

**Franklin Cultural District Committee
Minutes of Meeting
December 14, 2023
Held as a Virtual Meeting
via Remote Access Zoom Platform**

This meeting was held in the Campanella Boardroom at Dean College. Citizens were allowed to attend in person, and also able to dial into the meeting using the provided phone number or participate by using the Zoom link provided on the agenda.

Members present: Chair John LoPresti, Vice Chair Amy Adams, Clerk Katherine Botelho, Sue Cass, Dr. Pandora Carlucci, Roberta Trahan

Members not present: Patrick Conlan,

Also in attendance: Bryan Taberner, Planning and Community Development Director; Kenneth Elmore, President of Dean College; Erin Gallagher, on behalf of Children's Museum of Franklin; Erin Kerns, for Franklin Summer PorchFest; Carolyn Howard, for Franklin Summer PorchFest; Mary Olsson, Franklin Historical Museum; Kyle Olsson, Franklin Historical Museum; Alan Earls, Franklin Historical Commission; Lisa Piana, Franklin Downtown Partnership; Jane Curren, Member of Downtown Partnership; John Mitchell; Tina Powderly, Franklin Food Pantry; Danielle Hopkins, Director of the Franklin Senior Center; Marc Arensten, Dean College School of Dance & School of the Arts; Mary MacMurray, Franklin Teacher; Jon Ceander Mitchell

Upon achieving quorum with the required minimum of members present, Chair LoPresti opened the meeting at 7:01 PM

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

There was a motion to approve the November 9, 2023 Meeting Minutes. Motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

Dean College President Update

Chair LoPresti opened by speaking about how President Elmore and Dean College by extension are looking to become more involved in the Cultural District. President Elmore then discussed Dean College's place in Franklin and its student artists who have the potential to contribute to art and culture in the Town. He added that the goals of the Cultural District align with those of Dean College, and the students have commonly expressed a desire to be around more art. President Elmore continued by saying that it is important to him that Dean College to be a part of what the Cultural District is doing. Dean is looking at arts leadership, which would entail more accessible programs and appealing to the public; teaching students about the marketable needs that involve art; and conversely teaching the business students to understand culture and art. Dean wants to be in the mix of all the arts, cultural, and civics organizations in Franklin, and concluded by asking people to view Dean College as their home just as Dean College views Franklin as its campus.

Mary Olsson weighed in to remark that she has seen a lot of activity from Dean and its students in the Community recently, including restoration work at the cemetery at the corner of West Central Street and Union Street and the History Majors' Night hosted by the Museum itself. Vice Chair LoPresti then asked how else the students at Dean can connect with events going on in Franklin, whether it be social media or a newsletter or something else. Marc Arensten replied

that the newsletter is being circulated around to the students of Dean and they are interested in moving things further. Dr. Carlucci thanked Dean College for being so welcoming to the Cultural District and the whole Franklin Community in how the Dean campus is so open to access by those who pass by it.

President Elmore then expressed his hope to foster a student internship/apprenticeship/co-op program that can provide interested students with paid internships throughout the community, citing that it would be the most effective way to teach them about the workings of art and culture in the world. He added that he would be open to meeting with anyone that had ideas or proposals they would like to discuss with him.

MCC CDI 2024 Grant

Chair LoPresti briefed the room on the goals and uses of the funds from the CDI Grant, emphasizing that anyone who will be planning to request funds from the Grant should view their program through the lens of whether or not it is accessible to anyone interesting in it—namely free to attend—and that it is promoting culture in the District. Finally, the program should be viewed on whether or not it benefits the community, and does it drive economic activity into Franklin. Chair LoPresti then went on to say that the Committee is happy to see all of the entries it received, but there is not enough funds from the grant to completely fulfill all requests. The Committee then began review of applications for funding, starting with those for events which would be free to attend.

First was a request from the Franklin Public Library for \$450 for a concert on March 16 where they would host Performer Mary King.

Chair LoPresti motioned to allocate the full \$450 to the Franklin Public Library's March 16, 2024 event. The Committee members voted unanimously to approve the funding.

Second the PorchFest idea was discussed by Carolyn Howard, who added that it would be a good opportunity for Dean Students to become involved in and free to attend. The bands would not be charging fees. Currently June 1 (June 2 rain date) is the planned date, out of consideration with not clashing with other community events scheduled around that time. Lisa Piana said that she and the Downtown Partnership were fans of the idea. Dr. Carlucci asked for clarification if everyone at porchfests are volunteers, which Carolyn Howard and Erin Kerns answered they are and they get exposure from the event. They added that they are trying to collaborate with Tri-County's Art Department for creating a logo, and they are also attempting to build a website for the event. Vice Chair Adams asked about the dedicated website for the event, which Chair LoPresti and Mr. Taberner responded that it would be used for bands to register and would be best kept as its own separate website from the Cultural District website. Chair LoPresti asked what the amount for building a website the PorchFest Promoters would need, to which they responded that they were not sure but \$1,500-\$2,000 would be the estimate. Erin Gallagher offered to help them with the creation and design of a website. Dr. Carlucci asked to wait on a vote to allocate funds until all of the items on the list were reviewed and discussed. Vice Chair Adams then read the descriptions of the other proposals that were requesting funding.

Mary MacMurray discussed her request for \$1,080 for funds to the second annual Kennedy and Parmenter Elementary School Night of the Arts in May. It would be free to the public.

Franklin Lifelong Learning requested \$400 for a creativity exercise presentation that would be free to the public.

Oak Street School requested \$1,500 for food, vendors and performers to be at their May 2024 Cultural Fair that would be open to the public.

Mary Olsson inquired if a proposal had been received from Alan Earls for Franklin Book Week, which Mr. Taberner confirmed had been submitted. Mary Olsson confirmed that event is free to the public.

There was then discussion about a request for funding in regards to photographs from 1915 that the Museum is hoping to preserve.

The Members of the Committee then deliberated on the proposals.

Vice Chair Adams proposed that the PorchFest have \$2,000 set aside for it, but any funds that go unused be returned to the Committee for reallocation to another Partner or project that is looking for funding.

Chair LoPresti Motioned to allocate \$2,000 to the PorchFest event for designing a website, with remaining funds expected to be returned to the Committee for reallocation. Seconded by Dr. Carlucci. The Committee Members voted unanimously to approve the funding.

The Committee then talked about a funding request from the Franklin Farmers Market for \$1,200 to provide for three days of entertainment free to the public.

Chair LoPresti Motioned to allocate the requested \$1,200 to the Franklin Farmers Market. Seconded by Vice Chair Adams. The Committee Members voted unanimously to approve the funding.

The Committee confirmed that Mary MacMurray was only asking for \$1080 for both Parmenter and the Kennedy Schools, and not for each.

Chair LoPresti Motioned to allocate the requested \$1,080 for Parmenter and Kennedy Schools. Seconded by Vice Chair Adams. The Committee Members voted unanimously to approve the funding.

Next, the Committee discussed a request by Franklin Lifelong Learning for \$400 for Dr. David Murphy of Effective Effort Consulting to give a 90-minute presentation on “strategies to develop and improve executive functions in the home” that would be free for anyone to attend and teach them about thoughts and behaviors that are relevant for creativity.

Chair LoPresti Motioned to allocate the requested \$400 for Franklin Lifelong Learning’s guest Presentation by Dr. David Murphy. Seconded by Vice Chair Adams. Vice Chair Adams voted Yes. Dr. Carlucci voted Yes. Clerk Botelho voted Yes. Ms. Cass stated that she had reservations about it being an appropriate use of funds relative to the Cultural District Committee. The Committee agreed to defer a vote on allocating funds for Franklin Lifelong Learning’s request to later in the meeting.

The Committee discussed Franklin Book Week and asked for more information on the program. Alan Earls briefed the Committee on Franklin’s history with its books and Public Library. He said that January 17, the birthday of Ben Franklin, would be the anchor of Book Week and the week would include publicly available readings, lectures, and author discussions. Chair LoPresti asked for clarification on how grant funds would be used, which Alan Earls answered would be used on promotion of the event as well as snacks and food. The total funding

requested was \$1900. Dr. Carlucci asked if the event might be able to be marketed and advertised with less funds, but said that Franklin has a unique position with Ben Franklin and that the reach of the event would go out to surrounding communities as well. Alan Earls said that it could likely be marketed with less funding, but he has done public relations before and thinks even a modest amount of money would go far. Mr. Taberner said to Alan Earls if the Planning Department could look into providing some funding itself that could help an event come together. Alan Earls added that Escape Into Fiction is going to be involved in the event as well. Dr. Carlucci reiterated that she believes it is an important project, which Vice Chair Adams agreed with. Alan Earls said that they could work with a different amount of funding with the Town on the Franklin Book Week event.

Chair LoPresti Motioned to allocate \$1,000 of grant funds to the Franklin Book Week event. Seconded by Dr. Carlucci. The Committee Members voted unanimously to approve the funding.

Dr. Carlucci asked how much funding remained at that point in the meeting, which Mr. Taberner answered was \$5,732. The Committee then discussed Oak Street School's request and proposed giving \$750 of the requested amount to them for their Cultural Fair.

Chair LoPresti Motioned to allocate \$750 of grant funds to the Oak Street School. Seconded by Clerk Botelho. The Committee Members voted unanimously to approve the funding.

The Committee then resumed discussion of the 600 photographs that the Franklin Historical Museum is looking for help in funding preservation and digitizing of. Mary Olsson emphasized that the physical photographs are deteriorating despite their best efforts to preserve them in protective sleeves. Chair LoPresti asked about a timeframe for donating copies to the Town Library. Mary Olsson responded that they were having discussions of creating and publishing a book of the photographs to be sold for fundraising. Mr. Taberner inquired about donating digital copies to the Historic Commission and/or Historic New England, who has been themselves acquiring historic photographs from other Towns for digital and physical preservation, and emphasized that making sure the photos are available to be viewed by anyone interested is what benefit the Town.

Erin Gallagher then presented on behalf of the Children's Museum of Franklin, who requested funds for a "Makerspace" that would be set up in their biweekly pop-up museum events to foster art and creativity for children and families, and eventually there will be a permanent location for the Children's Museum. Funds would pay for various arts & crafts materials. Chair LoPresti asked if there is a fee for participating in the Children's Museum, which Erin Gallagher answered there currently is not, but when there is a permanent location to move into, they will impose fees. Ms. Trahan asked what the estimated cost of the initial supplies would be, which Erin Gallagher answered was priced out item-by-item for \$1,489.75. Vice Chair Adams expressed appreciation of the project being a lasting program and not just a singular event, and Dr. Carlucci remarked that it seems to have been well planned as indicated by the itemization of their request.

Chair LoPresti Motioned to allocate the requested \$1,489.75 for the Children's Museum of Franklin. Seconded by Vice Chair Adams. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the funding.

The Committee then reviewed a request by Jon Mitchell for assistance in funding an opera performance he wrote called *Mary Anning: Fossil Hunter* that would be performed in Franklin. He said the Opera would be free and open to the public, but they are still looking for a location to perform at, and currently has considered Dean College and the Black Box. The total cost of the performances was calculated out to be \$8350, but Jon Mitchell is not asking that full amount from the Committee. Chair LoPresti asked Marc Arentsen about the possible interest of Dean College in hosting and helping with such a performance, to which Marc Arentsen said he could talk to his colleagues about it, but the timing of the year would be important in determining whether or not they could host it, and they would have a conversation about it. Mary Olsson asked if the High School would be a viable location for the performance, which Jon Mitchell responded might be too large for the scale of the performance he envisions, which would be range from a couple hundred to five hundred audience members. Chair LoPresti asked when the performance would be held if it were to reach their needed funding, which Jon Mitchell responded would be around May-June 2024. Chair LoPresti expressed a concern about committing any funds before a location and firm timeframe were firmly established for the performance. Jon Mitchell responded that he had heard support for hosting the performance from Dean College and the Unitarian Meetinghouse during the end of May/start of June timeframe, so he does not believe that will be a problem. Mr. Taberner weighed in to say that a certain dollar amount could be put on hold to be ready to allocate to the performance and then, if the performance is unable to find a location or is cancelled, they can reallocate the funding elsewhere.

Chair LoPresti proposed setting aside \$1000 for such a plan to be awarded to Jon Mitchell's Opera Performance if he is able to confirm the performance will happen. Seconded by Clerk Botelho. The Committee voted unanimously to allocate \$1000 with the stipulation that it could be withdrawn if the performance is unable to happen.

The Committee then reviewed an application from the Franklin Food Pantry for \$1700 for painting a storage unit on site to be made into a functional artwork, with \$500 being for supplies and the remaining \$1200 for preparing the storage unit for the paint. Vice Chair Adams mentioned that the cost may differ as they determine if resources from the Artsy Box projects can be shared with this one. Mr. Taberner said that having the same contractor from the Artsy Box project might lead them to get a less expensive price for the priming of the storage unit. Vice Chair Adams added that if the contractor is willing to do pro bono work, then the funding could go right back into being allocated to a different Partner's request. Tina Powderly said their hope is to find someone who can work with their volunteers in the sanding and creating the artwork, and the artwork will help convey a message to people who visit the Food Pantry that they are deserving of being able to see artwork. Chair LoPresti mentioned that he would be in favor of supporting the funding as they want to improve the mood of going to the Food Pantry and encourage those who may need their help to use it, which Dr. Carlucci agreed with.

Chair LoPresti motioned to allocate the requested \$1700 for the Franklin Food Pantry's storage unit art project. Seconded by Dr. Carlucci. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the funding.

The Committee then reviewed a request from the Franklin Performing Arts Company and the Black Box for \$1200 for a performance of *August: Osage County* in July 2024. Chair LoPresti said he had a concern that because the event is not free to enter, it does not align as closely with the goal of funding events which directly benefit the community. Mary Olsson weighed in to say that the activities and fundraisers at the Black Box bring a benefit to the Museum as a result

of guests venturing out to surrounding places, and made the argument that the Black Box does not have enough space to be able to accommodate shows that would be free to the public, but as far as bringing culture to the Cultural District, it is hard to do better than the Black Box. Ms. Trahan weighed in to say that the ticket price does not come close to covering the cost of setting up the performances, and reiterated the points that Mary Olsson made about how the events at the Black Box benefit the community indirectly at least.

The Committee and Mr. Taberner then discussed how they had limited grant funds remaining to be allocated and deliberated on how to provide funds to as many Partner requests as possible. ***Chair LoPresti Motioned to allocate \$300 of the request by Temple Etz Chalm for their Israel Dance and Music Program. Seconded by Vice Chair Adams. The Committee voted unanimously to approve \$300 for the Temple Etz Chalm's Israel Dance and Music Program.***

Chair LoPresti Motioned to allocate \$200 of the request by Franklin Lifelong Learning's Presentation by Dr. David Murphy for "Strategies to develop and improve Executive Functions in the home". Seconded by Vice Chair Adams. The Committee voted unanimously to approve \$200 for the Franklin Lifelong Learning's Presentation.

There was a Motion to allocate \$900 of the request by Mary Olsson that would go toward negative scans and glossy prints of each of the photographs. The Committee voted unanimously to approve \$900 for the Photograph Preservation Project.

Chair LoPresti Motioned to allocate \$100 of the request by Franklin Art Association for the acquisition of a new promotional banner. Seconded by Dr. Carlucci. The Committee voted unanimously to approve \$100 for the Franklin Art Association's new banner.

Chair LoPresti Motioned to allocate \$500 of the request by Franklin Performing Arts Company for their performance of August: Osage County. Seconded by Vice Chair Adams. The Committee voted unanimously to approve \$500 for the Franklin Performing Arts Company's performance.

Committee Reports

-Artsy Box Project Part 2

Vice Chair Adams briefed the Committee on six boxes that could be used as new Artsy Boxes, given their locations. She said that the process would be similar to the first set of Artsy Boxes, in that they would be primed for paint and the artists selected with their submittals before June 2024. Stephen Sherlock of Franklin Matters has started promoting information with the public about it. Clerk Botelho asked if it would be any different with its smaller budget, to which Vice Chair Adams said that smaller boxes have been selected this time that will be able to be painted completely with the smaller funding available.

Local Artist and Creatives Database

Dr. Carlucci told the Committee that they had received an email from one of Franklin's residents who was representing an Assisted Living Facilities, and she was looking for different artists and creatives in the community who might come in and speak to residents. It made Dr. Carlucci realize that the Committee does not have a list/database of artists and/or creatives who either reside in Franklin or work in Franklin and want to be a part of this. Dr. Carlucci asked if

the Committee would give her permission to research the possibility of creating such a resource of knowledge. Chair LoPresti said that he believed it would be a great idea.

Member Roundtable

Next Cultural District Meeting Dates

January 25, 2024 7:00 PM at Franklin Public Library

February 8, 2024 7:00 PM at Dean College

March 7, 2024 7:00 PM

Additional Comments

The Committee decided to reschedule the January 11, 2024 meeting to January 25, 2024, still at 7:00 PM.

Adjourn

Chair LoPresti motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ms. Trahan. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:18 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Paslaski
Administrative Assistant