

Franklin Cultural District Committee
Minutes of Meeting
August 31, 2020
Held as a Virtual Meeting
via Remote Access Zoom Platform

As stated on the agenda, due to the growing concerns regarding the COVID-19 virus, this meeting will be conducted as a Remote/Virtual Cultural District Committee meeting. In an effort to ensure citizen engagement and comply with open meeting law regulations, citizens will be able to dial into the meeting using the provided phone number, or citizens can participate by using the Zoom link provided on the agenda.

Members present: Nancy Schoen, John LoPresti, Roberta Trahan, Pandora Carlucci, Evan Chelman, Jamie Barrett.

Members not present: None.

Staff in attendance: Bryan Taberner, Director Planning and Community Development; Anne Marie Tracey, Marketing and Communication Specialist; Judith Lizardi, Recording Secretary.

Others in attendance: Amy Adams, Stephen Sherlock.

Commencement

Chair Schoen opened the meeting at 7:07 PM.

Welcome

Chair Schoen introduced Ms. Amy Adams and stated that Ms. Adams would be formally appointed to the Committee at an upcoming Town Council meeting. She thanked Mr. LoPresti for representing Franklin at the virtual MetroFest event. She stated that Ms. Tracey was going to become a representative for Franklin at MetroWest.

Franklin Cultural District Website: Anne Marie Tracey, Presentation and Discussion

Chair Schoen stated that Ms. Tracey would be discussing a new vision for the Franklin Cultural District Committee's website.

Ms. Tracey stated she works 50/50 for both the schools and the Town. Since being in her job for about one year, she has a stronger understanding of where the Town is and where they need to go to market the Town. She and Town Administrator Jamie Hellen have talked a lot about the Town website. They would like to update the website's landing spots to improve marketing. The Cultural District website is a good spot for people to be directed to in order to see what is going on in Town and find things to do. They are hoping to drive traffic to this spot; the more traffic the more exposure. This is good for the Committee and the community. She noted there are some things that she would like to tweak on the Cultural District website to make it a little more helpful for people when they visit.

Ms. Tracey stated the website has to be up-to-date and accurate. She said if people find a website outdated, they will wonder about the entire website. She has the skill set and time to update the website. She would like to use the website to expand the Cultural District audience. She talked about the functionality of the website and getting people to sign up for the newsletter. She noted that the Committee is currently using Constant Contact software for their newsletter. She explained that when someone is on the website and is interested, their information must be captured. Having people's information allows them to be reached with the newsletter and in other ways. She said there is some easy streamlining that can be done to make the signing up process easier. She stated her job is to reach as many people as possible. Mr. Chelman stated this may even help the partners become more interested in being involved

and engaged because of the benefits. Ms. Tracey stated that once the audience is expanded, then the exposure is expanded. She is hoping to add additional information such as a business's social media tag. This will give people a lot of options for communicating. She wants to update and monitor the website to make sure it has current information, that the links are all working, and the photographs are fresh. She would like to have more photos to show people having fun and enjoying themselves. She has talked to Mr. Hellen about getting a photographer to update the images. Mr. LoPresti stated there is a small inventory of photographs. He noted that a Town resident is taking pictures, as well. Ms. Tracey stated she would be glad for any pictures that she can get. Mr. LoPresti stated he thinks it is nice to have a good image to display of each of the partners; the photographer should go to each partner's business to obtain a good photo in order to promote them on the website. Ms. Tracey stated they are lacking in business photos. She said she would be happy to ask businesses to share some pictures and images. Ms. Trahan suggested pairing old photos with new photos. She mentioned Mr. Joe Landry has many historical photos and provided Ms. Tracey with his contact information. Mr. Sherlock shared a link to his photographs for Franklin Matters.

Ms. Tracey stated that she would like to do some work on the website's search feature including adding tags to all the businesses based on what the business is and does to help people when they search. She would like the search to be more powerful and user friendly. The more successful people are when searching, the more apt they will be to return to the website. She wants to make sure people are finding the partners through their searches. She suggested putting in the new parking map. She noted that the more information on the website, the better it will be to use for marketing purposes. The goal is to drive the traffic and get as much exposure as possible. She said that she spoke to Mr. Taberner and Chair Schoen about updating the website; she wants to use this site to market the Town. Chair Schoen said this would be great and the partners would like it. Mr. Chelman stated he was excited about the update. Ms. Tracey said the goal is to put something on the front page of the Town's website to let people know this is where to go; the connection needs to be more direct.

Mr. LoPresti said a real challenge is keeping the calendar updated. Having the calendar information fed in never came to fruition with the website development. Capturing all the businesses' events and putting them on the calendar is difficult. Ms. Tracey said she would like to talk with Mr. Sherlock about the calendar. Mr. LoPresti stated the calendar is not as automated as it could be. Ms. Tracey said that once the partners see the website as being a benefit to them, it might help to motivate them, and they may be more likely to add their events. Ms. Carlucci noted the Committee's social media components. Ms. Tracey discussed ways to make it easier to manage the social media accounts and flow of information; she would be happy to help Mr. Chelman and Mr. Barrett with this. Mr. Sherlock said he would talk with Ms. Tracey about the calendar approach pre-pandemic.

Mr. Taberner stated that making the Cultural District website a place to go for all things Franklin is great; however, that means including things that are not in the Cultural District. He asked how should this be treated? Is it a Town website with the Cultural District name on it? Is it for the District and the partners that created the District, or is it a Town-wide thing? For instance, should it be focused on the Cultural District such as restaurants or should the focus include all restaurants in Town? These concerns need to be settled. He stated the Cultural District website at one point was supposed to be very specific. A requirement to become a Cultural District was to have a website. This has to be decided by the Committee as it is the Committee's site. Ms. Tracey stated she has spoken with Mr. Hellen about this. She said the goal in every way is to drive more people to the website. They have discussed how to do it the right way; she does not have the answer. She wants to work with the Committee to have the website reflect the Committee. This is not a simple decision. Mr. Taberner gave an example and asked if many restaurants are listed on the site, and they are not all in the District, will Taco Bell be listed? Ms. Tracey said there will have to be parameters. Mr. Taberner stated that until now, a business had to be a partner to be listed. If Ms. Tracey wants to open the website Town-wide, does the concept of the partners get dropped? Ms.

Tracey said there could be different levels of what is posted for partners and for those who are not partners. Ms. Trahan agreed that this has been struggled with since the beginning. Her feeling is that there is a way to blend this which includes involving the arts. She said they have to be respectful of the Cultural District, and the arts are the key connector. Mr. Chelman said this is a good time to reflect on the Committee's identity. Mr. LoPresti stated that when the Committee was started, it was all about the District and the partners in the District. This current conversation is outside of that. Chair Schoen said she likes where the focus is on the partners and the District, but they should list all the other businesses on the website and be inclusive. Ms. Tracey said this will be a growth and evolving process; there are ways to prioritize the District. Chair Schoen said it will be good to get people in the District engaged. Ms. Tracey said it is good to connect with and listen to all the businesses. She noted a Business Listening and Networking session virtual meeting on September 30, 2020, at 6:30 PM. Mr. Taberner stated that if four members of the Committee want to attend the September 30, 2020, meeting, he will need to post a Committee meeting. Chair Schoen thanked Ms. Tracey for her presentation.

Next Cultural District Meeting Dates

The next meetings are scheduled for Monday, September 14, 2020, at 6:30 PM; and Wednesday, September 30, 2020 at 6:30 PM - FCD & FDP Business Listening Session.

Next Cultural District Partner Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 14, 2020, at 7:00 PM.

Adjourn

With no further discussion, a motion was made by Chair Schoen to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ms. Trahan; voted and approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary