

**FRANKLIN CULTURAL DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
OCTOBER 10, 2022**

IN PERSON MEETING IN DOWNTOWN FRANKLIN

**Franklin Cultural District Walking Tour with MCC
Franklin Cultural District Partners Meeting with MCC**

The Cultural District Committee held a two-part meeting in Downtown Franklin with Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) Program Officers, Franklin Cultural District Partners, Town staff and others on October 10, 2022 beginning at 1:00 p.m. Times listed below for each venue are approximate.

Individuals that attended the full two hour Walking Tour are listed below. Others that joined in at specific locations are mentioned within the meeting minutes.

Cultural District Committee Members present: Co-chairs Roberta Trahan and Dr. Pandora Carlucci, Vice Chair John LoPresti, and Katherine Botelho.
Also in attendance: Carolyn Cole, MCC Program Officer; Guelmi Espinal, MCC Program Officer; Susan Sheridan, President, Franklin Art Association; Lily Rivera, Marketing and Communications Specialist; Tyler Paslaski, staff, Planning and Community Development; and Bryan Taberner, Director, Planning and Community Development.

Franklin Cultural District Walking Tour with MCC

1:00 p.m.

CDC members, MCC Program Officers, and others gathered at the Museum to tour the District. Notes related to each portion of the walking tour are listed below.

- Franklin Historical Museum 1:00 p.m.
 - Others in attendance: Mary Olsson, Chair, Franklin Historical Commission.
 - Carolyn Cole asked Mary Olsson about whether she had looked into the Community preservation Act for upkeep of the Museum. Mary Olsson said they were going to be receiving assistance from the Community Preservation Act starting this year, and provided her details on how it would help with proper restoration of historical sites like the Red Brick School House that had previously been painted over instead of actually repaired.
 - Carolyn Cole also asked if the Historical Commission had applied for or looked into the Cultural Facilities Fund as a source of financial assistance with building and historical site upkeep.
 - Carolyn Cole also inquired about what the Museum wants/needs for staffing its sites. Mary Olsson said they were bringing onboard a new person to help at the Museum after being without one for a while.
- Horace Mann Statue 1:40 p.m.
 - No questions or comments were raised at this part of the tour, just a presentation of Horace Mann and how the Statue got to be there.
- Franklin Public Library 1:50 p.m.
 - Others in attendance: Felicia Oti, Vicki Earls
 - Guelmi and Carolyn talked to Vicki about the water damage they noticed in the top corner of the main hall/atrium, and again mentioned the Cultural Facilities Fund as a means of possibly repairing it.
- Dean College, Chancellor's House and Student Center 2:15 p.m.

- Others in attendance: Gregg Chalk, Vice President Marketing and Business Development; and Chancellor Edward Augustus.
- There was continuous discussion between Carolyn and the Chancellor about collaborations on Cultural Activities and community service among Dean Students, Dean College, and the surrounding community.
- There were also suggestions of bringing Dean Students into the Cultural District Committee, the Downtown Partnership, and the Historical Society, where they could bring a fresh perspective and technical skills to help.
- Main Street, Escape Into Fiction Bookstore & FAA Art Gallery 2:40 p.m.
 - Others in attendance: Peg Munson, Franklin Art Association; Lisa Piana, Executive Director, Franklin Downtown Partnership.
 - There was discussion by Susan Sheridan about the new FAA Art Gallery

Franklin Cultural District Partners Meeting with MCC

3:00 p.m.

In attendance for the Tour of TBB and Meet & Greet, and or the Q&A session were the following:

CDC Members: Co-chairs Roberta Trahan and Dr. Pandora Carlucci, Vice Chair John LoPresti, and Katherine Botelho.

Also in attendance: Ms. Carolyn Cole & Mr. Guelmi Espinal; Jeff Roy, Massachusetts State Representative; Tom Mercer, Chair, Franklin Town Council; Melanie Hamblen, Member, Franklin Town Council; Cobi Frongillo, Member, Franklin Town Council; Raye Lynn Mercer, FSPA Owner/Executive Director; Alan Mercer, FPAC, Director of Advancement; Marc Arentsen, Dean of the Joan Phelps Palladino School of Dance and the School of the Arts; Gregg Chalk; Chancellor Edward Augustus; Sue Sheridan; Peg Munson; Pattie Gay, Director of Lifelong Learning Institute; Lisa Piana; Bryan Taberner; Tyler Paslaski; and Lily Rivera.

Quick Tour of THE BLACK BOX and Meet & Greet

3:00 p.m.

- Raye Lynn Mercer provided a summary of Franklin Performing Arts Company and TBB
- Carolyn Cole asked the audience if any of them had applied for Cultural Sector Recovery Grants, to which Raye Lynn Mercer answered yes and they were making use of them now.
- Raye Lynn Mercer expressed the TBB's wish to improve the level of upkeep they have on their building.

Meet & Greet: CDC members, FCD Partners, and others met with MCC Program Officers at THE BLACK BOX.

Question & Answer Exchange with Mass Cultural Council

3:15 p.m.

Program Officers, Ms. Carolyn Cole & Mr. Guelmi Espinal

- Some partners emphasized that their businesses are still struggling to regain their momentum from before the Covid-19 pandemic.
- A question raised by many attendees was in regards to understanding the difference between the Cultural District and the Cultural Council. Another question was about the hierarchy and structure of Cultural Institutions and the need for an identified leader.
- Carolyn Cole said the Partners should be asking not just what the Cultural District can do for them, but what they can do for the Cultural District, because providing assistance to one another in events and programs would help show what the Cultural District can do for them. What the Partners can do for the Cultural District is what the Cultural District can do for the Partners.

- What do the biggest challenges that Partners face look like? Racing to meet deadlines, particularly for applications for grant funding. Comment also that more resource and supply sharing was needed for collaborations between Partners to carry out ideas of programs and events that want to do.
- Roberta Trahan mentioned that the Cultural District Committee's deviation from a usual committee to start planning and running events itself had been problematic and inconvenient, and the Committee is still hoping that Partners will take a larger role in such responsibilities.
- Carolyn and Guelmi spoke about how some other Cultural Districts have a paid town employee advocating for them, usually an Arts and Culture Director.
- Raye Lynn Mercer said that the many branching paths to acquire funding for a project frequently resulted in applying Partners not being aware of other options, or of other Partners who are also trying to fund projects, which results in missed opportunities for them to collaborate.
- Carolyn Cole brought up the issue of Partners feeling as though they are invisible in the context of town committees and regional organizations being the focus of grants and attention.
- Members of the Cultural District Committee mentioned the cyclical problem of their members experiencing burnout from the amount of work they were each taking on that could be passed onto Partners or additional members if the Committee had more people. The stress and workload causes members to leave or take a break, and then prospective and remaining members consider doing the same under their increased workload before a replacement member can be found and brought up to speed.
- Guelmi stated that an important part of onboarding Partners and new Committee members quickly is setting the framework for Committee responsibilities and event preparation to be intuitive and easy to learn. That way, someone new can start helping without the need for other members to stop what they are doing and teach them. Partners will also be more confident in taking their own initiative if they can understand what they need to do without having to be guided along by others.
- The point was made that much of the Partners' and Cultural District Committee's work is being recognized by newer and younger residents who are also then getting more involved as a result. Meanwhile, many longtime and older residents are not aware of the changes to the Cultural District, nor the existence and purpose of the Committee. There was mentioned thereafter of introducing a tagline "Rediscover Franklin" for a potential initiative to familiarize the older Franklin residents with the Cultural District.
- Guelmi and Carolyn placed emphasis on the potential benefits from inviting Dean Students onto the Cultural District Committee and utilizing their tech savviness with programs the Committee wishes to expand ~~its use of~~.
- Cobi Frongillo inquired that, even though there may be a set plan along with a dedicated staff and space, there still appears to be a challenge in creating the perception that Franklin is an Arts Community. Carolyn discussed regional collaborations of events and promoting the best that every town has to offer as a means of building the Town's image as a Cultural center. She added that Regional Tourism Boards are an underutilized resource of Towns in rural areas. Regional Tourism Boards can help promote a Cultural District to the outside world, or provide resources for the Town to improve its ability to draw in outsiders.
- Carolyn stated the advice to "Turn recommendations from expert assessments into a Checklist" and the Committee should have access to assessments that have already

been done.

- Carolyn and Guelmi spoke about how MCC is working to simplify and streamline the grant application process.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Paslaski
Administrative Assistant