

**Franklin Cultural District Committee
Minutes of Meeting
January 20, 2022
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: Roberta Trahan, Jamie Barrett, Dr. Pandora Carlucci, Amy Adams, Katherine Botelho, Pat Timmons

Members not present: Candice Narsasian-Healey, Vice Chair John LoPresti

Also in attendance: Bryan Taberner, Planning and Community Development Director

Dr. Carlucci opened the meeting at 7:05 PM

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2021 Franklin Cultural District Meeting Minutes: Ms. Roberta Trahan motioned to accept the meeting minutes for the Cultural District Committee, seconded by Ms. Botelho. Ms. Botelho voted yes. Mr. Barrett voted yes. Ms. Amy Adams voted yes. Ms. Trahan voted yes. Mr. Timmons voted yes. Dr. Carlucci voted yes. The motion to accept passed 6-0-0.

Election of Committee Chair, and Other Officers if Needed

Dr. Carlucci opened up the discussion of leadership to reiterate the need for a Chair for the Committee following Chair Nancy Schoen's recent departure from the Committee. Vice Chair LoPresti is taking a temporary leave and will not be available to assume the role of Chair. Dr. Carlucci asked if any members had thought about stepping up to become Chair. She then asked Mr. Taberner for any insights to this situation from his experience helping the Committee. Mr. Taberner said that it is not uncommon for Committees to have times where there is an issue finding a new Chair to lead them. He elaborated that taking the role of Chair does entail more work and responsibilities, and that he is there to help the Chair as a resource to the Committee. He will answer questions the Chair might have, and provide advice such as running a meeting as that can sometimes be the only additional responsibility of being a Committee Chair.

Ms. Trahan spoke to express her understanding that many members of the Committee are new and not comfortable with taking on additional responsibilities, but added that they would be willing to work with Dr. Carlucci to run a co-Chair system until June 2022 when they can identify whether or not Vice Chair LoPresti will be returning. Ms. Trahan then made clear that she is not in a position, nor is she interested in, running an ArtWalk event. Ms. Trahan then stated she believes that, because it lacks a budget and cannot take on more members than it currently has, the Cultural District Committee should go back to keeping Partners informed and supporting other groups in putting on festivals in a more auxiliary role. Ms. Trahan would accept a co-Chair

position on the understanding that the Committee follows this direction, but she is not sure if a co-Chair system is acceptable and deferred to Mr. Taberner to find out.

Mr. Taberner said that such a change could require Town Council approval, and it would be more practical to continue the Chair and Vice Chair position. Vice Chair LoPresti does not have much availability in his schedule to take on many responsibilities, which is why he has not run for the position of Chair, but if someone were to take his place as Vice Chair while he is away, then that member and the Chair might be able to take on the tasks that they initially wanted co-Chairs to handle. Mr. Taberner said he could contact Vice Chair LoPresti to see if he would be willing to step down as Vice Chair until he is ready to return. Mr. Taberner then suggested that this discussion be put on hold until they hear back from Vice Chair LoPresti.

2022 ArtWalk – Quick Discussion

Ms. Adams asked if a co-Chair system would mean that the Cultural District Committee would not put on its own ArtWalk event, to which Ms. Trahan confirmed yes. Dr. Carlucci said that she was thinking about the grants associated with ArtWalk and Strawberry Stroll, and that the Cultural District Committee's role would be less extensive as it was in the previous year, but the Committee would be empowering the Partners to carry out their events. The Partners would be more responsible for themselves, and the events will still happen, but the Cultural District Committee would not be doing such things as setting up their chairs and supplies for them. Ms. Adams inquired that the Partners would have to be using their grant funds before a certain deadline but could use their funds towards something to FCC is putting on. Dr. Carlucci responded that the funds have to be encumbered by June 30, 2022. It was mentioned that the Strawberry Stroll event is happening on June 10, 2022. Dr. Carlucci reiterated that the last year's Strawberry Stroll event did not have enough people from the Cultural District Committee to provide support in setting things up. Ms. Trahan added that the Committee could still do something similar to what it did at last year's ArtWalk, but someone will have to take on the task of setting the event up and that cannot be the Cultural District Committee again. The Cultural District Committee will advertise itself and the District to Partners and attendees of events like the Strawberry Stroll. Dr. Carlucci urged viewers and members to speak up if they had reservations about this plan to shift back to a supportive role and not a leading one. Ms. Adams expressed sympathy for the amount of effort it takes to set up at events, and added that it is too much for just the Committee to handle on its own. Ms. Botelho asked if the Committee could tell Partners that a stipulation of receiving grant funding is to take charge of setting up their own events. Ms. Adams responded by saying she is concerned that performers will be reluctant to put in the work to set up events. Ms. Trahan acknowledged this concern by explaining that the Downtown Partnership, not the performers, would be working on the setting up of events. The Committee then also discussed how the risk of injury was also a reason for wanting to avoid the physical work of setting events up, as injuries had happened in past events.

Mr. Taberner told the Committee that, if the town itself were to hold an event, then the Cultural District Committee could pick tasks and responsibilities that it knows it can handle without difficulty. He continued by reviewing upcoming and potential events to be organized by Partners, and found that the Committee would not have to do anything to help set up at any of them, but it should make sure ahead of time that the Partners are ready to coordinate their own events without expecting its help in setting up. Mr. Taberner then reflected on the beginning of

the Cultural District Committee and its purpose of helping the District Partners and fostering collaboration between Partners, not to take on events by itself. Ms. Trahan and Mr. Barrett both expressed agreement to Mr. Taberner's last remark. Mr. Taberner concluded that the Committee should only go so far in supporting Partners, but that Partners have to do a lot by themselves and coordinate with Partners if they want to push things forward. Otherwise, the Committee risks burning out from the amount of work and responsibility it has placed upon it. Ms. Trahan added to Mr. Taberner's remarks by suggesting that the past year had seen the Committee become too invested in the ArtWalk once it took on that event, and that the Partners would need to take on more responsibilities if the Committee were ever to decide to get involved with another ArtWalk. Mr. Taberner remarked that the Cultural District Committee had initially taken on so much work as a means of advertising itself and spreading awareness of the Cultural District to Partners and townspeople, but the Committee was not meant to continue with that amount of work and responsibility.

Mr. Taberner summarized that the purpose of the Cultural District Committee has been, from the start, to manage the district, make sure it meets goals, coordinate and nurture the Partnerships. Ms. Trahan reiterated her agreement and added that she thinks the current amount of work the Committee is letting be placed upon it is unfair to be placed on just 6 people. It was clarified that the ArtWalk event will be on the week of June 10, while the Strawberry Stroll will be on June 10 from 4pm to 8pm.

MCC Cultural District Grant Focus Discussion

Dr. Carlucci reviewed the \$7500 grant and reminded the Committee of the Franklin School Department and Ammaya Dance & Drum Group wanting to hold a 3-day event that would be funded by \$5800 from the grant. It had been counter-proposed that they could instead hold a 1-day event with less schools for \$1500 if they don't ask for funding for ArtWalk. Dr. Carlucci reached out twice to the School Department and Ammaya and has not heard back from them. However, she looked back on their application to clarify that the \$1500 option was something they had proposed to be granted if not the full event for \$5800. The \$1500 option would enable the Committee to allocate the requested funds to the other Partners in their entirety. Dr. Carlucci asked for the Committee's thoughts, to which Ms. Adams said she was not sure about having to leave 3 of the 5 schools out if the Committee only granted \$1500. Ms. Adams continued saying it would not be fair to the schools who could not participate, however she understands that granting the full amount would leave too little of the budget to grant to other Partners. Ms. Adams recalled finding that the School Department's funding estimates did not have any information to break down its costs and explain the need for the requested amount, as such she would be in favor of reaching out to them to find a way to involve all 5 schools without needing to give \$5800 from the grant to their event. Dr. Carlucci asked Mr. Barrett for any insight to organizing events that involve multiple schools to see if he could explain the School Department's requested amount.

Mr. Barrett said that the schools have been breaking up events by class, for the purpose of easing Covid-19 concerns, so grouping all schools together would be going against social-distancing protocols. Ms. Adams then proposed that the School Department and Ammaya only come to the ArtWalk event so that they would be serving the community as opposed to deciding which 2 schools to organize performances for. Dr. Carlucci asked if Ms. Adams and Mr. Barrett were thinking the School District could have one large performance on the Franklin Town

Common during ArtWalk so that the family of each student could choose whether or not they wanted their child to participate. The Committee then discussed ways to adjust the allocated amount to be granted to the School Department in conjecture with changing the number of schools that would be able to participate. Mr. Barrett brought up the possibility of Ammaya having limited availability that might prevent them from being able to attend whatever number of events the Committee grants funding for.

Mr. Taberner pointed out that the Committee would still have \$1900 of its \$7500 remaining if it were to grant \$2000 to the School Department and the full amounts to the other Partners. He recommended the Committee tell each Partner what dollar figure they were going to receive so that they can start planning what they are going to use the grant funding for, meanwhile the Committee will continue talking with the School Department to work something out. Mr. Taberner added that the Committee can use remaining funding to buy advertising/marketing materials, to which Ms. Trahan said such materials would be helpful at this time. Ms. Adams asked to confirm that everyone besides the School Department is going to be allocated the full amounts of their requested funding. After Ms. Trahan confirmed the amounts for each of the other events:

\$700 for the Painting Classes;
 \$1125 for the Art Association;
 \$1000 for the Farmers Market;
 and
 \$650 for the LiveArts.

Totaling up to \$3475 and leaving \$4025 of funding available. That remaining amount is not enough to give the School Department everything they want, but is still a lot to work with. Dr. Carlucci asked if the Committee could reach out to the Partners to say there are still small funds available. Ms. Trahan proposed the option of telling the School Department that the \$4025 is all they can get and they will have to find a way to work with it. Ms. Adams pointed out that giving the School Department the \$2600 amount would only leave the Committee with enough to use for marketing or small additions to the Framers market to allow them to hold another performance. Dr. Carlucci said that there were Partners who typically apply that had not submitted requests for grant funding this year, possibly because the holiday season was too busy for them to submit anything. Dr. Carlucci then asked if Ms. Adams, Ms. Trahan, and Mr. Taberner could collaborate to draft a formal announcement of funding allocations. After the Committee added up an agreed upon allocation of the requested amounts for each partner, plus \$2600 for the School Department, for a total of \$6025, the remaining amount was determined to be best used for marketing materials and flexibility to fund some events that Partners potentially want to put on, but have not yet mentioned to the Committee.

Ms. Adams Motioned for the Cultural District Committee to allocate \$700 to XPressions Enrichment for the Painting Classes; \$1125 for the Franklin Art Association; \$1000 for the Farmers Market; and \$650 for the LiveArts. Additionally, \$2600 will be allocated to the Franklin School Department, bringing the total to \$6075 of the \$7500 Mass Cultural Council Grant. The Remaining \$1425 will be held for flexibility in as-of-yet undetermined projects and requests. Motion was seconded by Ms. Trahan.

Role Call Vote: Ms. Adams voted yes; Mr. Timmons Voted yes; Ms. Trahan voted yes; Mr. Barrett voted yes; Ms. Botelho voted yes; Dr. Carlucci voted yes. Motion passed 6-0-0

Festivals Grant Program

Mr. Taberner introduced the Festivals Grant Program to the Committee, and started by explaining how it could be an easy way to acquire funding for an event. Mr. Taberner said he would prefer to see Downtown Partnership try to obtain grant funding from such programs as this one. An example of the grant would be if the Art Association wants to have an ArtWalk and needs some extra funding, they could apply and probably be awarded a grant to fund it. The Department of Planning and Community Development would be willing to help any Partners who want to apply for this Grant. Dr. Carlucci reiterated that the Downtown Partnership could apply for the grant, as could the Franklin Art Association. Ms. Trahan said the Committee should definitely make everyone aware of the grant. Ms. Adams agreed and told the Committee that the Franklin Art Association has a new president, Sue Sheridan, so they may be able to spend the time to apply for grants now.

Mr. Taberner said he was unable to contact Vice Chair LoPresti while the meeting was happening, but Mr. Taberner will reach out to him by email.

Subcommittee Updates

Partnership, Management, Recruitment and Outreach: Ms. Trahan said that she and Ms. Botelho had met to discuss issues and agreed that they need to reach out to the Partners. They have drafted an email to get in touch with Partners, but want to hear from the rest of the Committee about how they worded the email before they send it out to approximately 140 recipients. Ms. Adams thought it was concise. Ms. Trahan said that hers and Ms. Botelho's emails would be the only Committee members in the email, so as to avoid violating open meeting law. The Committee discussed ways to make the email more interesting to recipients, like a tagline, so that they will open it and take a survey. Ms. Trahan then told the Committee that she and Ms. Botelho are hoping to have the email sent out by the end of next week (the week of January 24). Mr. Barrett said that a week was a good amount of time to provide recipients to respond.

Marketing: Mr. Timmons and Mr. Barrett explained that they have not yet had a chance to meet between themselves or with Vice Chair LoPresti. Mr. Timmons and Mr. Barrett will schedule a meeting between the two of them before the next Committee meeting.

Goals and Grants: Ms. Adams and Dr. Carlucci have not yet been able to meet to discuss more about developing goals. Dr. Carlucci remarked that they would have to review the goals which Vice Chair LoPresti had drafted before he became unavailable.

Ms. Trahan reminded the Committee that Stephen Sherlock of Franklin Matters had said he would be interested in helping with the social media/website goal of the Committee. She added that the new Subcommittees will have to be reconfigured to work without Vice Chair LoPresti. Dr. Carlucci said that she and Ms. Trahan could meet to discuss grants once they are certain of what they want to do with those grants. Ms. Trahan said there is not anything urgent in that

matter, and once the issue of Chairmanship is resolved then they could further discuss goals at a future meeting.

Dr. Carlucci brought up a discussion point from a previous meeting of changing the newsletter to become a blog instead now that Mr. Timmons is part of the Committee. Dr. Carlucci also told the Committee that she was thinking about the possibility of a radio show to promote the District and Partners, and then turn the radio shows into podcasts. Mr. Timmons elaborated on the benefits of a blog over a newsletter, such as its greater flexibility in terms of posting news, whereas the newsletter has to be monthly. Dr. Carlucci said she had found out that a blog feature had been set up, but hidden, by Stephen Sherlock back in 2015 when the cultural district website was first set up. Dr. Carlucci then stated she would talk to Mr. Taberner about setting up meetings, including one between Stephen Sherlock and Mr. Timmons. Ms. Trahan asked that a meeting be put on the agenda for February that would focus on teaching everyone who wants to know about the website and blog how to create such content.

Next Cultural District Meeting Date

February 17, 2022 7:00 PM

Cultural District Partners Meeting

May 19, 2022 7:00 PM

Additional Comments

Mr. Taberner suggested that the first item on the February 17, 2022 agenda be the election of a Chair for the Committee. Mr. Taberner will talk to Vice Chair LoPresti about the position of Vice Chair. When the February 17 meeting takes place, someone can share their screen featuring the Cultural District Website as everyone learns about using it to post articles, blogs, and podcasts.

Adjourn

Ms. Trahan motioned to close the meeting, seconded by Dr. Carlucci. Ms. Trahan voted yes; Dr. Carlucci voted yes; Mr. Barrett voted yes; Ms. Adams voted yes; Mr. Timmons voted yes; Ms. Botelho voted yes. Committee voted 5-0-0 to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Paslaski
Administrative Assistant