

**Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District
Minutes of September 21, 2023**

Members in Attendance: Barbara Watkins, Seth Keyes, Robin Helfand, Kris Kanter, Betsy Andrus, Karin Watkins, Carli Scolforo, Elissa Haskins-Vaughan, Sally Michael Keyes

Also Attending: Laura Brennan (BRPC), Chris Rembold (Town of Great Barrington); Dennis Iodice (social media subcontractor)

Not Present: Ben Elliot, Wylie Goodman (BRPC)

This meeting was conducted by remote participation, as stated on the agenda. Kris K. called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Approval of Minutes of 07/20/2023 – Barbara W. made a motion to approve the minutes. Robin H. seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously. The notes from the August 17 meeting were shared with the Committee members but required no vote as a quorum was not met at that meeting.

Update on Walking Tour – Robin H. said that Mindy M. reported a very successful experience running the walking tours. Attendance increased throughout the season, from zero attendees for the first tour to 20 at the end of the season. Mindy M. felt that the A-frame sign erected by Dennis I. on Railroad Street made a “world of difference”, which along with publicity at the Farmer’s Market and word-of-mouth contributed to the end-of-season success of the event. Mindy M. also expressed enthusiasm at leading the event next summer, and Robin H. suggested that such events could be held at other times during the year such as Indigenous Peoples Weekend and other Monday holiday weekends. Approximately 2/3 of guests were out-of-town, and 1/3 were locals, with a common dynamic being locals bringing their out-of-town house guests. There also tended to be more adult guests than child guests. Robin H. said that next year there may be a push to make the event more family- and child-oriented.

Treasurer’s Report – Barbara W. reported that there were no changes to the accounts. No money was received or spent. The balance is \$9,908.23.

Bills to Approve for Payment – Chris R. reported that there are no pending bills for payment.

MCC FY24 CDI Grant Application & FY24 Cultural District Budget - Laura B. said that she already submitted the FY24 CDI application to MCC. MCC has made the application process very easy, and the District did not need to provide a breakdown of anticipated spending. The only stipulation is that at reporting time in July 2024, the District must speak to what it has done in regard to DEI. This does not need to be formal training or workshop and can be cost-free, but must promote DEI objectives. The MCC allocation across all Commonwealth districts is \$15,000, which is the same as FY23. Assuming that the application is met, and combined with \$5,000 of unspent funds from FY23, the District has approximately \$20,000 to spend in FY24.

Laura B. shared the draft FY24 budget, which was prepared by her and Chris R., with input from Robin and Kris. The draft budget included increased funds for Berkshire Busk, ArtWeek Berkshires, and social media management. Chris R. mentioned that even though there are \$9,908.23 of unencumbered funds, the amount of funds that has not received any discussion by the Committee is \$5,000.

Walking Tour Line Item – The FY23 allocation for the walking tour was \$3,400 paid to Mindy M., \$1,000 of which was for tour development and \$2,400 of which was for running 6 tours at \$400 each. The proposed FY24 allocation is \$2,500, allowing for 6 tours at \$400 each plus residual for additional costs. Robin H. said that if the Committee wishes to expand the tour calendar, Mindy M. offered up to 10 tours at \$400 each, for a total of \$4,000. Additionally, she offered to prepare three reports on attendance for \$250 and is willing to redevelop the tours to be more family-oriented for a fee. Robin H. suggested that the Committee consider developing a QR code for Walking Tour/Cultural District marketing. She also suggested that the Committee consider finding a sponsor for the walking tour to offset Mindy's fee.

DEI Line Item – The FY24 allocation is \$500. Laura B. suggested that some portion of this could be given to support the DuBois Statue project. Karin W. suggested that there could be a collaboration with/support given to the DuBois Freedom Center. Robin H. said that the walking tour includes extensive discussion of DuBois and begins with a land acknowledgment, thus it could be considered as an element of the District's DEI efforts. Dennis I. suggested that the Committee look into the workshops offered by Berkshire Pride as an element of the District's DEI mission.

Berkshire Busk Line Item – The proposed FY24 allocation is \$4,500, a \$1,000 increase over the FY23 allocation of \$3,500. This increase is based on the Committee's assessment that there has been considerable positive impact from Berkshire Busk being downtown. Robin H. said that Busk leadership has told her that the District's support allows them to secure matching and overmatching support from private sponsors. The first year of District support for Busk included the stipulation that funds must go towards compensating artists, the second year of support removed that stipulation, but Robin H.'s impression from discussion with artists is that they feel well-compensated. The Committee supported the increase in the FY24 draft budget.

ArtWeek Berkshires – The District increased its support to \$3,000 in FY23 when the MCC allocated \$15,000 to all cultural districts. These funds were pooled with \$12,000 from the other four Berkshire County cultural districts for a total of \$15,000. These funds were used as follows: \$2,000 for BRPC staff work; \$1,000 for 1Berkshire staff work; \$12,000 for advertising and promotion (print, radio, social media, billboard). Robin H. asked if there is an equal division of promotional spending across the County. Laura B. said yes except for billboards due to limited billboard availability in Southern Berkshire County. Robin H. suggested a few hundred dollars were allocated in the budget for an A-frame sign in Great Barrington. Betsy A. supported this suggestion. Robin H. and Kris K. asked what the level of participation of Southern Berkshire County artists was in 2023. Laura B. said it was fairly evenly spread throughout the county's subregions.

Laura B. said that ArtWeek 2023 is on track to have a lot more participating events and a lot more attendance at said events. Laura B. is confident that the 2023 investment was a success. The FY24 allocation was thus increased to \$4,000.

Social Media/Dennis I. Contract (Social Media Management & Boosting) – Dennis I. was awarded a contract of \$3,000 for 12 months of work in 2023. Chris R. said that Dennis I. had gone above and beyond what was required by the contract in some instances, and nobody else on the Committee could do the work, thus he supported an increase in the contract to \$4,000. Barbara W. agreed with the increase but suggested further discussion when Dennis I. wasn't present. Robin H. suggested that contractors hired by the Cultural District

such as Dennis I. give a presentation toward the end of their contract to inform the Committee's decision regarding contract extension or increase.

Approval of FY24 Working Budget – Betsy A. made a motion that the Committee approve the draft budget as a working budget for FY24. Seth K. seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Wayfinding and Additional Banners – For several budget cycles the Committee has set aside funds for improving wayfinding in downtown Great Barrington including banners and more permanent practical information about parking, restrooms, restaurants, etc. To date, the Committee has not moved forward because it is a complicated effort that requires input from other stakeholders such as the municipality. Additionally, the Committee separately invested in an extensive banner project that did not meet expectations. Kris K. said that a full discussion on wayfinding would be too long for the current meeting. Committee members asked Chris R. to prepare a presentation for a future meeting where the issue could be discussed in depth. The funds in the approved working budget earmarked for wayfinding will be reevaluated based on future discussions.

Annual Community Stakeholder Meeting (October 26) – The Committee previously selected October 26 as the best date for the Annual Community Stakeholder Meeting. Laura B. said that 20 to 40 people were expected to attend. Karin W. had suggested that it could be held at the Mahaiwe Theater if needed. Dennis I. said that the Berkshire Food Co-op has a community space where it could be held. Chris R. said that the Mason Library could be a backup location. The Committee agreed that the first choice would be the Co-op's community space, the backup would be the library, and the second backup would be Zoom.

October 19 Meeting – The Committee agreed to a short meeting (30 minutes) ahead of the Annual Community Stakeholder Meeting.

Adjourn – Barbara W. motioned to adjourn. Seth K. seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 a.m.

Prepared by:

Laura Brennan and Wylie Goodman, BRPC