**Cultural District Committee**

**Minutes of Meeting**

**March 26, 2018**

**Meeting held at Municipal Building,**

**355 East Central Street, Room 106, Franklin, MA**

Members present: Christopher Brady, Stacey David, John LoPresti, Philip Regan, Nancy Schoen, and Tyler Warren.

Members not present: Robert DeRobertis.

Also in attendance: Planning & Community Development Director Bryan Taberner.

7:03 PM Commencement.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes. Motion by David to approve the February 26, 2018 meeting minutes. Seconded by LoPresti; voted and approved unanimously.

Committee Meeting Schedule. Regan thanked everyone for filling out the meeting availability form; he will pick some dates for meetings for the next few months. Hopefully, the Committee can get some other meeting venues besides this municipal building. It was informally agreed the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, April 25, 2018 at 7:00 PM; location TBD.

Sub-committee Updates.

*● Partnership Sub-committee.* Schoen stated she had met with Encore; they are interested in being a partner and want to be on the map. She sent them a partnership form and will follow up. Some of their concerns are access and affordability of the high school; there is no resolution at this time. The high school cost is $150/hr., plus $35/hr. fee for janitorial, plus $40/hr. fee for technical, plus additional fee for piano. A show usually practices the night before, as well. Large events also need police detail. Maybe they can review the fee policy to see if a sliding scale could work. Horace Mann School is not much less expensive.

Committee members discussed the fees and asked if Schoen could suggest pricing. It was mentioned they should review the policy, down the road. Maybe there is a way to get a special price for certain events.

Schoen stated Encore was also interested in performing with Concerts on the Common; Encore is outside the district. She is going to talk to Penny Tenaglia who is now in charge of Concerts on the Common. She and David met with Taberner about working on the application which must be a number one priority. They also met with the superintendent of schools who seemed open to being in the partnership. Hopefully, the superintendent is going to talk to the School Committee about this; she will follow up. Schoen mentioned the Drummers’ Studio is also interested in the partnership; it is outside the district.

David suggested a different fee schedule for the high school for Cultural District members as that may encourage membership. She has rescheduled the meeting with the Downtown Partnership and will discuss signing up for both partnership and as cultural member. She asked what is the price point they will consider. Once the goals are hashed out, she would like to share that with the Downtown Partnership; several of the goals impact them directly. Regan said they are in a good place and can share information with the partnership.

David stated she wants to talk about pricing. Part of what must be determined is what they want to charge for membership. What amount of money do they need for a budget? That will greatly impact what the Committee needs to raise.

Taberner said if David talks to some of the partners, such as Dean College, and they do collaborative marketing, the costs will not be that high. He mentioned that if they work out a marketing plan, they will be collaborating for money use. All events can be marketed through the partners. If the Committee has a big budget, go for it, but they may not need a large budget.

David said if the Committee is counting on partners to do their own marketing, then what is the value added offered by the Committee? If there is a collective marketing piece, that would make a difference. If, for instance, Dean College is doing all their own marketing, why would they want to put the Cultural District Committee logo on it? Taberner said the members have all wanted to work together, help each other, and market together. David discussed a scenario with Dean College saying why would we promote Encore’s event and Encore saying why would we promote Dean College’s event? It is one thing to say we want to promote each other and another thing to actually do it. LoPresti provided scenarios about shared marketing.

Warren agreed with David and said it makes sense. When he talked to Steve Sherlock it was implied that everyone wants to help everyone, but this is not always the sentiment of the big players. Regan said maybe there are different ways to approach this. Let’s get the goals set, get the brand established for the District, and then talk about using each other’s logos.

Taberner said some of the organizations are not going to prop up other groups, but they want to help the Franklin Cultural District. It is going to be part of the marketing; that is what the State wants to see. There will be a central calendar. The Downtown Partnership wants everyone’s events to go well. He noted he has a little money for event banners and may get a little more money for events. He questioned if the Committee really wants members or partners. He stated a cultural organization is what is needed to create members. This is a committee that manages a district; this is not a nonprofit group that manages events. If enough people get together for this, then it can be brought back. The nonprofit can become one of the partners that the Committee is dealing with. If money gets funneled through them, they can share fund raising activities and even bank accounts, but that is not the Town. At least until this Committee was formed, there was no intention of having an events-related committee; this is a separate organization.

David said membership is not necessarily running events. Taberner asked what would you become a member of? David said there is a difference between a partner and a member as many other districts have done. A member is not necessarily a partner. Membership fees would go into the budget. Taberner said it is better if it is a separate organization.

David discussed how the Downtown Partnership could write a check to the Town and stated the money would become the marketing budget for the Cultural District Committee. She mentioned she is thinking of the need for a marketing budget and stated the Cultural District, as a whole, will be paying for some of the marketing, as a whole.

Regan suggested the Partnership Subcommittee talk more about this; they should meet in the next week. David will have met with the Downtown Partnership by then. He suggested she draft some ideas for discussion. He stated that for anyone to write a check to the Cultural District Committee, they must have a legal identity. Let’s talk about what that looks like in structure and charter. He mentioned the need to be careful as everyone is competing for the same funds. They must make it clear to the partnership what the Cultural District Committee is looking for.

Schoen said it is hard to reach out to partners and then tell them they must pay to join. She said branding and logo is a first step. Committee members discussed a possible fee. Suggestions included to start small, even free, grow it, and then ask for some revenue. Schoen said number one is to get partners around the table talking. David said she does not want to make promises and then tell them there is a fee.

*● Marketing Sub-committee.* LoPresti stated he is getting together a marketing plan. He asked what the costs are associated with the events. Is it sweat equity or cost, for instance, for a graphic designer? He suggested they agree on ideas that make sense, then price out the ideas. Social media is relatively inexpensive; print or other advertising is costly. He will try to lay out various options and budget. He has not started with this yet as he does not know the mission statement; he sent out the mission statement and is looking for comments. Regan said he has not had a chance to look at the mission statement.

David mentioned Susan Nichols said she is not 100 percent sure if there is any long-term investment for the website. She thought the mission statement was great and read it aloud. She noted the Committee was not developing history, so the wording must be changed. LoPresti said he was focusing on using historic sites. He asked for everyone’s comments and said he would incorporate them. Brady said he did not know how to comment in Google docs. Committee members discussed the best way to make changes to the Google document as they want to make sure there is a trail from the original version.

*● Goals Sub-committee.* Taberner asked Brady and LoPresti to find time to meet with him to make sure what they are doing is working regarding the vision and goals of the district. Then they should look at the purpose of their own committee, followed by the work plan. There is quite a structure to this. If they meet with him, they can easily come up with the goals; then the marketing plan will come right along. Both the goals and marketing plan must relate to each other. They do not want to waste any time; the Town needs to get the application done soon. LoPresti and Brady both said next week is better for them to meet. Taberner told them to give him some dates and he will check his calendar.

Brady said they aimed to take the original goals from the former Cultural District Steering Committee (7-8 goals). They then took the objectives from the marketing plan and looked for overlap. They wanted goals that captured everything but were also concise enough to be able to attach a metric to be easily measured. He stated the goals sent to everyone have a lot of content, but they may need to organize them in a different way.

Taberner mentioned the State goals which the Town Council adopted. They must come up with a work plan which includes a marketing component and economic development. The basic goals they have are great and the metrics are right in line. Committee members discussed the listed goals and the metrics. David had a few comments on the goals and made specific suggestions on wording. Taberner said the marketing plan being put together should keep in mind the listed goals and should implement the goals. LoPresti questioned the second goal and made some wording changes. Committee members further discussed the goals.

Taberner explained tax assessment and increased value. This is usually for corporations coming in that want to increase the value of property. He would love to see old buildings totally redone. David mentioned, for instance, if a group of artists came in and saw a space that would be good, there should be information on the website on how the Town could help that group for tax breaks. Something should be developed for the future.

Warren stated his sister is a graphic designer; she would be willing to make a few designs for free. The logo they have now is not very good; it does not attract people. He would like to work on something more up-to-date. He requested input on what to send his sister. He mentioned he talked with Steve Sherlock about the social media aspect; Sherlock has a good platform and has things setup his own way. Warren suggested Sherlock should stop posting on Facebook and Twitter and go dark. Then they could come out with a new logo, new branding, and a new plan. They would need to shut down the Facebook page that Sherlock runs.

Regan said key words should be discussed. They need to make sure to have a consistent message for search engines. They should get a plan together quickly for what Sherlock should post. Committee members discussed the Facebook and blog that Sherlock maintains.

David said she asked Susan Nichols about the calendar. She is 99 percent sure the Natick site does pull from other sources. Taberner said everything the Town does is from Google.

Cultural District Goals. Regan said he thinks everything has been covered already.

Management Plan. Regan stated they are going to talk more about membership, partnership, and nonprofit status and wanted to meet in the next week. LoPresti suggested putting membership on the table and go down path of no membership for now as it feels a little scattered.Committee members agreed on the need to focus on the application. David asked isn’t this supposed to be a membership organization. Regan said anyone can make a donation. Taberner said for anyone writing a check it has to be in the form of a donation.

Taberner said the application needs a general marketing plan--what are you doing over the next six months? If a membership organization is created, it is a totally different layer. It is good either way. It would not be this committee taking in the checks; it would be a different organization. He reviewed some of the specifics that are needed to go into the application.

David said the people she has talked to, including Natick, say all the districts that do not have money coming in fall apart. Taberner said this committee has a different structure. This is a seven-member town committee with some staff support. This committee does not have a budget. If funding is wanted, it is through a town process unless another group such as a nonprofit is created, or the Downtown Partnership takes on a role of doing something like that. Athena Pandolf in Natick has something different. We do not have another organization managing it.

Regan said it is not a no. He wants to lay it all on the table and see what a nonprofit structure will be; have the district, have a committee that runs the whole thing, and have a different subcommittee running the nonprofit in addition to the three subcommittees that the Committee already has. For the purposes of the application, they can apply and then evolve as needed. He proposed to get the marketing and goals up and running and talk about membership and nonprofit status at a later point.

David asked what we are telling the partners that we are offering to them. Schoen said we can ask them what they would like to see; we should be doing lots of listening and getting initial information. Let them know we are trying to promote them and work on their behalf; keep it very general. This is just getting off the ground.

Other. Regan said he is going to do outreach in the next few weeks for applicants to replace Rob; this will be temporary. He will look at applicants that had already applied to this Committee. He would like to get feedback on that.

Schoen asked if people were writing letters indicating they were interested in becoming a partner; she would like to bring a sample letter to people she speaks with. Taberner said he has asked people to write a short letter stating they are in support of the district and will make a commitment. He will send her a sample letter. Schoen said she would like to customize the letter to each person.

Brady asked what the time line for the application is. Taberner said when the goals are done; it is a rolling deadline. The hope is to get the application done so the site visit can be held in the warmer months.

Regan said asset inventory needs to be done for all the venues in town including restaurants, dance studios, museums, and cultural events. They can use Google docs to coordinate the list. Taberner said the application has a form that can be filled in; the asset inventory is simple. Regan said he will create the list based on the map and everyone can add to it.

With no further discussion, a motion was made by Warren to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by David; voted and approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary