit proposals. BRPC will be surveying previous participants before the April 6th meeting.

Social Media Goal-Setting Update from Subcommittee – Dennis I. shared that the group met to put together a calendar of events throughout the year that he can share with the group for the next meeting. The calendar will be informed by past years' activities. Dennis I. will also in subsequent meetings share social media analytics. Dennis I. is posting more than requested. Wylie G. asked about his ability to post on Instagram in addition to Facebook. Dennis I. discussed some of the complications of that, given that he is mostly "sharing" other groups' content on the DGB Facebook page rather than generating original content. Wylie G. suggested that the social media icons on the website be moved to the top and be made more prominent. Dennis I. said he can also share with Chris R. other edits/errors on the website that should be addressed. Wylie G. suggested Dennis I. share e-newsletter monthly content on Instagram at least as a trial to gauge response and try to bring in younger viewers.

DEIA Update from Subcommittee – Talya L. and Robin H. discussed their conversation with Eden Renee Hayes, who responded to the group's request for interest in DEIA training. She proposed a broad set of options that may be more than the group can afford at this time. Talya L. and Robin H. recommended the group begin with an Unconscious Bias workshop @ \$1.8K (90 minutes over Zoom or in-person) and a policy review for \$350 (1 hour looking at bylaws, website, etc.). The total of \$2,150 they are seeking approval for should be allocated before the end of the FY. The training could also focus on the diversity of what the CD promotes. Robin H. and Jeff V. agreed that the work can be used to teach the committee new ways to think about who they are as a group and how they can reach more people to join the Steering Committee. Dennis I. suggested that the group make sure training was broad in focus vis a vis race, and Talya confirmed that this was part of their initial outreach to potential training providers.

MCC FY23 Reporting Check-In: Business Openings/Closings – Robin H. reported on a needlepoint store that is moving into the former Familiar Trees location. It will initially be a pop-up for the summer. Robin H. also shared about a Pollinator Project that will be happening that may be of interest.

Artist to Highlight in March Newsletter – Robert Watkins will be featured in the next e-newsletter.

Adjourn – Jeff V. made a motion to adjourn. Talya L. seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:57 am.

2023 Steering Committee Meetings, all at 9 a.m.:

April 20

May 18

June 15

July 20

August 17

September 21

October 19

November 16

December 21