

**Franklin Cultural District Committee  
Partners Meeting  
Minutes of Meeting  
September 14, 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 Partners 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.***

**Cultural District Committee Members Present:** Nancy Schoen, Pandora Carlucci, Roberta Trahan, Jamie Barrett, Evan Chelman.

**Culture District Committee Members Absent:** John LoPresti.

**Town of Franklin Staff Present:** Bryan Taberner, Director of Planning and Community Development; Anne Marie Tracey, Marketing and Communication Specialist; Judith Lizardi, Recording Secretary.

**Business and Other Attendees:** Claudia Zarazua, MAPC; Steve Sherlock, Franklin Matters; Becca Rausch, State Senator; Lisa Piana, Franklin Downtown Partnership; Caleigh Keating, Franklin Public Library; Amy Adams.

**Welcome:** Chair Schoen opened the meeting at 7:04 PM and welcomed everyone. She noted that many of the Cultural District partners have been very creative and have engaged in many initiatives including summer Concerts on the Common, theater performances by The Black Box, private music lessons by Lifelong Learning and private schools, online performances hosted by Circle of Friends, events held at La Cantina Winery, YouTube performances by Jamie Barrett, scavenger hunts and programs for all ages by Franklin Library, activities by Southern New England Trunkline Trail, and outdoor spaces for diners created by restaurants; she stated Franklin is lucky to have so many cultural events to choose from.

**Newsletter:** Chair Schoen stated the first edition of the newsletter was produced in June; three editions have been published to date. The newsletter highlights the partners and things going on in the community. She stated the Cultural District Committee hopes to encourage collaboration. Partners can reach out the Committee, and their business will be highlighted in the newsletter. Ms. Carlucci said the partners have been generous with their knowledge, logos, and business information; it has been a very positive experience.

**MetroFest Virtual Festival:** Chair Schoen stated that MetroFest changed from an in-person event to an online/virtual event this year. The Cultural District was represented by Committee member John LoPresti who manned a booth with a video loop and music by Committee member Jamie Barrett. The current newsletter provides a link to the music.

**Town of Franklin Business Listening & Networking Sessions:** Mr. Taberner stated that the Town is reviewing the recent economic project and looking at results and prioritization. The Franklin Town Council Economic Development subcommittee would like to connect with a wide variety of local businesses, organizations, and citizens to obtain feedback on the MAPC Market Analysis and learn more about the needs of Franklin's business community moving forward in the COVID-19 era. He stated that the first of the listening and networking sessions will be held

remote/virtual on September 30, 2020, at 6:30 PM, with discussion on businesses in the Downtown area, Crossing area, and the Cultural District. The Downtown Partnership will also be participating.

Mr. Taberner discussed the Micro-Enterprise Grant program. The Town of Franklin and other communities in the area were awarded funding to create local micro-enterprise grant programs. Micro-enterprises are businesses with five or fewer employees, one of which is the owner. Eligible businesses can receive grant funding for their business. He encouraged anyone with questions to contact Chrissy Whelton in the Town Administrator's office. He noted an outside consultant will be processing the applications.

**Massachusetts Area Planning Council (MAPC) Regional Indicators Project:** Ms. Claudia Zarazua, planner in MAPC's Arts and Culture Department, gave a slideshow presentation. She said the mission is to advance planning and policy conditions that can help arts and culture thrive in Metro Boston. The purpose is to build a baseline of arts and culture economy and programming in the greater Boston area to document and respond to the impact of COVID on artists, arts organizations, and the creative economy. They will be working with the Town of Arlington, City of Boston, City of Beverly, and Town of Franklin. Their proposed timeline begins in September 2020, with survey release, moving to virtual focus groups, data analysis, partner workshops, draft recommendations, final report and project debrief in March 2021. She said they are looking for Franklin's support in distributing surveys to as many people, organizations, creative individuals, and schools, as possible.

**Guest Speaker Anne Marie Tracey - Marketing & Communications Town of Franklin:** Ms. Tracey provided a slideshow presentation. She said there is a great resource in the Cultural District website and it has a lot of potential to become a great landing space for the Town of Franklin. She would like to take advantage of this great spot and make sure it is being utilized as well as possible. The goals of the website are to communicate, spread awareness, increase audience, increase exposure, showcase Franklin's assets, and attract visitors to get people to come to Town to see how great it is, support business and community organizations, and attend events. She would like to update the website including streamlining the newsletter sign up. They need to make sure the website is a trusted source of current information about businesses, events, and organizations in Town. She would like to make more comprehensive connections to the businesses to include website addresses and social media accounts and make connections easy for visitors. She stated that they need to clarify the purpose and voice of social media, update imagery to show lifestyle, and analyze the website traffic. She stated that as they communicate better, they will grow their audience; a larger audience will expand knowledge of the Franklin Cultural District. She would like to obtain more social media followers and build connections while spreading awareness about the Cultural District Committee's purpose. The logo will become more recognizable, and people will start to make the connection between what the FCD is and what it does. They will then analyze the growing audience and get to know them better. She discussed spreading awareness of why Franklin is so special. The Town has so much to offer: restaurants, entertainment, services, shopping, events, and organizations. Using the Cultural District website as the draw to what is going on in Franklin would be good. She would like to expand the search feature on the website. Once the website is more structured, the website can be used to push people to see what is going on and all there is to do in Franklin. She discussed increasing exposure by using the Franklin Cultural District Committee's website as the landing spot for targeted marketing efforts both in print and online for both localized and regional markets. The goal is to establish Franklin as a destination for arts, culture, entertainment, and food. She stated she would like to work with Ms. Carlucci on the Constant Contact website.

Chair Schoen said it sounds like a great plan. She asked how the partners can be highlighted as the website is updated. Ms. Tracey asked what makes someone a partner and what are the benefits and goals of membership. Chair Schoen said this is rather fuzzy. There are a number of partners outside the district; if a business has an event within the district once a year, they are considered a partner. Ms. Tracey said they need to state who is a partner and what is the benefit to make people understand what they will get out of it. She suggested the Committee determine what benefit they will be giving the partners. Mr. Taberner stated partners are the art and culture related organizations that get together and wanted to create a district; partners want to make it successful and keep it going. Partners are all committed to make it happen and make the district as good as it can be such as The Black Box, Dean College, and the Museum, as well as artists and small businesses. If the organization is performing arts related, they have to perform in the district once a year to be a partner. For instance, Franklin TV and Circle of Friends are partners, but they are outside the district. The organization does not have to be in the district, but they have to be committed to making the district work. Ms. Trahan said there is still a need for the Cultural District Committee to define what the district can do for the partners and what the partners can do for the district.

Ms. Tracey suggested the Committee define who they are, what they do, benefits offered, and a reason why an organization would want to be a partner. Ms. Carlucci said she thinks there are threads that go through the district; education is important to the district as it includes learning of all kinds. Ms. Tracey asked if the Committee had a mission statement. Chair Schoen said not really, but it would be a great thing to do. Ms. Amy Adams asked if there was a way for the partners to advertise on the website. Ms. Tracey discussed the idea of advertising on the website. Chair Schoen suggested highlighting four partners per month which could be a benefit for the partners. Ms. Trahan said when this Committee was started, it was all about being local; she stated the Committee needs to get to the bottom line of how the Committee's mission is different than the Downtown Partnership. She noted that there are many people in Town trying to figure out what the Committee is and what makes it different. Chair Schoen agreed that the Cultural District Committee's mission is not clear; the Committee needs to determine the mission statement and define themselves and how the social media platforms are being used. Mr. Taberner stated that the Cultural District is designated by the State and has specific goals. He reviewed the Franklin Cultural District goals as listed in the Cultural District application. He stated that the vision and goals of the district are also in the application. The manager of the Cultural District is this Committee and they come up with the annual goals and make sure more things are happening in the district. He suggested the Committee review this.

Ms. Piana stated that art and culture is what will get the Committee to their mission statement. She suggested that not every business should be in the district. She recommended the Committee look at other arts and culture districts and who their members are. Ms. Adams suggested that a virtual porchfest could be done and would cost very little. Chair Schoen said a virtual porchfest may be a good thing to do in the colder weather. She suggested having a meeting/workshop just to think about the Committee's mission statement. Mr. Sherlock stated the Committee seems a little lost at this time. While every business can benefit from the district, this group is arts and culture first. He stated that this group is supposed to be bringing the partners together, and the partners are supposed to be doing the activities. He said the purpose was to establish a Cultural District Committee as an umbrella. He discussed the importance of the visibility of the events calendar. Ms. Carlucci agreed with the need for a calendar; partners are doing many things, but they are doing them individually and without visibility. Ms. Piana agreed with Mr. Sherlock and said it is about the partners and the Committee being an umbrella for the partners. The district benefits the businesses, but the partners are arts and culture and

should work together and get it out to the community. Chair Schoen said she would continue to reach out to partners and encourage collaboration.

**Questions/Discussion:** Ms. Keating explained her idea for a Halloween event involving a combination of scavenger hunt and drive around Town. It will be a trunk-or- treat in multiple locations/parking lots throughout Town, and participants will not have to get out of their cars. She will write up her plan. Chair Schoen stated it sounded like a good idea; she requested Ms. Keating keep the Committee posted and let the Committee know how they can help. Ms. Piana recommended Ms. Keating reach out to the police as they may want to partner with this event.

**Next Partner Meeting:** The next Cultural District Partners Meeting is Monday, January 11, 2021, at 7:00 PM.

**Adjourn:** With no further discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Carlucci to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ms. Trahan; voted and approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Judith Lizardi  
Recording Secretary