

**Franklin Cultural District Committee
Minutes of Meeting
April 13, 2023
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: Co-Chairs Roberta Trahan and Dr. Pandora Carlucci, Vice Chair John LoPresti, Clerk Katherine Botelho,

Members not present: Amy Adams

Also in attendance: Bryan Taberner, Planning and Community Development Director; Stephen Sherlock, Franklin Matters; Marc Arentsen, Pippin

Upon achieving quorum with the required minimum of members present, Ms. Trahan opened the meeting at 7:03 PM

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair LoPresti motioned to approve the February 9, 2023 meeting minutes.

Seconded by Dr. Carlucci. Vice Chair LoPresti voted yes; Ms. Botelho voted yes; Dr. Carlucci voted yes; Ms. Trahan voted yes. Motion to accept passed 4-0-0.

Vice Chair LoPresti motioned to approve the February 22, 2023 meeting minutes.

Seconded by Dr. Carlucci. Vice Chair LoPresti voted yes; Ms. Botelho voted yes; Dr. Carlucci voted yes; Ms. Trahan voted yes. Motion to accept passed 4-0-0.

Artsy Box Project, Call for Artists

Vice Chair LoPresti asked Mr. Taberner for an update on the priming of the boxes that would be painted on by artists. Mr. Taberner answered that they hope to have all of the boxes painted done at latest by Monday April 17. Mr. Taberner added that he would be off the following week, so Town Planner Amy Love would be the person communicating with the painter. The painter has been asked to inform her of when he is finished painting the boxes, and Ms. Love will in turn notify the Committee.

Ms. Trahan and Vice Chair LoPresti noted that a delay would be alright, but Vice Chair LoPresti clarified that the main reason for why they had wanted the boxes ready for painting by that point was so that the student painters would be on their school vacation week and thus have more availability to do their work.

Vice Chair LoPresti then provided an update on the artists themselves, saying that they generally seemed excited for the project. The artists have been receiving some direction from the Committee and Mr. Taberner, and they have started sending their information and invoices to him for the upcoming work. Mr. Sherlock has agreed to document the event, which Vice Chair LoPresti thinks will be great to show local artists' work to the public in Franklin. What Mr. Sherlock is going to do is interview the artists to learn about their inspiration for the painting and document the course of their work over time, and it should be a great way to attract more artists

to the Cultural District going forward. Mr. Sherlock elaborated that he has talked with two artists already, and has further interviews scheduled for the coming days as he tries to work with their schedules. The interviews thus far have been short, so Mr. Sherlock will probably package them together in one combined piece, instead of keeping each interview separate. Mr. Sherlock ended by saying he will keep the Committee updated. Vice Chair LoPresti thanked Mr. Sherlock and reiterated that it would be a great project for the community. Vice Chair LoPresti continued by saying that he and Ms. Adams would also be documenting the progress of the painting, and then brought up the subject of the priming cost of at least \$1,200. Since \$2,000 had been budgeted for the priming and it appeared that there would be a sizable amount leftover, they were considering offering it to one of the artists who was interested but unable to be approved. Dr. Carlucci remarked that idea is a possibility that the Committee can keep in mind and address if the opportunity is there. Vice Chair LoPresti added that he did not want to leave fund unspent, which Ms. Trahan assured they would not. Mr. Sherlock noted that he would be creating a Google Photo Album as he surveys the work being done by the artists that the Committee, and that would help with tracking progress and enabling collaboration. Mr. Sherlock also mentioned the efforts to create and promote a hashtag, and Vice Chair LoPresti answered that he and Ms. Adams had agreed that it would be #artsybox2023 and it would be another way to promote the work and progress of the Artsy Boxes.

MetroWest Arts & Culture Symposium

Dr. Carlucci briefed the Committee on how the Symposium went, saying it had been a success. She mentioned how it had been one of many collaborations with the Franklin Cultural Council, as well as been joined by Dean College. Eighty people registered, and fifty people attended with positive feedback. The speakers spoke of and address the intersection of arts and culture with the economy, as did the attendees. One presenter has told Dr. Carlucci that people who attended have continued to reach out to them, which they appreciated because it brings them closer to different communities. Attendees came from all over, from MetroWest to Rhode Island all the way up to Newburyport. Dr. Carlucci will be sending out an email link to a recording of the Symposium, including posting on social media so that it is shared throughout town. She added that she thinks it is another way of expanding the reach of the message of the Committee, especially since many of the presenters talked in depth about Cultural Districts. Dr. Carlucci asked the Committee members what their thoughts were, to which Vice Chair LoPresti remarked that Kaye Kelly had done a wonderful job in MC'ing the panel and keeping it going. He also noted that one of the attendees was from North Attleboro where they do not have a cultural district but are thinking of starting one, and he had a conversation with her to help provide insight and offered for her to attend one of Franklin' Cultural District Committee Meetings. The Symposium was a great opportunity for people to meet and discuss these sort of matters. Vice Chair LoPresti said he had also explained to the attendee from North Attleboro that the process for setting up a Cultural District and a Cultural District Committee is a longer, more complicated process than one might assume. Dr. Carlucci remarked that Cultural Districts as a program only began as recently as around 2011, then the MCC visited Franklin in 2013, festivals were held throughout 2015 to 2019 when Franklin's Cultural District was finally recognized. However, Dr. Carlucci wonders if, now that there are over 55 cultural districts, that the MCC is learning and speeding up that process. Mr. Taberner weighed in to say he believes an aspiring cultural district can get organized much quicker now with the help of other Cultural Districts, which Ms. Trahan said she agreed with.

Mr. Taberner added that setting up the partnership was the most major part of the process, and other towns aspiring to establish cultural districts are usually in that part of it.

Ms. Trahan said she thought there were many good discussions on the return on investment of having someone at the town level working on behalf of a cultural district. Ms. Botelho

commented that the Symposium had run for just the right amount of time to give everyone a chance to speak while not lasting too long to take up an unnecessary amount of people's time.

Ms. Trahan agreed and thanked Ms. Botelho for pointing it out, and added that people seemed to appreciate the Symposium being held on a weekday rather than a weekend to attend where

people would have to sacrifice their free time to attend. Dr. Carlucci emphasized the effect of having a musical performance at the start of both Symposiums that have taken place so far, in

that they allow attendees to transition mentally from outside of the event to becoming

completely immersed in it. She thanked Marc Arentsen of Pippin for his part in this year's music performance, to which Marc said he was happy to see an emerging generation become involved in this as his students had and thanked the Committee for sharing the Symposium with them.

Ms. Trahan said the performance set the tone for the whole evening and it was wonderful. Marc

made a comment that what he thinks was a huge takeaway from the Symposium was the community-building aspect of it, and everyone was there to create synergy, learn, and share,

and not just there for themselves. Marc added that everyone should be encouraged by the feedback they received and use it for their next endeavors.

MCC CDI Grant update

Dr. Carlucci briefed the Committee by reminding everyone of where their funds stand. The Artsy Box project is using \$7,000 of the \$15,000 CDI Grant. Some of the artists have invoiced while others have not. The Farmer's Market has been awarded \$750, but an invoice has not yet been received. Mr. Taberner said that, as long as invoices are sent to him by the end of June, it should be okay. Dr. Carlucci considered whether or not they should send a reminder of that to every recipient of the grant funds. Mr. Taberner said that they have not yet received invoices from most of the grant recipients, but the ones received have been paid.

Dr. Carlucci then asked the Committee about a proposal from Dave Burnham of LiveArts to perform in the Mural Room of the Franklin Public Library. The Library does not allow performances during business hours, so LiveArts asked if the Committee could speak with them on performing at a time slot from 5:00pm to 6:00pm on a day. They would likely need to pay custodial fees, but Dr. Carlucci wanted to run the idea by the rest of the Committee. Vice Chair LoPresti voiced his opinion that it would be a great idea, as did Ms. Trahan. Dr. Carlucci added that the funds needed to pay the custodians for helping out in off hours would probably not be too high, but they want to make sure that the custodians are paid for their help.

Dr. Carlucci then moved on to discuss Town Councilor Cobi Frongillo's Black Box Movie Night Series. Three movies would be shown the last Tuesday of the month for April, May and June.

Dr. Carlucci then said there would be a \$5 admission fee to go in and see the movie, to which

Ms. Trahan and Vice Chair LoPresti said that they had thought the purpose of their grant was to ensure there would not be an admission fee for those who wanted to go. Dr. Carlucci said she had seen there was an admission fee when she read about it on a post on All About Franklin.

Vice Chair LoPresti and Ms. Trahan said that was not what the Committee had agreed upon when they approve the allocation of funds to the event. Mr. Taberner suggested that, if Cobi

were to change it to a \$5 dollar donation and have those donations go towards paying for a fourth month of film nights after the first three free ones, that might be the better thing to do. If it

is a moneymaking deal for anyone however, then that is not what the Committee is trying to do.

Vice Chair LoPresti offered to reach out to Cobi to discuss the matter. Ms. Botelho reiterated

that the Committee had not gotten the impression that anyone attending the movie nights would be charged at the time they had approved the grant funding.

Dr. Carlucci then moved onto the matter of telling four other Partners that they need to send their invoices to the Committee; Franklin Farmers Market, Franklin Public Library, the Kennedy School, and the Downtown Partnership. Dr. Carlucci said she would reach out to the Kennedy School, while Ms. Trahan offered to contact the Farmers Market and the Downtown Partnership, and Ms. Botelho would speak with the Library. Ms. Trahan also brought up the FPAC Scavenger Hunt, which has been scheduled for Sunday June 4, and Ms. Trahan would contact them about their invoice.

Vice Chair LoPresti then brought up some news that the Downtown Partnership had hired a social media liaison to help with their outreach and marketing, which made him wonder if some of the grant funding could be used by the Cultural District Committee to do the same for themselves. He also suggested that the Downtown Partnership might be willing to share the liaison, who Ms. Trahan said is named Ann Parker. Vice Chair LoPresti said he would reach out to Lisa Piana of the Downtown Partnership to find out if Ann would have availability and if the Downtown Partnership would be okay with her also helping the Committee.

Dr. Carlucci asked Mr. Taberner if the funds left in the budget are eligible to be used for payroll expenses in this capacity. Mr. Taberner said they would be paying a consultant/contractor, and it would be fine and he would make sure all the correct processes that the Town requires are followed. This would include the possibility of needing Ann to be insured. Vice Chair LoPresti responded that he would continue getting more information from the Downtown Partnership for Mr. Taberner. Dr. Carlucci remarked that it would be good for showing another level of collaboration between the Committee and the Downtown Partnership.

Strawberry Stroll Participation

Dr. Carlucci briefed the Committee that the Strawberry Stroll would be on June 9, from 4:00pm to 8:00pm, with a rain date of June 10. The Committee has reached out to the Cultural Council and invited them to share a booth at the event, which a tentative hold has been placed on. Dr. Carlucci said that it is a chance to teach everyone about the Cultural District and its mission. Vice Chair LoPresti said that he would be away and thus unavailable for the event. Dr. Carlucci continued saying that having the Cultural Council would be good for showing a united collaborative relationship to people. Ms. Trahan said she would know where to go to retrieve the Committee's supplies for the event. Mr. Taberner said that the Planning Department would be helping to set up at the event by the time the Committee members going to it arrive. He added that he would be at a booth showcasing the Master Plan. Dr. Carlucci commented that she would try to make sure the Committee's booth is close by to the Master Plan showcase, and added that people need to learn more about Master Plans and what goes into them. Mr. Taberner said there would be basic examples of what a Master Plan is, including those from the 2013 Master Plan.

CDC Budget Update

Mr. Taberner presented the Committee's budget, which included a breakdown of its funding and expenditures. In addition to the \$15,000 2023 MCC CDI Grant, there was \$2,528.75 in rollover funds from the fiscal year 2022. Mr. Taberner added that he had uncovered additional unspent funds totaling \$1,000 from previous years, to bring the total funds of the Committee to \$18,528.75. There are not any additional funds expected this fiscal year. Mr. Taberner then broke down the expense and uses of funding so far spent in the 2023 fiscal year, which included funds allocated to Partners as well as the reimbursement of expenses incurred by Committee

Members for purchases of supplies made on behalf of the Committee. The expenses totaled out to \$17,229.19 leaving the Committee with a remaining balance of \$1,299.56 that could be rolled over to the next fiscal year if the Committee wished to. There was no remaining funds from the \$1,000 provided annually by the Town. The Committee continued its discussion of what options it had to use or allocate the remaining funds towards. Dr. Carlucci emphasized that it had been a surprise the past year for the Committee to receive \$15,000 from the Cultural Council, and similarly the Committee does not know how much additional funds it could receive in the next year, if any. She added that the Committee had been very thoughtful on how the funds were allocated.

Collaborative Opportunities

Dr. Carlucci spoke about how the Symposium had brought about discussions of applying for grants jointly, instead of independently. The Committee has received an email from Stacey David at the Metrowest Boston Visitors Bureau (MBVB) that they have a small mini-grant available to be applied to, however the applications are due within three days and the timeline would be difficult for the Committee. Dr. Carlucci wants the Committee to think about any future such grant opportunities ahead of time, so they might have time and a plan for reaching out and collaborating with the Downtown Partnership, Cultural Council, Dean College, the Historical Museum, or anyone else where there is an opportunity to benefit from working together. Vice Chair LoPresti said Dr. Carlucci had a great idea, and added that being interconnected with Partners and other groups makes it important to look for ways to work together when there are synergies.

Ms. Trahan also agreed, and remarked that it sometimes feels like the Committee drifts from one event to another, and because the members are all frequently busy they do not always give time to thinking about what else it can do. She added that she would be attending a listening session on April 28 at the Franklin Public Library, and she is anxious to hear what thoughts come out there because they might in turn provide the Committee with inspiration.

Dr. Carlucci said this would all be for thinking in the long-term, and being proactive by seeing what is out there for opportunities. Lily Rivera had reached out to Dr. Carlucci about the possibility of having a column in the Newsletter where artists could share what they personally are doing, and that could create more interest in the Newsletter.

Vice Chair LoPresti brought up that the other type of collaboration the Committee needs to work on is with Partners, but he cannot think of any new ways or strategies to promote Partner collaboration that they have not already tried. Ms. Trahan and Dr. Carlucci agreed with him, and Dr. Carlucci asking Partner Marc Arentsen if there was anything he could think of that would be him feel more welcomed to meet and work with the Committee. Marc responded that he did not believe it was a matter of not feeling welcomed, but for him it is a matter of timing. For Marc to pencil meetings with the Committee into his calendar is challenging to fit in with the rest of his schedule. However, Marc recommended being consistent and persistent with contacting people to get them to attend the meetings. Discussion continued on how and why the Committee might not be seeing the amount of guest attendance as it wished to see, with a point being made that the pandemic had left lasting effects on meetings and gatherings that still had not yet gone away. Vice Chair LoPresti mentioned that the idea of a guest speaker had been previously proposed, to which Marc said that even 5-10 minute presentations from guests and Partners on their work might increase engagement and interest in coming to the meetings. Vice Chair LoPresti added that people might even attend because they are interested in the guest speaker themselves rather than the topic. Marc asked if, in terms of collaborations and so forth, if there is a roadmap or annual calendar of events that are more like meetings and presentations than

things like the Strawberry Stroll. Dr. Carlucci answered that they did not have a broad landscape calendar, before continuing by saying how the Franklin Town calendar has a habit of becoming densely populated with activities mere weeks before said activities are scheduled for. When she puts together the Newsletter, Dr. Carlucci visits all of the different websites and pages she knows of to find out what things are happening and where, but with a little work they could make something like the calendar, because they have the sources bookmarked. Marc thanked Dr. Carlucci for putting together the Newsletter and added that he knows it is hard work.

Next Cultural District Meeting Dates

May 11, 2023 7:00 PM

June 8, 2023 7:00 PM

Additional Comments

Dr. Carlucci expressed hope that the Committee could find ways to meet in person, but would have to make sure their meetings were still broadcast virtually, where ever they would be held. Mr. Taberner responded that the Committee would just need to connect the Town's broadcasting equipment into the building the Committee chose for a meeting. For Partner meetings, Vice Chair LoPresti suggested the Committee start with meeting at the Franklin Municipal Building before trying other locations. Mr. Taberner also mentioned how the Committee had considered hosting a meeting at Dean College in years past, but Dean College had wanted a liability document signed by the Town to meet there, which the previous Administrator Jeff Nutting had been reluctant to sign. So, the Committee would likely have to contact Dean again about the possibility. Mr. Taberner then brought the conversation back to the need to entice people and Partners to attend the meetings, and how they still need to work on that issue.

Adjourn

Ms. Trahan motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Vice Chair LoPresti. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:21 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Paslaski
Administrative Assistant