

**Franklin Cultural District Committee
Minutes of Meeting
December 13, 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: Vice Chair John LoPresti (Acting as Chair), Roberta Trahan, Jamie Barrett, Dr. Pandora Carlucci, Amy Adams, Katherine Botelho, Pat Timmons

Members not present: Candice Narsasian-Healey

Also in attendance: Alan Earls, Franklin Observer; Bryan Taberner, Planning and Community Development Director; Stephen Sherlock of Franklin Matters T.V./Radio

Vice Chair LoPresti opened the meeting at 7:00 PM

Franklin Cultural District Committee Membership Update

Vice Chair LoPresti introduced two new members of the Cultural District Committee who have been approved by Town Administration. Katherine Botelho and Pat Timmons each told the rest of the Committee about themselves, and Vice Chair LoPresti pointed out that the Committee now has full membership. He added that the two new members cannot vote until they are appointed, but they can listen along with the meeting.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

November 16, 2021 Franklin Cultural District Meeting Minutes: Ms. Roberta Trahan motioned to accept the meeting minutes for the Cultural District Committee, seconded by Dr. Carlucci. Ms. Trahan voted yes. Vice Chair John LoPresti voted yes. Ms. Amy Adams voted yes. Dr. Carlucci voted yes. Jamie Barrett voted yes. The motion to accept passed 5-0-0.

Cultural District Committee Structure

Vice Chair LoPresti opened up by telling the Committee that they have an opportunity to reevaluate how the Committee is structured and possibly change it to meet their goals in the future. He then presented his concept on three subcommittees to everyone in the meeting that would entail each subcommittee focus on certain responsibilities.

The first subcommittee would be Partnership Management, Recruitment and Outreach. This subcommittee would work with Partners in the district and encourage their attendance in Committee meetings, in addition to finding new Partners and connect Partners together with cross-marketing efforts.

The second subcommittee would be Marketing and would entail social media presence, the CDC website and newsletter as well as any promotional work the Committee does. This promotional work includes events that the Committee participates in or supports.

The third and final subcommittee is Goals and Grants, and this subcommittee would track and report on activity at events throughout the district (a state requirement that Ms. Trahan has previously been responsible for). Also, this subcommittee would handle grant applications and opportunities to help Partners with funding their activities.

These three subcommittees focus on areas that Vice Chair LoPresti thinks are critical.

Ms. Trahan expressed agreement to the idea of three subcommittees, and suggested that they consider prioritizing the responsibilities of each subcommittee. Vice Chair LoPresti agreed and stated that his intent is to first assign members to the subcommittees, then work together as a whole to prioritize the responsibilities of each subcommittee. Dr. Carlucci asked about the Goals and Grants subcommittee, specifically if Vice Chair LoPresti was envisioning applying for grants that the Committee has not typically applied for in the past. The Committee usually applies for grants from the Mass Cultural Council (MCC) and Franklin Cultural Council that help Partners with funding events, but there are grants that would allow the Committee to conduct more ambitious projects such as research or staffing and “take the Cultural District Committee to that next level” and thus have more tools to better support the Partners. Vice Chair LoPresti answered that his initial plan was to continue the MCC and Franklin Cultural Council grants that help fund Partners’ activities, but also be able to apply for the larger grants on top of those. However, Vice Chair LoPresti said he has not filled out a grant application before and is not familiar with how complex or time-consuming they can be, so he is hoping that the MCC may be able to help with that. Otherwise, he does not want to take on more than what the Committee can handle at this point in time, but if the Department of Planning and Community Development are able to help, then that would be a third option.

Mr. Taberner weighed in on the discussion to say that, usually, some Committee members would work with Mr. Taberner to put a grant application together and submit it, and then report on it at the end of the year. He is happy to work with Vice Chair LoPresti on any additional grants the Committee wants to apply for. There is regional funding available through the MetroWest Tourism Bureau that could be applied for, and in fact the website was partially supported by regional funds. Mr. Taberner then expressed agreement with having Goals and Grants be one subcommittee because both items go hand-in-hand. Vice Chair LoPresti brought the discussion back to Dr. Carlucci’s question about the Goals and Grants subcommittee and said they would have to figure out how to spread awareness of grant opportunities. Dr. Carlucci offered to have Vice Chair LoPresti be included in notices sent by Luis Cotto from the MCC. She went on to emphasize the benefits of the information from the MCC as it highlights other towns and gives insight into how other Cultural Districts are managed. Vice Chair LoPresti then opened the discussion to ask if any Committee members had a preference for which subcommittee they would like to be part of. Mr. Taberner commented that all three subcommittees would benefit from having non-Committee member Partners on them, and being subcommittee members might help engage Partners enough to attend Committee meetings. Vice Chair LoPresti added that Partners might see the value of participating in the Committee meetings when they see how they can help with grant applications and other tasks that directly or indirectly help Partners. Mr. Taberner asked if responsibility for ArtWALK and other such events falls neatly into one of the three subcommittees, or if it would be handled by the whole Committee. Vice Chair LoPresti answered the Marketing subcommittee has that task as part of its responsibilities, but the whole Committee would likely still help regardless. Ms. Botelho suggested that she may well be situated to go connect with Partners, as she lives in the center of town and has time available in the day to go visit Partners in the area. She also asked about how people become Partners, so Vice Chair LoPresti explained that Partners are usually

business owners in the Downtown area that are recruited into the Partnership by the Cultural District Committee, frequently as a result of meeting them in person. Ms. Trahan reminded everyone that a list of the Partners is available on the Cultural District website, and that convincing some of them to engage with the Committee may be as easy as meeting them in person. Dr. Carlucci added that some Partners are not in performing arts, but there will soon be a pop-up bookstore called “Escape into Fiction” opening on East Central Street in February, meaning that Partners can be anyone and not just artists. Ms. Adams elaborated on Dr. Carlucci’s point and discussed the Franklin Artist Association, of which she is a member, and she described a previous collaboration where Partners displayed artists’ works in their shops, banks, and other types of establishments. The Franklin Artist Association is planning to do that again this year. Dr. Carlucci summarized by saying that the concept of a Partner is very broad. Mr. Timmons pointed out that there could be a strong overlap between Partner Management and Marketing on putting together material for recruiting new Partners, thus helping Ms. Botelho when she goes out to meet with them. Vice Chair LoPresti agreed, and explained that the Committee had previously created Partnership kits, which included informative materials and advertising stickers/signs Partners could display to show their membership in the Cultural District.

The Committee then discussed some other ideas, such as encouraging the Partners to support one another with cross-promotional discounts for customers of one Partner to use at another Partner’s business, before discussing which members would want to work in each of the three subcommittees. Ms. Adams expressed interest in the Goals and Grants subcommittee, and said she would have difficulty finding time to work in Partner Management. Mr. Barrett had interest in the Partner Management and the marketing subcommittees, but not in the Goals and Grants, and he wants to see more activity around Downtown. Ms. Adams said she believed the activities of the subcommittees would start to overlap with one another. As such, she would be okay with helping with the newsletter or social media part of Marketing whilst being part of the Goals and Grants subcommittee, but she does not want to try taking on any more than one responsibility of another subcommittee. Vice Chair LoPresti said he is fine with Committee members working on parts of other subcommittees, but they need someone working on each task for all three subcommittees and being a driving force for getting things done in regards to that responsibility. Dr. Carlucci said having more contributors to the newsletter would bring more energy to it, and that more could be done to promote upcoming events and CDC presence at Partners’ events. Vice Chair LoPresti said he believed Ms. Trahan would be helpful on the Partnership Management subcommittee with Ms. Botelho to connect in person with Partners, to which Ms. Trahan said she agreed and could find time to fulfill the tasks of the subcommittee. Vice Chair LoPresti continued and stated Mr. Timmons could help the Marketing subcommittee with his social media experience as well as improve the website, to which Mr. Timmons agreed and added that Marketing is always better when it is collaborative. Mr. Timmons added he would want to have a meeting with Mr. Barrett to brainstorm.

Dr. Carlucci said she would like to work in the Marketing subcommittee and also help Ms. Adams in Grants, but reduce her role in the newsletter to contributing and not being in charge of it.

She added that she did not see education on the list of tasks handles by all three of the subcommittees, despite education about the Cultural District being talked about as something the Committee wanted to expand upon in past meetings. The Cultural District has a strong education component K-12 teaching in the arts, and Dr. Carlucci does not want to lose that education thread. The schools, the museums, Dean College, library, FPSMA all have art

education that can help and be helped by the Cultural District, but are not being supported as much as they could be. Vice Chair LoPresti added Educational Assets (FHS, Dean College Library, etc.) to the list of Partner Management responsibilities.

-Vice Chair LoPresti then reviewed the list for the subcommittees to have Ms. Trahan and Ms. Botelho in Partner Management;

-Mr. Barrett, Mr. Timmons, Dr. Carlucci, Vice Chair LoPresti and Ms. Adams (both as a secondary responsibility) in Marketing;

-and Ms. Adams, Dr. Carlucci, and Vice Chair LoPresti in Goals and Grants.

Ms. Trahan stated this was a necessary new approach and it is a good time to try with the start of a new year upcoming. Mr. Sherlock commented and offered to help with Marketing, specifically the integration of the community calendar with Franklin Matters T.V./Radio, to which Vice Chair LoPresti reminded everyone of Stephen's work in the ArtWALK on their Marketing subcommittee. Mr. Sherlock told the Committee to expect activity on the community calendar to increase next year as people continue opening back up from the pandemic and Franklin Matters works to create a more comprehensive schedule of upcoming events.

Vice Chair LoPresti concluded by suggesting the Committee try out this subcommittee structure for the next several months and familiarize the new Committee members with the roles they want to help in. Dr. Carlucci reiterated her desire to see someone else take charge of the newsletter. Ms. Trahan proposed a meeting where other Committee members learn from Dr. Carlucci what exactly she does for the newsletter. Mr. Sherlock proposed changing the newsletter to a blog, as the Committee would benefit from the automation and Mr. Sherlock has noticed an increase in reader activity since starting his blog. Ms. Trahan and Dr. Carlucci liked the idea of small daily updates to a blog instead of using a large single amount of time to set up a newsletter each month. There was also consensus that a workshop event for teaching everyone what Dr. Carlucci does for the newsletter would be worthwhile. Vice Chair LoPresti said he would set up a workshop meeting, and Mr. Taberner reminded him that meeting would have to be open if there was a majority of Committee members attending it. Vice Chair LoPresti proposed that, first, there be a meeting with Dr. Carlucci, Vice Chair LoPresti, and Mr. Sherlock that would not be open because it has less than a majority of members; later there will be an open meeting to allow more members and anyone else who wants to learn about the newsletter to attend.

Franklin Cultural Council Grant Update

Dr. Carlucci let the Committee know that the grants are being reviewed by the Franklin Cultural Council at the moment. Sometime in January the Committee should hear from them. Mr. Taberner told the Committee that the MCC District Grant has received five grant applications so far, all of which are related to ArtWALK.

Xpressions Enrichment wants to have classes during ArtWALK, and are looking for \$700 to pay for thirty-five adults and children to take the class.

The Franklin Art Association would like tents with sides, tent weights, and display easels, so they can transport and display their art more easily, including at the Strawberry Festival and ArtWALK. Requested funding is \$1125.

Franklin Farmers Market sent in an application, but did not specify how many individual performances they wanted and have not yet returned Mr. Taberner's inquiry into that number. It appears they want weekly performances, but those events would start in June and the grant expires at the end of June, so the four weeks they have performances are the only weeks they should get funding. Requested funding is \$1600.

It was later clarified that the Franklin Farmers Market is only requesting \$1000 at most.

Franklin School Department/Ammaya Dance & Drum Group would like to do three full days of performances involving all five K-5 schools, as well as a performance at ArtWALK. Fulfilling this request would take \$5800 of the \$7500 grant, but letting them do a one-day performance with just two schools would take \$1500 and \$2800 if they are also funded for ArtWALK.

LiveARTS would like to hold an event at the Museum during ArtWALK and need \$650 for their event.

MCC Cultural District Grant Focus Discussion

Mr. Taberner stated that everyone's performances/events could be funded if the Franklin Farmers Market performance was funded for one day and two schools only, with some money left over. He also mentioned that the Committee receives \$1000 each year and has that funding available to add to the \$7500 to sponsor Partners. Ms. Trahan said that she would recuse herself from any vote concerning the Franklin Farmers Market due to a possible conflict of interest. Ms. Adams asked for clarification if the Franklin Farmers Market had also applied to the FCC grant for the past year, as she noticed the possibility that they might be receiving double grants by performing after the 2022 grants become available, but before the 2021 grants expire. The Committee then continued to discuss which grants funds could be allocated for when, as well as possibility of funding all of the events and finding the needed additional funding elsewhere. Dr. Carlucci suggested Vice Chair LoPresti contact the Director of Music and Performing Arts for the Franklin Schools and see if they can perform with all of the schools across all three days and ArtWALK, and then make up the difference in funding with their own funds. Vice Chair LoPresti asked if a date for ArtWALK had been settled upon, to which it was answered that June 10 through June 12 are the days of the event. Mr. Taberner then reviewed the requested funds in comparison to available funds, and expressed hope that the Committee could distribute as much as possible to as many events as possible. Vice Chair LoPresti said he would prefer instead to first look at marketing opportunities that he and Mr. Timmons had discussed that could expand funding. Mr. Taberner replied that funding does not have to be allocated this meeting, and that the situation could change for people to require different amounts of funding.

Vice Chair LoPresti suggested the Committee wait before voting on any allocation of funds and think about it. Dr. Carlucci suggested that FSD/Ammaya Dance and Drums be asked to review their request to see if they need the actual amount they have requested and if they could find places where they could save on money. The Committee then agreed to wait on allocating funds and instead make it an agenda item for the January 20, 2022 Cultural District Committee meeting. Ms. Trahan suggested having it be the only item on the agenda because it will be a lengthy discussion and may need to continue being discussed after the Partners meeting. Mr. Taberner said he could have the MCC Cultural District grant application submitted in the next twenty-four hours, and the application will be worded so that the Committee can distribute funds where they see fit between now and January 20, 2022.

Next Cultural District Meeting Date

January 20, 2022 6:30 PM

Cultural District Partners Meeting

January 20, 2022 7:00 PM

Additional Comments

Adjourn

Ms. Trahan motioned to close the meeting, seconded by Dr. Carlucci. Ms. Trahan voted yes; Dr. Carlucci voted yes; Mr. Barrett voted yes; Ms. Adams voted yes; Vice Chair LoPresti Committee voted yes; Committee voted 5-0-0 to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Paslaski
Administrative Assistant