

Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District
Minutes of November 19, 2020

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

Members in Attendance: Ed Abrahams, Betsy Andrus, Jeff Gagnon, Robin Helfand, Kris Kanter, Seth Keyes, Barbara Watkins, Karin Watkins

Also Attending: Laura Brennan (BRPC), Richard Le, Neel Webber

Not Present: Kate Burke, Jeff Caminiti, Tate Coleman, Talya Leodari, Chris Rembold

Karin W. called the meeting to order at 9:20am.

Minutes of 10/29/2020 meeting – Seth K. made a motion, Robin H. seconded. Unanimously approved, no abstentions.

Treasurer's Report – Barbara W. informed the group that there have been no new expenditures, and the balance remains at \$3,571.

Prospective Steering Committee Members – Karin W. discussed a vote to appoint additional Steering Committee Members Richard Le and Neel Webber. Barbara W. made a motion, Seth K. seconded. A roll call vote was conducted, all present members voted in the affirmative, achieving the 2/3 majority required by the group's MOU. Mary Ann Palermo and Terry Cooper have also expressed an interest in joining the group and were invited today's meeting but did not attend. They have yet to be oriented to committee responsibilities so the group held off on voting on their appointment until a future date.

Lamppost Banners – Robin H. has met with both Richard and Neel regarding involvement in this project. Neel has agreed on behalf of the high school art department to have students take on the banner artwork. This will be worked into the curriculum. Richard will be doing mockups of banner design. Robin has also been emailing with Ryan Larkin regarding banner permitting. The project budget is approximately \$3,000 for 24 banners incorporating the new district signage design. We have a handle on the technical requirements and can get the artwork in the proper resolution. The budget has increased due to the permitting and need for an engineer. Robin is also looking into possible grant support for this project which may cover up to 2/3 of the overall project. If we do not qualify for a grant, there remains the plan to approach local businesses to get sponsorships. The timeline for this project is probably installation in late winter or early spring. Karin W. asked about how banners from various organizations get scheduled. BIFF and DuBois are the two other possible banner installations. Chris R. expects that the District banners would be the standard, and would only be taken down when others are scheduled. Karin W. asked for more information about cost to reinstall when banners are removed and reposted. Robin H. asked how the students should be guided regarding featured district institutions or assets. A list exists on our website from which to draw inspiration. Chris suggested providing a list of possibly 10 necessary "featured" institutions and letting them add to it. Robin H. suggested adding to that list some thematic items to ensure that general themes are also included. Betsy A. and Chris R. will start working on a list, focusing on institutions within the district borders. The logo which will be incorporated is the new one issued by MCC. At the next meeting, further discussion of funding sources will be on the agenda. Robin H. and Richard L. will be approaching sponsors prior to the next meeting. Sponsors will not be named on the banner, but will be recognized on our website and via social media posts. There is also the possibility of raising funds for the banner project through performance proceeds via the Performance on Main project that Ed A. and Robin H. have been brainstorming.

MCC Updates – Laura shared that applications for this fiscal year's funding will likely be available in December, which is in line with timing from previous years. This is contingent upon the state budget being approved. Street signs have arrived, and 3 have been installed. A fourth remains and could be installed on Taconic or Saint James Place. MCC will also be sending a PDF file of the sign for use on website and banners. The old logo design was used for window decals but not many businesses have put them in their storefronts. Robin H. suggested that we may want to consider being included in the illustrated Berkshire map and incorporate the new logo. Betsy A. will inquire with Mary Hart regarding pricing for 2021.

Berkshire County Cultural Districts Collaborations – Cultural Districts throughout the county are looking at collaborating in 2021, potentially on a regional ArtWeek event. Laura B. will share the January 12th meeting info with the full Steering Committee when it becomes available.

Long term planning to support small businesses – the group had a discussion regarding what small businesses may be facing with the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, and what we might do to help them. Betsy A. reinforced the idea that features of individual artists or business owners light on text and heavy on images would be particularly impactful, more so than long-form press releases. Kris K. indicated that the Arts Market is using Instagram as much as possible to spotlight various partners. Robin suggested developing a playlist of local artists and encouraging local stores to play this while customers are shopping. This could be developed on Spotify and promoted by the Cultural District. Seth K. and Kris K. will work together to develop a possible list of local musicians.

Social Media – Chris R. has been in communication with Dan Bolagnani regarding the potential for Housatonic Heritage to underwrite a social media intern for the Cultural District. This intern will report to Dan and would balance reposting content from district stakeholders with development of original content. Dan will be identifying the intern through his connections with local schools and youth organization.

Adjourn - The meeting was adjourned at 10:14am.

Next meeting: December 17th, 2020 at 9:15 AM via Zoom

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher R. Bolagnani". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "B".