

Downtown Great Barrington Cultural District Minutes of March 18, 2021

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, Sally Michael Keyes, Seth Keyes, Talya Leodari, Abi Rollins, Barbara Watkins, Karin Watkins, Neel Webber.

Also Attending: Chris Rembold (Town of GB), Laura Brennan (BRPC), Tim Newman, Katie Orenstein

Not Present: Jeff Caminiti, Tate Coleman, Kris Kanter, Richard Le

Ed A. called the meeting to order at 9:02am.

Minutes of 1/28/2021 and 2/24/2021 meeting – Barbara W. made a motion to approve, Robin H. seconded. Approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Barbara W. informed the group that the balance remains at \$3,355.00.

MCC Update – Laura B. informed the group that we have received approval for \$7,500.00, and the town has received contract paperwork. This will allow us to proceed as planned with projects within the FY21 budget.

Social Media Intern – Katie Orenstein briefly introduced herself to the group.

Berkshire Busk – Karin W. updated the group with information provided by Gene Carr. He has been busy, posting a position for an assistant manager position which is a paid position for 15-20 hours per week. He is also setting up a committee of advisors, which will include Karin W., Jeff C., and Seth K. A website will be launched soon. He is also reaching out to local students in the hope of finding both performers and interns for the summer. Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires will serve as fiscal sponsor. Corporate sponsors are also being approached and about half of the budget has been raised. He has not yet made a specific request to the Cultural District for funding, and Karin has encouraged him to ask. Chris R. indicated that we did set aside a portion of our MCC grant to support performers and/or production expenses, Laura B. confirmed that the amount set aside is \$2,000.00.

Lamppost Banners – Neel W. gave an update regarding student artwork, which is beginning to come in. He has expanded his search to Steiner, Montessori, and CATA. There will be a wide range and variety of work, and he is currently encouraging students to select themes from outside of the key favorites such as the Farmers Market. There is a relatively low level of familiarity with some of the cultural events and venues. He has set a soft deadline of March 20th for a first deadline for submissions. After that date, he will reach out to specific students. Sally will assist with outreach by drafting a press release regarding the need for student artists. Some discussion regarding timeline of production and installation. Laura B. clarified that May needs to be reserved for production, so all artwork should be in hand by mid-April. This should allow for installation in early June. Robin H. will be donating some advertising on the Berkshire Edge to the Cultural District, and some of it could be used to encourage students to participate. She will work with Katie O. to get this submitted. Katie O. also encouraged the group to consider submissions from students who are attending other schools remotely but are currently residing in the Berkshires. Laura B. reminded the group of plans to create an online gallery with artist bios on the District website. These can also be used for social media posts. Robin H. asked Neel to reach out to Larkin soon so they will have time to order materials for production.

Social Media Intern Update – Katie O. provided additional introduction information and described some of her work for the Town and the District so far. She has been working with Mark Pruhenski and Ellen Lahr

on municipal posts. She has been focused on Instagram stories, and featuring new and old businesses. She is also an Admin on Facebook. Although we have a Twitter account, very few of our stakeholders are active on that platform. She requested that committee members suggest post content, particularly trivia question ideas. She would also like to profile business owners. One of her goals is to develop a manual for future social media managers so that transitions will be seamless moving forward. She will likely be working with the Town and District until mid-June. She can be reached at social@townofgb.org.

Berkshire County Cultural District Collaborations – Laura B. updated the group on the recent convening of the five county Cultural Districts. The group agreed at the March 10th meeting to pursue a county-wide ArtWeek from September 18th through the 26th. It is possible that we would start on the 16th, which is Third Thursday in Pittsfield, this is yet to be determined. Venues should look at planned activity during that timeframe to see if they could be featured as an Artweek event. We will look to partner with 1Berkshire to present a full digest of Artweek Berkshires on their website, www.berkshires.org. Laura and Katie will connect to begin soliciting events for inclusion. Seth informed the group that Festival Latino of the Berkshires is likely to occur during the final weekend of this timeframe. Some of the traditional parameters of the statewide Artweek event will not necessarily need to apply now that this is being presented just in the Berkshires. We will not likely expect hands-on, interactive elements for all events, nor will we insist on events being free or very low cost. The group of districts also plans to work with a graphic artist to create a banner for use whenever the districts are collaborating. Deirdre McKenna from the Lenox Chamber of Commerce will be donating services for this effort.

Misc. – the group discussed various marketing opportunities, including possible reprints of the brochure in the future, as well as the need to update the website. Karin asked that we include website updates to the next agenda. We will also discuss the recently awarded LRRP technical assistance grant, which allows for planning of quick interventions to improve business conditions in the downtown. A survey will be issued soon, and Laura B. asked that everyone reply to that survey notification. Chris R. and Laura B. described some of the possible project ideas that may be identified through the process.

Meeting Dates and Times – the group agreed to move regular meetings back to third Thursdays of each month at 9am.

Adjourn - The meeting adjourned at 9:56 am.

Next meeting: Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 9:00 AM via Zoom

Laura Brennan 