

**Franklin Cultural District Committee
Minutes of Meeting
July 14, 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, Dr. Pandora Carlucci, Katherine Botelho, Amy Adams,
Members not present: Vice Chair John LoPresti, Jamie Barrett,
Also in attendance: Bryan Taberner, Planning and Community Development Director; Stephen Sherlock

Upon achieving quorum with the required minimum of members present, Ms. Trahan opened the meeting at 7:13 PM

Election of Cultural District Committee Officers

Ms. Trahan stated that the absence of Vice Chair LoPresti at the moment should be a reason to postpone the election of officers until the end of the meeting or later.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ms. Trahan motioned to approve the May 5 2022 Meeting Minutes. Dr. Carlucci interjected to request an edit to the minutes to correct the name of a grant recipient. Ms. Botelho also mentioned that the minutes stated the meeting was adjourned without vote, and this should be changed to say the meeting was adjourned with a motion. Mr. Taberner said the changes would be implemented. Ms. Trahan then made another motion to approve the minutes with the requested edits. Ms. Botelho voted yes. Dr. Carlucci voted yes. Ms. Adams voted yes. Ms. Trahan voted yes. Motion passed 4-0-0.

Update on ArtWALK 2022

Dr. Carlucci summarized the events of ArtWALK that took place in June, which the Cultural District Committee had supported and attended. These events included the Strawberry Stroll, Expressions Enrichment painting sessions, Franklin Farmers Market, LiveArts performances, Amaya dance & drum at the Town Common, Franklin Art Association storefront windows art displays, Escape Into Fiction author-book discussion, and Sweeney Todd performance among other events supported by the Committee. Ms. Trahan then talked about how 4 of the Amaya dance performances had to be cancelled due to illnesses, but they will hopefully be rescheduled. She added that she had observed the kids in the Amaya dance performances were enjoying the event, so they will hopefully enjoy the other 4 once they happen. Ms. Trahan also expressed gratitude to those who helped with setting up the events.

FCD Partners Meetings

Ms. Trahan briefed the Committee on the problems with getting Partners to attend meetings. There have been solutions proposed such as rescheduling the meetings to mornings before Partners have to open their businesses for the day. Ms. Trahan then asked if any members had suggestions, as she does not believe at this point that the Partner meetings area accomplishing anything because of the lack of attendance.

Dr. Carlucci responded by discussing her experience at the MetroWest Arts and Cultural Symposium meeting members of the Mass Cultural Council and listening to their presentations. Dr. Carlucci said this experience at the Symposium has given her the idea that the Partner meetings should be given a shape and purpose, and then they will become a valuable resource for Partners to find help and advice on anything they want to plan in the future. She added that a properly designed meeting would also teach Partners how the Cultural District Committee fits into the larger world of Cultural Districts.

Ms. Botelho asked if other towns' Cultural District Committees have their own Partner meetings, as they might be able to share some advice if reached out to. Mr. Taberner answered her question by explaining that every town has a different structure and system for managing their Cultural District. Towns that have Cultural Districts are all required to have Partnerships, but how engaged they are with their Partners is left up to the towns. Mr. Taberner added that he is not aware of any other town besides Franklin that has a Committee in charge of engaging Partners of the Cultural District. Mr. Taberner added that one of the main concerns with managing Cultural Districts is avoiding burnout or work overload from placing so much responsibility on a few people, and the Committee system that Franklin has is meant to address that concern. However, the Committee has never had more than a couple of people at a time that can give so much of their time to taking on the responsibilities of helping the Cultural District and its Partners. The Committee needs strong leadership and a lot of effort to build up relationships with the Partners to then be able to work with the Partners on more significant plans. Mr. Taberner added that it is important the Committee work with Lily Rivera in the Town Administration as she will be able to help with new ideas of engaging the Partners.

Dr. Carlucci responded that having Lily at a meeting to share her knowledge would be very beneficial. Ms. Trahan said that they should reach out to her to ask if she would have time to see if she could help the Committee with these issues. With the social media engagement of the members and myriad of cultural events going on in Franklin every week, the Committee should be finding success in engaging Partners, but the connections have just not been solidified, and hopefully Lily can assist with solving that.

Mr. Taberner expressed his opinion that the collaborations happening currently are healthy, but the Partners are just not coming to meetings. If the Committee wants to increase Partnership engagement, then perhaps meetings could start with a presentation from a Partner on a project or event that they want to put on. Also, the Committee could invite the MCC Representative Carolyn Cole to future Partner meetings to discuss programs and events that are happening around Franklin, and people who attend would be more interested in the information being discusses and remain engaged in later meetings. Mr. Taberner then asked if the Committee was interested in moving Partner meetings to 8:30am. Ms. Trahan said that Ms. Adams might have trouble attending meetings at that time.

Dr. Carlucci weighed in to say that consistent and frequent communication with the Partners, even if brief, might be helpful in connecting with them, but since the end of the newsletter there has not been such communication with them. Only reaching out the Partners around the times of the meetings-3 or 4 times a year-is probably not the best way of maintaining those connections and encouraging Partners to attend. Ms. Trahan concluded that the next steps for

the Committee would be to invite Lily to a brainstorming session and decide on whether any of the proposed solutions are worth trying. Communication is important, and Lily might have some insights on how to improve the Committee's performance there.

Ms. Trahan then mentioned that she and Ms. Botelho had met and sorted the Partners into groups based on their types of business and cultural expression. Ms. Trahan and Ms. Botelho agree that what each of those groups may need could be different from what the other groups need, and reaching out to each with a focus on their need might result in collaborations between Partners that would strengthen the Cultural District. Lily or Caroline could be able to help with determining the needs that the different groups of Partners are likely to come to Partner meetings to look for assistance on. Collaborations have not been common between the Partners in the past, but a good example of collaboration is how The Black Box has coupons for guests to use at Cultural District restaurants. Ms. Trahan added that there is also potential in how Escape Into Fiction is now hosting meetings, and the location of that store is perfect within the confines of the Cultural District. Ms. Trahan also emphasized that Kay Kelly from the Franklin Cultural Council would hopefully be included in any of these meetings and efforts at fostering engagement in the Cultural District.

Mr. Taberner discussed the importance of having a Committee Chair that is focused on administration and able to transfer responsibilities to other Committee members. Mr. Taberner then explained that the Committee was never created with the intention of having it run events, to which Ms. Trahan expressed agreement and the desire to have Partners handle events themselves with the Committee only needing to provide assistance at most. She added that such a situation is what the Committee has been trying to achieve, but is having trouble with as previously discussed. The Committee had tried to divide up responsibilities for ArtWALK this year, and Ms. Trahan thinks the result was a less stressful, somewhat more manageable event, albeit one that could still have been made easier with more Partners and help taking on some of the responsibilities. Dr. Carlucci then suggested the Committee reflect on how the grant process; specifically, the problem that the Committee has to show partners how to use their funding, and from there the Committee usually ends up entangled in helping run the event more than it should be. Ms. Adams agreed, and said that the Committee should not have to walk Partners through spending and should just expect them to uphold their commitment to perform on the day the grant was for, especially when the Partners are all hosting events at around the same time.

Ms. Adams also asked Dr. Carlucci about reaching out to the Partners more frequently, and whether or not Stephen Sherlock's outreach has been helping. Dr. Carlucci added that Stephen Sherlock's outreach efforts only reach the Partners if they are subscribed to Franklin Matters, and the Committee has been trying to direct Partners over to the website to subscribe. Ms. Adams asked if there was any way to notify Partners that the Cultural District Committee is now working with Franklin Matters through a single announcement or alert. Dr. Carlucci clarified that the Committee's notice currently goes out to a list of 400, not the entire list that Franklin Matters has. Stephen Sherlock has suggested to the Committee that they also use the constant contact newsletter on a smaller and more frequent scale, and include the link to the Franklin Matters Committee pages, then more people may be likely to read the smaller newsletters and follow the link to Franklin Matters when they want more information. After further discussion on how the notifications on Franklin Matters work, Ms. Adams stated that she believes daily notifications are too much for the recipients, to which the other Committee members agreed. She added that she agrees with the idea of having themes for each Partner meeting, and Partners who are hosting a meeting will have more initiative to participate in the Cultural District as a whole. Ms. Adams also suggested that if the Committee has someone from the Mass Cultural Council out

to Franklin, then the Committee could discuss and ask for ideas on improving Partner engagement with them. Ms. Adams also suggested there may be a possibility that some Partners might be interested in becoming more involved if they are new or simply interested in doing more after the past 2 years of the pandemic. Ms. Trahan agreed with Ms. Adams' points, especially the point about how the pandemic causing a major disruption that the Committee and partners might still be trying to regain their initiative.

Ms. Trahan then added that the question of how to address these problems remains before reviewing the suggestions made amongst the Committee:

- Reaching out to Carolyn Cole to see if she would be interested in attending a meeting
- Continuing work and collaboration with Stephen Sherlock in use of constant contact to increase readership and better share information
- Figure out a way to engage Partners before having Carolyn attend a meeting, to avoid a situation where she goes out of her way to attend only for no Partners to be there.
- Change the way in which the Committee works with Partners who have received grant funding to place more responsibility of the spending and planning away from the Committee and onto the Partners.

Members of the Committee pointed out instances where Partners had been able to run their events largely on their own after receiving grant funding from the Committee, which in most cases had at least 1 member attending to show support. Dr. Carlucci said that if all members of the Committee made contact with at least 1 grant recipient, potentially in attending the recipient's events, then it could help build connections with the Partners.

Ms. Trahan said that this discussion would have to continue at a later meeting so that the Committee could proceed with covering the remaining agenda, to which the rest of the Committee agreed to move on to Subcommittee Updates.

Subcommittee Updates

Ms. Trahan told the Committee that the Partnership Management Subcommittee's update had just been covered in the prior discussion. She then moved on to the Marketing Subcommittee, but with Vice Chair LoPresti not present to update the Committee, there was none given. For the Goals and Grants Subcommittee update, Ms. Trahan said that the goals for 2022 had been successfully submitted, and the Committee will continue to work towards those goals. Ms. Trahan added that another grant cycle will happen at some point in the future. It is not clear if the same amount of funding will be available because of the current economy, but the Committee will still plan to apply for grants and award them to Partners, Ms. Trahan predicted. Ms. Trahan concluded by suggesting to Ms. Botelho that the two of them meet again soon for the Committee and Partnership Management.

Policy on Donation of Artwork

Ms. Trahan explained to the Committee how, because of her role on the Ladybug Committee of the Franklin Downtown Partnership, she was asked by Town Councilors Melanie Hamblen and Cobi Frongillo to develop a policy on the donation of artwork, which she did. Councilors Hamblen and Frongillo also asked that, prior to them bringing such a proposed policy before the rest of Town Council, the drafted policy has been brought by the Franklin Cultural Council and Cultural District Committee, and both entities have agreed that a policy on donation artwork would be worthwhile. Neither the Cultural Council nor the Cultural District Committee have to necessarily endorse Ms. Trahan's draft policy, but rather just express support for the idea of

such a policy. In the context of the policy, artwork would also include sculptures and other things of that nature. The request for a policy was prompted by the Downtown Partnership installing about to install a sculpture, combined with its previous work of installing Ladybug sculptures, signs, murals and other things around the district. Having explained the situation, Ms. Trahan then asked the rest of the Committee if they would be in support of a policy, but not a specific policy on donation of artwork as the Town Council would be the ones refining and shaping a draft of it. Dr. Carlucci and Ms. Adams said they had not received the draft policy from Ms. Trahan, who remembered that she only sent it to Vice Chair LoPresti. Mr. Taberner added that they had not originally intended to review a policy, but rather have a brief discussion about the idea of a policy. Ms. Trahan agreed, and point out to the Committee that the Town Council could possibly use none of Ms. Trahan's draft policy and build one by themselves. Mr. Taberner then described to the Committee that the Town Council wants to have it so any art or sculptures that are displayed on town property have someone who is in charge of approving or rejecting the public display of that art. Setting policies on these matters is important because otherwise, the display of art in public may be left entirely up to whoever is on the Town Council at that time. Mr. Taberner added that, besides Councilors Frongillo and Hamblen, the rest of the Town Council might not be aware of the discussion to have an Art Donation Policy. Ms. Taberner then said to Mr. Taberner that she had traced her email correspondence on the matter back to emailing Kaye Kelly of the Franklin Cultural Council and Vice Chair LoPresti and asking them to discuss with their Committees/Councils, but had not yet heard back from either for any opinions on the policy proposal. Ms. Trahan continued by saying that she did not think she really needed to gather their opinions, and that Councilors Frongillo and Hamblen need to just take her policy draft before the rest of the Council for them to start shaping it themselves.

FCD Budget Update

Mr. Taberner briefed the Committee on the changes made between the previous year and the incoming year for the Committee's budget. Mr. Taberner listed the grants spent by the Committee in the previous year, including the \$7500 MCC Grant among others spent in support of Partners. In addition, the Committee spent \$3000 of other funds, including the \$1200 FCC Grant as well as the remainder of funding rolled over from previous fiscal years. Also included in the expenses was spending that the Department of Planning and Community Development made on the Committee's behalf, as well as Constant Contact annual renewal and various other grants that needed to be spent else the funding be lost. Mr. Taberner then told the Committee members that they would start receiving expense reports on a regular basis a few months into the new fiscal year. Ms. Trahan and Dr. Carlucci expressed gratitude for Mr. Taberner's work and help with the reports, with Dr. Carlucci adding that the Committee make sure it is spending down its accounts so that the assistance being provided from them to the Cultural District is as much as it can be.

CDC Town of Franklin Annual Report

Mr. Taberner told the Committee that he planned with Vice Chair LoPresti to meet and discuss putting together the next annual report the week following the meeting. He added that himself and Tyler Paslaski in the Planning Department have already started updating the report, but the content for the Committee's report only needs to add up to a page.

FCD MCC/CDI Annual Reporting

Ms. Trahan asked Mr. Taberner to confirm that the FCD MCC/CDI Annual report is complete, to which Mr. Taberner confirmed that yes, it had been completed and submitted in time.

Next Cultural District Meeting Dates

August 11, 2022 7:00 PM

Cultural District Partners Meeting

Fall 2022, specific date TBD

Additional Comments

Ms. Trahan reiterated that the Committee had not held elections this meeting, and she was not certain of what the Committee should do at that point. Mr. Taberner said that it needs to be placed on the next agenda and addressed next meeting.

After Ms. Trahan confirmed the next Committee meeting date of August 11 and the still To-Be-Decided Partners meeting to be held in the Fall, Mr. Taberner offered to reach out to the new MCC representative to ask her to visit Franklin. He described possibly having her tour some of the Partner businesses and sit in on a meeting, to which Ms. Trahan expressed agreement and thanked Mr. Taberner for being willing to do that. Mr. Taberner told the Committee that they could discuss at the next meeting what they would want to ask the MCC representative about. Ms. Trahan suggested that the conversation with the representative start with a sort of presentation that asks why a town should have a Cultural District, as Ms. Trahan believes Partners may not be aware of the reasons why.

Dr. Carlucci mentioned that the MCC representative had previously been chair of the Lynn Cultural District Committee, and suggested that October be the month when the next Partner meeting happen. Ms. Trahan suggested late October for the meeting, but mentioned that it could be discussed at a later Committee meeting.

Ms. Trahan asked Mr. Taberner to inform Vice Chair LoPresti that Committee elections had been delayed from this meeting.

Adjourn

Dr. Carlucci motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ms. Botelho. Ms. Trahan stated that adjourning the meeting was non-debatable.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Paslaski
Administrative Assistant