

**Franklin Cultural District Committee
Minutes of Meeting
January 12, 2023
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: Co-Chairs Roberta Trahan and Dr. Pandora Carlucci, Vice Chair John LoPresti, Clerk Katherine Botelho, and Amy Adams

Also in attendance: Bryan Taberner, Planning and Community Development Director; Stephen Sherlock, Franklin Matters; Lisa Piana, Executive Director of the Franklin Downtown Partnership

Upon achieving quorum with the required minimum of members present, Ms. Trahan opened the meeting at 7:02 PM

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

Upon confirmation of recommended changes and corrections to the minutes, Dr. Carlucci motioned to approve the Cultural District Committee meeting minutes from December 8, 2022. Ms. Botelho seconded. Ms. Adams voted yes; Ms. Botelho voted yes; Dr. Carlucci voted yes; Vice Chair LoPresti voted yes; Ms. Trahan voted yes. Motion to accept passed 5-0-0.

New Committee Members

Vice Chair LoPresti briefed the Committee to say that no new potential members have contacted him or the Town with interest in joining. He then suggested that Stephen Sherlock conduct an interview with Dr. Carlucci and Ms. Trahan to talk about the Cultural District Committee as a way to get the attention of people who may decide that they want to join. Stephen Sherlock then said it would be a matter of scheduling a time to meet up, while Ms. Trahan added that other members could also be interviewed. There was discussion to whether or not this would constitute a meeting by having enough members to meet quorum, in which Mr. Taberner stated that it would be best to consider the interview to be a meeting and distributing an agenda for it once a date is settled upon.

Cultural Wednesdays

Dr. Carlucci updated the Committee to let them know that she continues to receive positive feedback from people who read the newsletter. It has been a great partnership between the Cultural District Committee and Franklin Matters, with increasing numbers of clicks on posts for the Committee, Franklin Matters, and the Partners. Stephen Sherlock weighed in to say that he noticed the calendar on the Cultural District Committee website is still experiencing errors, and that is impacting the likelihood of events and news being noticed by anyone interested. Mr. Taberner said that the Department of Planning and Community Development has repairing the calendar on its itinerary.

Art Gift-Away

Ms. Adams said she had enjoyed being able to share art with the community, and believed the activity had allowed the community to engage with the Cultural District. It provided reasons for people to visit and learn about the historical sites, especially for those with children whom they wanted to connect more with the Town. Ms. Trahan commented that it was absolutely worth the time and effort, and thanked Ms. Adams for her work on the Art Gift-Away. Dr. Carlucci also thanked Ms. Adams for her work, and commented that it had also been a gift of spirit to the community.

MCC Check-In Meetings

Dr. Carlucci then started to discuss Cultural Districts throughout the region. Dr. Carlucci provided examples of initiatives carried out to engage community members, including art displays in public places and buildings, a film containing interviews with the public to find out what they love about New Bedford, as well as a story of how one downtown had no vacancies for prospective businesses, so they set up a shipping container for those businesses to occupy temporarily and even allowed artists to paint murals on them.

Dr. Carlucci shared information about Ms. Adam's Art Gift-Away at the meeting as well as the murals, LadyBugs, and grant assistance the Committee is using to explore new ways to support arts and culture in Franklin. Ms. Trahan remarked that the Check-In meetings are always interesting and the state is full of interesting stories and projects of Cultural Districts.

Stephen Sherlock weighed in to remind the Committee that he has started recording audio of *What Does Culture Matter in Franklin?* and received a dozen recordings with answers from the public. If he receives more, then he could compile them with a video or podcast and produce it accordingly. Vice Chair LoPresti suggested it could be played on a loop on the Cultural District Committee website as well.

Dr. Carlucci also commented that Carolyn Cole sent a message earlier in the week to say that the MCC is embarking on a campaign to highlight ten years of the cultural districts initiatives being in operation, and is asking if cultural districts send one or two photos that best represent their district. Dr. Carlucci thought of the Strawberry Stroll, Harvest Festival, and events put on by the different Partners and groups that could be shared with the Committee to submit to the MCC. Dr. Carlucci then asked the Committee if she could send a message out to Partners and affiliates of the Cultural District to see if they have any photos to share with the Committee, to which rest of the Committee expressed agreement. Dr. Carlucci said she would come back to the Committee with the results.

FY23 MCC Cultural District Investment (CDI) Grant

Mr. Taberner briefed the Committee on updates to the CDI Grant received by the Town. The Grant award is \$15,000 and must be used by the end of Fiscal Year 2023 in June 2023. The funds must be allocated in support of the Cultural District's activities and goals, and at the direction of the entity's management team. He then continued to explain the guidelines and rules that come with using the Grant funds, and summarized that the Committee needs to think about what it will spend the funding on and if they will reach out to Partners for proposals.

At Ms. Trahan's request, Vice Chair LoPresti and Ms. Adams presented their Artist Call Initiative for Painting Electric Boxes around the Cultural District. The aim was to find a way to reach out to local artists and get them more engaged with the Cultural District and beautify the area overall. Electric boxes that they surveyed included one by Union and Beaver Street, as well as one by Dean College and Main Street, with a total of six boxes to be painted. Vice Chair

LoPresti and Ms. Adams believe that utilizing the CDI Grant funding on getting artists to paint these electrical boxes could help promote their general engagement with the Cultural District as well as provide the artists with exposure. For pricing, they would be requesting \$7,000 total; \$2,000 would be for priming all of the boxes, and artist awards would be \$1,000 for each of the four large boxes to be painted and \$500 for each of the two smaller boxes. If the Committee approved of this idea, then Vice Chair LoPresti and Ms. Adams would begin preparing documentation for the artist call immediately, as artists need as much time as possible to plan out their work months ahead of starting it. Ms. Adams detailed out a timeline that would enable key steps leading up to the painting to be completed in time for future monthly Committee meetings and update everyone on their progress. The current plan would be to put out the call for artists and their concept drafts to be submitted before the next Committee meeting so they can review and possibly vote on them at the March 2023 meeting. The Committee would want to vote on designs that catch the eye but still fit in thematically with the direct surrounding area of each electric box. These boxes are near highly travelled areas, and the hope is to encourage passersby to stop by them and explore around.

Ms. Trahan asked if there was any requirement to make sure the paint used in these projects would be weatherproof, to which Vice Chair LoPresti confirmed that Amy had written a weatherproof paint-only requirement into the call to artists. Vice Chair LoPresti added that these electrical boxes are Town boxes on public property so they do not need any additional approval to be painted on. Ms. Trahan then confirmed with Vice Chair LoPresti that he and Ms. Adams are looking for a vote from the Committee to be granted the request funding for this project. Dr. Carlucci asked if Vice Chair LoPresti or Ms. Adams would be communicating with businesses near the electrical boxes to make them aware of when an artist would be there to paint. Ms. Adams answered that they would make sure to include the business in the process, but they are waiting first on approval and then voting on which boxes would be painted. Dr. Carlucci also asked Vice Chair LoPresti and Ms. Adams if they or the artists would need any support from the Committee as they move forward and actually begin the painting. Ms. Adams said that once the boxes had been painted, the Committee should look at them and vote on approving the work after making sure they match up with the approved designs and do not have anything in their design that was not agreed upon, at which point sealant will be applied. They will also need people to wait by the electrical boxes once they are covered with sealant to watch over them while the sealant dries. Ms. Adams then said that a line in the call to artists should be included to emphasize calling out those artists and groups who are underrepresented, and such language is used in other towns' calls to artists.

Mr. Taberner asked Ms. Trahan to send him photos and locations of each of the boxes they hope to have painted so he can have them on hand when he talks with DPW Director Brutus Cantoreggi. Ms. Adams clarified that the artwork on each electrical box is intended to last about a year and be replaced soon after, but the contracts with artists would include a clause requiring them to touch up and maintain the artwork against wear for about six months.

Ms. Trahan asked Ms. Piana if she had any insights to add from her research into the electrical boxes. Ms. Piana answered that wrapping the boxes with designs by the artists had been discussed and found to be potentially less expensive and easy to attach. Ms. Adams said she had considered wraps for the electrical boxes, but had concerns that someone could pull the tear the wrap off the box. In addition, using wraps might make artists who are not familiar with the method feel excluded.

Vice Chair LoPresti motioned for the Committee to approve of using \$7,000 from the MCC Cultural District Investment Grant for putting out a call for local artists for a project to paint electrical boxes around the Cultural District. Seconded by Ms. Adams. Ms. Adams

voted yes; Vice Chair LoPresti voted yes; Ms. Botelho voted yes; Ms. Trahan voted yes; Dr. Carlucci voted yes. Motion to approve passed 5-0-0.

Vice Chair LoPresti repeated the plan to the Committee to have the project completed by late spring, and design submittals from artists will be shared with the Committee as they arrive.

Ms. Piana then brought forth a proposal from the Franklin Downtown Partnership to continue with creating murals along the Ferraras Building. The cost of supplies and installation for three to four murals would be \$2,000 total. Ms. Trahan said that the Committee would take the murals' part in the LadyBug Trail into consideration as they decide on whether to provide funding to the project.

Mr. Taberner presented a standard funding request form that showed what information would be needed from anyone requesting funds, to which Ms. Trahan said she would pass it along to any future parties who want to apply for funds from the Committee. Ms. Adams asked Ms. Piana if the Downtown Partnership has a timeline for working on the fund allocation and mural painting. Ms. Piana said they would be hoping to start as soon as possible, and have the murals done by June 2023 at the latest so they would be ready for ArtWALK. Ms. Piana added that they now had experience with murals and would know better of how to be more efficient with these ones. Ms. Trahan asked the rest of the Committee for their thoughts on allocating any funding. Dr. Carlucci commented that she believes the Committee needs to be transparent. There are many people who follow the news that the Committee posts, so they should send or post information on how much funding the Committee has been granted, what that funding has been used on, and how much funding is still available. Ms. Trahan and Dr. Carlucci said they would have copies of the funding request forms available for anyone who wants to fill one out and then submit it to them. Ms. Trahan then commented that they should have all proposals in by the February 9 Committee meeting so that they can make sure all of the funding is used by the end of June when the Fiscal Year ends.

Ms. Adams then asked if the Committee could send out a public announcement to let Partners know that they can request forms and apply for funding assistance from the Committee. In addition, Ms. Botelho suggested they could include the request form in the public announcement, which Ms. Trahan and Dr. Carlucci agreed both were worthwhile ideas. The Committee also agreed to have a due date of February 7 set for receiving the forms so they would be able to review them at the February 9 meeting.

FY23 FCC Grant

Dr. Carlucci reviewed with the Committee on the \$1,200 grant they had been funded for a proposed tour through Downtown Franklin; The tour starts at the Historical Museum, then moves to the Horace Mann Statue, The Town Common, The Franklin Public Library, Dean College, down Main Street by Escape Into Fiction and the Franklin Art Association Gallery, then finally to the Black Box. The Committee has reached out to everyone along the stops of the tour, but there still has to be a date set for the tour and whether or not the tour will happen at ArtWALK. The Committee cannot do both the tour and ArtWALK. The Committee then discussed issues it was having with hiring a trolley service due to their lack of availability, followed by having indirect representation that the Cultural District would have at ArtWALK via individual Partner booths. Ms. Trahan stated that they have given up on finding a trolley service, and the tour would have to be done on foot. Ms. Trahan also brought up a suggestion of reaching out to Dean College to have a history student help with the tours.

Ms. Piana asked for clarification on the nature of the tours and when they would be happening. Ms. Trahan clarified that a date for the tours had not been decided but they were thinking of enveloping the tours into the Strawberry Stroll. Ms. Piana stated that she liked the idea of

having the tour be on foot, but she did know of some ideas for how to get a trolley to Franklin for the tour. Dr. Carlucci reminded everyone the trolley was meant to give people with ambulatory difficulties a means to experience the tour. Stephen Sherlock mentioned that Dean College would end its normal academic year in May, so by the time of ArtWALK and Strawberry Stroll there would likely not be any students available to help with the tour. Dr. Carlucci then recommended the tour be postponed for another year, as they need more time to get it right and they will still be doing plenty this year. She added that she would speak with the Cultural Council to see if the \$1,200 could be used in other ways for the Cultural District. The other members of the Committee agreed with this plan.

MetroWest 2023 Symposium

Ms. Trahan and Dr. Carlucci reminded the Committee that, in the last meeting, they had decided that the Committee had originally decided to hold the Symposium on Thursday, March 30, but there has also been uncertainty among the Committee about being able prepare and organize the Symposium by themselves with only a couple months of time. Ms. Trahan let the Committee know that Sarah Cronin and Brianna Cummings from the Franklin Cultural Council have said they would be willing to help with the Symposium so long as the Committee is still helping. This will make it a joint effort, but it will still be an FCC-led event. The Symposium would be held in a part of Dean College this year. The Committee is due to meet with the Cultural Council again on January 19 to continue the discussion.

Next Cultural District Meeting Dates

February 9, 2023 7:00 PM

March 9, 2023 7:00 PM

Additional Comments

Dr. Carlucci brought up an issue of a Partner telling her that they wanted to be more included in Committee activities, and asked the Committee if they would be open to adding links for the Committee meeting agendas and Zoom links to the Newsletter. Vice Chair LoPresti agreed with the idea, and Stephen Sherlock suggested the Committee continue working at distinguishing the Cultural District from the Cultural Council. There was then discussion about how the Committee's purpose is not to be an events committee, but rather one that facilitates the growth and strength of the Cultural District. Ms. Trahan remarked that the Newsletter and Call to Artists are exactly in line with what they should be focus on. Ms. Trahan also clarified that, because the Partners are going to be included in the normal Committee Meetings, they would not need to schedule future Partners Meetings at this time.

Adjourn

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:41 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Paslaski
Administrative Assistant