

**Franklin Cultural District Committee
Minutes of Meeting
November 16, 2021
Held as a Virtual Meeting
via Remote Access Zoom Platform**

As stated on the agenda, due to the continued concerns regarding the COVID-19 virus, this meeting was conducted as a Remote/Virtual Cultural District Committee meeting. In an effort to ensure citizen engagement and comply with open meeting law regulations, citizens were 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 Nancy Schoen, Vice Chair John LoPresti, Roberta Trahan, Jamie Barrett, Dr. Pandora Carlucci, Amy Adams,

Members not present: Candice Narsasian-Healey

Also in attendance: Alan Earls, Franklin Observer; Bryan Taberner, Planning and Community Development Director

Chair Schoen opened the meeting at 7:00 PM

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

October 14, 2021 Franklin Cultural District Meeting Minutes: Ms. Roberta Trahan motioned to accept the meeting minutes for the Cultural District Committee, seconded by Dr. Carlucci. Ms. Trahan voted yes. Vice Chair John LoPresti voted yes. Ms. Amy Adams voted yes. Dr. Carlucci voted yes. Chair Schoen voted yes. The motion to accept passed 5-0-0.

Cultural District Newsletter Update

Chair Schoen reminded the Committee that the next Newsletter would cover both the month of December 2021 as well as January 2022. She added that Dr. Carlucci is already receiving information from people to post in the upcoming newsletter. It was clarified that the due date for information submittals would be December 2, and then the publication date will be December 7. To remind Partners of the fact that the Newsletter is going to cover 2 months, Chair Schoen stated that she would send out a notice to them the day after the meeting, November 17 in order to make sure that everyone submits their information before the deadline. Dr. Carlucci then briefed the Committee on a note received from Luis Cotto, the point of contact for the Mass Cultural Council, praising the newsletter for showing and organizing all of the information that comes in for the town. Dr. Carlucci responded to Luis by saying that the strength of the information comes from the Partners, and that the Cultural District Committee newsletter is different in that its goal is to support the Partners by sharing their information and events. It results in the newsletters being longer than most others, but it helps tell readers the story for each post, and she believes it is helping bring more readers to the newsletter. Dr. Carlucci then asked if anyone would like to take over the newsletter from her, and encouraged everyone to think about it. Chair Schoen suggested that multiple people could collaborate on the newsletter, because it is a lot to work on by oneself. Partners are starting to get into the habit of sending information before it is requested. Ms. Trahan agreed that it is a lot of work for Dr. Carlucci to

run the newsletter by herself, and added that the task requires working knowledge of how to do it. She then offered to help with the newsletter, but said that only someone with working knowledge of managing the newsletter, similar to Dr. Carlucci's, would be able to keep it running as it is.

Franklin Cultural District Committee Leadership

Chair Schoen started by reminding the Committee that she would be stepping down from the Committee soon, and that her position as Chair would need to be filled. Chair Schoen then suggested that Vice Chair LoPresti may become Chair, but deferred to him and the rest of the Committee to discuss the matter. Vice Chair LoPresti stated that he did not believe it would be a good time for him to take on the position of Chair. Chair Schoen expressed that this matter should be resolved in a timely manner. Ms. Trahan asked about open positions on the Committee, to which Chair Schoen confirmed they must remain at 7 members maximum. Chair Schoen then mentioned that she had a list of names of people who may be suitable for joining the Committee that she had shared with Town Administrator Jamie Hellen as well as Planning and Community Development Director Bryan Taberner. Once Chair Schoen steps down, the Committee will be one position short that it will need to fill.

Mr. Jamie Barrett joined the meeting at this point and was briefed on filling the upcoming vacancy and leadership position. Mr. Taberner explained to the Committee that Vice Chair LoPresti would have to take over as Chair until an election for a new official Chair was held and someone was voted for the position. If the Vice Chair was elected to Chair, then a new Vice Chair would need to be elected. During the month leading up to Chair Schoen's departure, Committee members should continue to think about leadership as well as the 3-subcommittee structure of the Cultural District Committee. The Committee then discussed trying to find a new member who would have technology skills to help Dr. Carlucci with the newsletter, and Chair Schoen proposed the idea that dividing up the Partners by responsibility may be a good idea for the future. Vice Chair LoPresti asked when Chair Schoen's last meeting would be. Chair Schoen answered that December 13 may be the last meeting, but she is not sure if she will be able to make it to that meeting.

Chair Schoen brought up previous applicants to the Committee, of which Mr. Taberner said there are three, to discuss potential candidates for inviting onto the Committee. Ms. Trahan pointed out that the Committee is at a crossroads because the amount of work that a new member would need to help out with is too much for anyone working full time, so the Committee should reevaluate the distribution of tasks and responsibilities and divide labor accordingly. Chair Schoen agreed. Vice Chair LoPresti asked if Tyler Paslaski, Administrative Assistant for Planning and Community Development, could help with the newsletter or website. Mr. Taberner explained that the Department of Planning and Community Development is already working on several projects at this time, so that would not be likely. However, Mr. Taberner would not have a problem with taking on a small part of the Committee's responsibilities. The new members that would be brought on to the Committee would also be capable of taking on responsibilities. Mr. Taberner also thanked Chair Schoen for her work on the Committee. Mr. Taberner then said he could try to help run meetings with Vice Chair LoPresti, but otherwise there is not much more room in his schedule to help with additional responsibilities.

Ms. Trahan asked at what point the Committee could reach out to Partners to see if any of them could help with responsibilities, although it may be counterproductive to the Committee's purpose of helping the Partners. She added that the upcoming winter may require the Committee to find ways to cut back on work, like changing the structure of the newsletter to be

easier to draft and publish. Mr. Taberner said that, if nobody were to volunteer their time to help Dr. Carlucci with the newsletter, then he might make time in his schedule on weekends to help with it. The Committee is working for the Partners and working to keep the Partnership together, and ideally you would have at least 10 Partners at a Partnership meeting discussing ideas to work together on, but that will not likely happen unless the Committee organizes itself and has financial assistance to distribute to the Partners. Mr. Taberner then concluded that the next steps should be bringing in the Partners more, and creating a Marketing Subcommittee whose responsibilities include what Dr. Carlucci is doing. Vice Chair LoPresti responded that getting Partners engaged throughout has been the challenge for some time, because they do not attend meetings often. As such, the challenge for the Committee has been to go out to the Partners to meet with them instead of convincing them to come to the Committee, but that would be time consuming. Bryan suggested that a Partners subcommittee could handle that task. He reiterated the importance of distributing the Committee's work out among the members.

Vice Chair LoPresti asked Dr. Carlucci about the possibility of moving to a quarterly newsletter, to which she responded that it may not support the Partners as effectively, nor would it be as accurate, as events and information change fairly often and a quarterly newsletter has higher risk of posting information that becomes outdated and not being able to correct it for the next issue. She then went on to say that if at least one more member or Partner were to help out then they could find a way to put together the newsletters and notify readers of edits more easily. Chair Schoen weighed in to say that the newsletter grows in popularity and includes a growing number of articles because Partners see what others have posted to it and want to follow suit. The fact that Partners send in material without having to be asked speaks to the quality of the newsletter as well. Ms. Trahan reiterated Mr. Taberner's statement that conversations should take place soon about bringing on a new member because the Committee does need more help if it is going to handle the growing amount of tasks. She pointed out that other Committees in other towns have a paid position to handle the newsletter and Partners, and Franklin appears to be one of the few that is mainly being handled by volunteers. Chair Schoen agreed, and Mr. Barrett used the time to mention that Franklin has accomplished so much with much less funding. Vice Chair LoPresti asked Chair Schoen and Mr. Taberner for a reminder on what the rationale for not expanding the Committee was from the Town Administration. Chair Schoen explained that Town Administration had previously rejected requests for additional members from other committees, and it would not be fair to them for the Cultural District Committee to be allowed when they were not. Bryan continued that the 7 member Committee was established by Town Council resolution, a process which would need to be repeated to change the number of possible Committee members. If the Committee is just looking for associates, then some other means of adding them to the Committee could be found. Member shortages are frequently a consistent problem, so adding more members has the potential to exasperate that. Bryan added that having someone with technological knowhow is the most important need for the Committee at this time.

Ms. Trahan said it would be best for the Committee for someone with technology skills to take her place on it. She then agreed that the newsletter has been helpful to the Partners, and suggested that the Committee focus on it for the near future until time can be found to meet each Partner and discuss their specific needs. Ms. Trahan and Chair Schoen both agreed that the Covid-19 Pandemic had made this process difficult, then Chair Schoen suggested Vice Chair LoPresti find a way for dividing up tasks. Chair Schoen said she and Ms. Trahan could check with Committee Member Candice Narsasian-Healey to find out her availability for helping

with tasks. Vice Chair LoPresti said that he could assume the role of Chair until a meeting is held to find a new Chair, which can also be used to redistribute tasks. Ms. Trahan mentioned that members have to look at their availability to see what work they can realistically handle. Mr. Taberner asked that he be able to share some information from the three resumes of Committee Member applicants. Then, interviews could happen as soon as January. The Committee let Mr. Taberner share the resumes of the three applicants as well as those applicants' availability. The Committee then discussed the benefits that each applicant might bring to the Cultural District. Chair Schoen suggested the idea of having the two applicants who do not become the new Member be instead offered Associate Membership. Dr. Carlucci asked if the Committee needed to go to the Town Council first to ask for the creation of Associate Member positions, to which Mr. Taberner suggested that the Committee wait until after Chair Schoen had left the Committee before they try to fill her position. Vice Chair LoPresti offered his opinion that all three Candidates be interviewed for both a Committee position and an Associate position before the Committee decides which one they believe is best for the Membership and then allow Associate status to the other two. Mr. Taberner replied that in most cases, Town Administrator Jamie Hellen would be interviewing all three before choosing one that would be endorsed by Town Council. Vice Chair LoPresti replied that the Cultural District Committee be the ones to have the last vote on who becomes the new member. Ms. Trahan agreed and asked if zoom meetings could be held to interview each Candidate by saying there is a possibility that the applicants might not know what the Committee is looking for. She added that a zoom interview would give the Department of Planning and Community Development a chance to also ask questions and see what the applicants know regarding Committee processes. Mr. Taberner pointed out that people who apply for committees will often change their interests or priorities months later and no longer be interested if the Town reaches out to them to offer a position. Typically DPCD will handle contacting applicants, and Town Administration will conduct the interviews and choose a Candidate, but if the Committee wants to handle the process differently, then it is up to them. Vice Chair LoPresti and the Committee responded that the Committee would like to handle the process. Mr. Taberner said that he would send the Committee information on the candidates.

Franklin Cultural Council Grant Update

Chair Schoen briefed the Committee that the deadline for the \$7500 grant application, which does not require matching funds, is December 15. Mr. Taberner has already started on the grant application, but the Committee needs to detail the focus of what the grant will be used for. Chair Schoen continued and explained the grant requirements, with roughly 80 percent having to be spent on artists and Partners within the Cultural District. Chair Schoen had already written a grant application to the FCC for Historical Museum performances during the ArtWALK event, but the deadline was pushed back so an update on that application will not likely happen until December – most likely after the deadline for the current grant being discussed. Dr. Carlucci mentioned that the grant review committee may, if anything, contact the Cultural District Committee with questions on clarification. Ms. Trahan asked to clarify which grant has been submitted, which Chair Schoen confirmed was the FCC Grant, and the \$7500 grant has to be applied for before the December 15 deadline. Chair Schoen then confirmed with Dr. Carlucci that ArtWALK is still planned for a Friday, which would prevent merging that event with the Strawberry Stroll. Ms. Trahan then expressed her concern with being able to plan ArtWALK depending on who can be brought onto the Committee to help with the work needed to set the event up. If someone new is brought onto the Committee at the beginning of 2022, a discussion

needs to be had to determine if the ArtWALK should still be held. Chair Schoen responded that much of the initial work had been completed by the artists and the businesses, and that word has to make it to Partners about what is going on so that they can assist with preparing events like ArtWALK. Ms. Trahan then replied that she may contact the Library about helping out, and weighed the possibility of Ms. Amy Adams working with Peg Munsen or Sue Sheridan. She added that she is willing to help out with the performance piece and reach out to Dean College and the High School to find out about any performance pieces. Chair Schoen confirmed that the Franklin Historical Museum has already agreed to host an event, and LiveArts has already agreed to be a part of that event. Chair Schoen then suggested that materials could be reused from the previous year's ArtWALK, such as the logo, if need be. She then added that she will still be around after she steps down from Chair and is willing to provide assistance during that time. Vice Chair LoPresti weighed in to express his agreement with Chair Schoen that there is already a framework for the ArtWALK that can be followed, and then expressed his belief that the FCC played a big role in past events so it should also be able to play a big role in future events. He then suggested that the Committee proceed with setting up the event and reuse marketing material like Chair Schoen suggested. Ms. Trahan asked about the amounts for each grant, to which Chair Schoen said the FCC grant would be \$1200 and the other grant \$7500. Dr. Carlucci said she believed it would be helpful if all Committee members each agreed to go to at least one of the events to make sure each event has Committee representation and show support for the Partners.

MCC Cultural District Grant Focus Discussion

Chair Schoen asked Mr. Taberner when he would need the grant application by, to which Mr. Taberner replied that the grant application should be written up as much as possible without finalizing details on parts that could be changed in the time before the filing deadline. He added that Partners might not end up getting the financing that they hoped, but the Committee can remain flexible on distributing grant funds if it avoids giving precise estimates on how much Partners will receive. Regardless, the Partners should send information to the Committee on what they need so they can help plan distribution of grant funds. Mr. Taberner also suggested possibly setting a deadline for Partners to submit invoices to the Committee by or else they would not receive any grant funds. Chair Schoen then decided that the Partners would have until December 10 to submit their information for grant funding to the Cultural District Committee, as that would give the Partners time and the Committee 3 days between the deadline and the December 13 meeting to review the Partners information. The Committee then clarified the date of the Downtown Partnership's Strawberry Stroll as being on June 10, 2022.

A Motion was made by Ms. Trahan and seconded by Vice Chair LoPresti to support the Partners by opening up the Mass Cultural Council Grant to them to submit information for the second annual artWALK Celebration. Mr. Barret voted yes; Ms. Adams voted yes; Vice Chair LoPresti voted yes; Dr. Carlucci voted yes; Chair Schoen voted yes; Ms. Trahan voted yes. Motion passed unanimously.

Next Cultural District Meeting Date

December 13, 2021 7:00 PM

Additional Comments

Vice Chair LoPresti agreed with Chair Schoen to work together on the meeting agenda for the next meeting. The Cultural District Committee then expressed their gratitude to Chair Schoen for her work and help leading the Committee. Chair Schoen wished a Good Luck and Happy Thanksgiving to the Committee.

Adjourn

Meeting Adjourned at 8:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Paslaski
Administrative Assistant