

Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District Minutes of February 24, 2021

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

Members in Attendance: Ed Abrahams, Jeff Caminiti, Robin Helfand, Kris Kanter, Sally Michael Keyes, Richard Le, Barbara Watkins, Neel Webber.

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

Not Present: Betsy Andrus Tate Coleman, Jeff Gagnon, Seth Keyes, Talya Leodari, Abi Rollins, Karin Watkins

Ed A. called the meeting to order at 9:03am.

Minutes of 12/17/2020 meeting – Approval of minutes was postponed until the next meeting.

Treasurer's Report – Barbara W. informed the group that the balance remains at \$3,355.

MCC Update – Laura B. informed the group that the FY21 MCC grant application was submitted on February 9th. Our application is likely in a batch that is being reviewed and approved this week. We will await word from Luis Cotto. There is a possibility we may need to provide additional narrative explaining the connection to the recover and rebuild priority set by the MCC board. In previous years we have been fully funded, and anticipate the same this round.

Lamppost Banners – Neel W. shared that he has been discussing with Laura B. and Richard L. regarding the parameters of the project. Students have received a list of potential topics/themes, and Neel has branched out to the full student body, not limiting it to current art students. The interested students are requiring a substantial amount of assistance in researching the subject matter. Neel would like to postpone any discussion of enlisting any other artists at this time, and give at least another week to see what student signups turn out to be. Robin H. asked if we might want to reach out to Simon's Rock students when the time comes, if necessary. Neel agreed but still wanted to hold off for one week. Robin will share contact information with Neel.

The group discussed the potential to offer more incentive to student artists to participate and follow through. Robin suggested offering gift cards to her own store and other downtown stores. Ultimately it was agreed that both she and Jeff Caminiti will offer \$50 gift certificates to each student whose art is selected to be featured on a banner.

Laura B. updated the group that when artwork is scanned or photographed in order to be reproduced on banners, we will also use those digital files to create a gallery on our website, accompanied by short artist bios. Image files and content can also be parsed out into social media posts. Robin H. suggested that we also use these files to create commercial products such as posters, postcards, and masks. Barbara W. also volunteered to sell reproduced items and original artwork in her store. Jeff C. also offered to hang student art in his restaurant when they reopen.

Social Media Intern Update – Chris R. reported that the intern will be starting soon. She will be working with both the Town and the Cultural District. Approximately 1 hour per week will be devoted to the Cultural District. He will be sharing credentials to our accounts this week. Chris will also connect her with Richard L. in order to ensure a smooth transition as she begins and prepare for transitioning when she completes her task.

Berkshire County Cultural District Collaborations – Laura B. updated the group regarding our ongoing effort to collaborate with fellow cultural districts in Berkshire County, which continues to focus on an ArtWeek for the Berkshires now that the statewide festival has ceased. Preliminary conversations have identified the potential dates of September 18th through 26th. ArtWeek activity can vary widely, and could include open studio tours, performances, hands-on experiences, special sales, etc. The next discussion among districts will be on March 10th, and Laura will share the link when it is available. Lenox has been considering applying to the MCC festivals grant, and it is possible that all districts in the county could apply to this grant program and pool their funds to boost the overall effort. She asked for overall feedback on ArtWeek collaborations and on whether to apply to the grant program. Steering Committee members expressed enthusiasm for both. Chris R. asked Laura B. to pursue an application on behalf of the Cultural District.

Meeting Dates and Times – the group agreed that moving back to Thursday was likely to garner better participation on a regular basis. A number of current members expressed concerns about the possibility of moving to Wednesdays. For March, we will test the third Thursday of the month at 9am rather than the fourth, and make a final determination at that time. This will be an agenda item on March 18th.

Misc. – We did not discuss Berkshire Busk during this meeting, as Karin W. was absent. Chris R. did indicate that as far as he knows it is moving forward. We will include this topic on the next agenda.

Adjourn - The meeting adjourned at 9:31 am.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 18th, 2021 at 9:00 AM via Zoom

Laura Brennan / CP