

**Franklin Cultural District Committee
Minutes of Meeting
October 14, 2021
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: Chair Nancy Schoen, Vice Chair John LoPresti, Roberta Trahan, Jamie Barrett, Pandora Carlucci, Amy Adams, Candice Narsasian-Healey

Members not present:

Also in attendance: Alan Earls, Franklin Observer; Tyler Paslaski, Administrative Assistant for Planning & Community Development

Chair Schoen opened the meeting at 7:00 PM

Introduction of Candice Narsasian-Healey

The members introduced themselves to Ms. Candice Narsasian-Healey, who was about to be sworn in as a new member of the Cultural District Committee. Ms. Narsasian-Healey introduced herself, after which Chair Schoen asked her to describe her passion-project of managing an Instagram account called Local Franklin. Local Franklin, which went live 3 months ago, focuses on what is going on in Franklin and shares what local businesses are doing as a one-stop location to learn what businesses are doing in the town. Also, the account has a weekly Spotlight series, which meets with a local business each week. Ms. Narsasian-Healey is looking for a more sustainable format for sharing events going on and help townspeople find things to do. She started the account because she was having a hard time finding out about things going on in town. Chair Schoen agreed that it was hard to find a one-stop way to see everything that was going on around Franklin and said she hoped that Ms. Narsasian-Healey could apply her knowledge to help the Cultural District do the same thing with its social media pages. Chair Schoen asked Ms. Narsasian-Healey where she ended up looking to discover what happens around Franklin, to which she responded that she followed 100 to 150 businesses and checked the town calendar among other resources. She struggled with finding what methods were the most successful in drawing followers and engagement to Local Franklin, and that would be something to consider when trying to grow the Cultural District social media presence. Answering Schoen's question, Ms. Narsasian-Healey said that she explores business websites and media pages, and has to dig through to find a lot of the information. Chair Schoen then gave some ideas as to how townspeople were trying to find out about events to go to. She then thanked Ms. Narsasian-Healey for introducing herself and sharing her insights.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2021 Franklin Cultural District Meeting Minutes: **Ms. Roberta Trahan motioned to accept the meeting minutes for the Cultural District Committee. Ms. Trahan voted yes. Vice Chair John LoPresti voted yes. Ms. Amy Adams voted yes. Ms. Pandora Carlucci voted yes. Chair Schoen stated that she had read a transcript of the meeting and thus could vote, then voted yes. The motion to accept passed 5-0-0.**

September 13, 2021 Franklin Cultural District Partnership Meeting Minutes: **Ms. Trahan motioned to accept the partners minutes. Vice Chair LoPresti seconded. Mr. Jamie Barrett voted yes. Ms. Carlucci abstained. Ms. Adams voted yes. Vice Chair LoPresti voted yes. Chair Schoen Voted yes. The motion to accept passed 5-0-1.**

Newsletter

Chair Schoen talked about how Ms. Carlucci's work on the monthly newsletter had a high open rate of almost 49% on the initial, and a 13% click rate. Ms. Carlucci gave some details on the demographics of the newsletter that was giving her information on what subjects were most interesting to readers. She then talked about a discussion she had with the Partners regarding changing the release of the newsletter from the middle of the month to the beginning of the month starting November. Ms. Trahan thanked Chair Schoen and Ms. Carlucci for their hard work on the newsletters. There was then discussion between the members about ways to more efficiently collect information from businesses and partners to put into the newsletter.

Associate Members – “Friends of the Cultural District”

Chair Schoen and Ms. Carlucci recently met with Town Administrator Jamie Hellen to discuss expanding Committee membership. Jamie Hellen said that most other boards are also asking for increased membership, and proposed the idea of bolstering the Cultural District Committee's manpower while not increasing its official membership. Associate members would be appointed by the town and be able to share their insights, but would not have voting power. Chair Schoen then pointed out that people had approached the Committee's booth during the festivals expressing a desire to get involved with helping the town, and allowing such people to become associate members might be exactly the thing to enable those townspeople to help. Vice Chair LoPresti asked why Jamie Hellen had not wanted to expand the full membership of the Committee, to which Chair Schoen answered that he wanted to remain consistent with solutions he had presented to other boards, and granting every board more members might cause issues. Ms. Carlucci elaborated on his reasoning and brought up his insight that people would volunteer and be happy to help, especially when given a title marking their association with the Committee. Chair Schoen then mentioned his point that people who have a title marking their membership to a committee might increase their attendance at meetings because they would feel more obligated to said title. As the Cultural District Committee currently knows of two people who would like to help, the Associate member/"Friends of the Cultural District" program could be a good test-pilot case to see how well it works for the rest of the town. Ms. Trahan said that, if the Committee is not going to get more official members otherwise, then it may as well go with the Associate member program. Vice Chair LoPresti said that the best way forward is to have the voting members identify key projects and goals and then have the associate members run subcommittees of volunteers. Chair Schoen added that everyone should think about what they want those key projects to look like ahead of November.

Ms. Trahan motioned to approve the formation of Friends of the Cultural District. Ms. Carlucci Seconded. Vice Chair LoPresti voted yes. Ms. Adams voted yes. Ms. Trahan voted yes. Mr. Barrett voted yes. Ms. Carlucci voted yes. Ms. Narsasian-Healey voted yes. Chair Schoen voted yes. Motion passed unanimously 7-0-0

Ms. Trahan motioned to approve the acceptance of associate members/ Friends of the Cultural District into the Cultural District Committee. Ms. Carlucci seconded. Ms. Narsasian-Healey voted yes. Ms. Carlucci voted yes. Ms. Adams voted yes. Ms. Barrett voted yes. Vice Chair LoPresti voted yes. Ms. Trahan voted yes. Chair Schoen voted votes. Motion passed unanimously 7-0-0

Festivals

Chair Schoen extended a thank you to everyone who helped out at the Cultural and Harvest Festivals. There was a lot of interest at the Cultural District table for both Festivals. She also applauded Ms. Adams' booth where she painted and showed off her art, to which the rest of the Committee also expressed their respect for her work.

Website Training Available

Chair Schoen and Ms. Carlucci both attended the website training, but found it minimally helpful. It would likely be more helpful to meet up at the library to experiment with the website and learn from each other how to change it without creating any errors. Chair Schoen wondered if they could get a more personalized session for learning the website. Vice Chair LoPresti responded that the town should be able to set that up. Chair Schoen said she would contact DPCD Director Bryan Taberner about setting up such a class. She asked if anyone else from the Committee had anything else they would want in a learning session, to which nobody had any suggestions.

Franklin Cultural Council Grant

The Franklin Cultural Council Grant applications are supposed to be due by the next day, October 15. Chair Schoen and Ms. Carlucci wanted to discuss them before the Committee, but there would not be enough time, so they decided to coordinate together on what grants would make the most sense to apply for. Performances at the Franklin Historical Museum were popular last year, so they thought they would apply for a grant for that. Chair Schoen and Ms. Carlucci got in touch with live performance companies, to which some were interested in taking part, including Live Arts. Discussions are being had with Live Arts as to what the performances would look like. The grant proposal was sent in before the deadline, but that deadline was then extended, and the application cannot be edited now at this point.

MCC Cultural District Grant Details coming soon

Grants were supposed to be submitted on October 1, but nothing has been heard about it since, so it is uncertain whether the deadline for this grant was delayed or not. Chair Schoen suggested a discussion be had to determine what this grant (\$7500) could be used for. Hopefully the partners will have ideas, or at least start thinking about ideas for what the Cultural District Grant could be used for. The application deadline can end up being 2 weeks from its announcement, so ideas would have to be planned and put onto an application quickly. A discussion may result in a partner having an idea later that they want to use the grant for. Vice

Chair LoPresti reiterated a previous comment he had that setting up more lighting around the Cultural District around artwork might help better display it, as many works of art are currently displayed in windows that are too small or too dark to clearly see the art through. Ms. Adams then detailed some of her troubles with getting art clearly displayed and convincing businesses to make changes to more clearly display it. Chair Schoen suggested going around to businesses and asking if they would be interested in setting up displays in their storefronts for art.

Conflict of Interest Follow up

Chair Schoen talked to Town Administrator Jamie Hellen and Ms. Adams about conflict of interest, because there can be one for Ms. Adams displaying her art because she is on the Cultural District Committee. It was discussed that Ms. Adams should recuse herself from such talks, and the Committee should steer clear of anything that seems like it may be a conflict of interest.

Partner Outreach

Chair Schoen explained that the Committee needs to get partners more involved. Once the Committee has a goal, like artWALK, the partners tend to become more involved, but it would be better to have them in the meetings contributing to the discussions. The Committee has made some gains in collaboration with partners with the School, the Public Library, and the Art Association, and it should continue that. Chair Schoen proposed the idea of breaking up the partner list between Committee members, and having everyone take part of the list and go to the businesses on it to reach out and try to get those partners more engaged. It appears that the more people are aware of the Cultural District thanks to the Festivals, so it may be time to start helping the partners who are further out from Downtown Franklin.

Additional Comments

Ms. Trahan mentioned the opening of Mary Poppins at the Black Box which opened October 15 and ran through the weekend, and will also be performing the weekend of October 22.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Chair Schoen to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Vice Chair LoPresti; voted and approved unanimously (no roll call vote taken).

Meeting Adjourned at 8:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Paslaski
Administrative Assistant