

Franklin Cultural District Committee
Partners Meeting
Minutes of Meeting
January 11, 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 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, John LoPresti, Pandora Carlucci, Roberta Trahan, Jamie Barrett, Evan Chelman, Amy Adams.

Culture District Committee Members Absent: None.

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: Ken Norman, Franklin Public Radio; Steve Sherlock, Franklin Matters; Becca Rausch, State Senator; Lisa Piana, Franklin Downtown Partnership; Bob Vozzella, La Cantina Winery; Jane Curran; Athena Pandolf, Executive Director Natick Center Cultural District.

Welcome and Partner Introductions

Chair Schoen opened the meeting at 7:03 PM and welcomed everyone.

Newsletter

Chair Schoen stated that there were 117 newsletter subscribers in June; there are currently 180 subscribers. She thanked everyone who sent in articles to support this initiative. She said they are including a little less in the newsletter itself and providing links within the newsletter to access additional information. She explained that the Mass Cultural Council (MCC) finalized their FY21 budget and every cultural district in Massachusetts is eligible for a \$7,500 grant. She thanked Sen. Rausch and the legislators for making this happen. She noted a workshop is being held this Thursday regarding the grant opportunity. It is a short timeline, and there are stipulations for the grant. The application is due by February 19th, the money must be spent by June 30th, and the final report to the MCC is due by July 12th. She stated the Committee is excited about working with the partners to support arts and culture in Franklin.

FCD Data Reporting Forms

Chair Schoen discussed that the Cultural District has an obligation with the State to collect data annually with the goal of tracking who is coming to the Cultural District events and where they are from. Mr. Taberner reviewed the data collection forms and the basic information about each event that needs to be collected. Mr. Chelman explained that the forms are located on the website. He reviewed the process of filling out the forms and submitting them online to the Committee. Ms. Trahan said the forms can be completed and submitted once yearly, but she recommended it may be easier for partners to submit the forms more often. Mr. Taberner reviewed the four forms: Dining and Drinking, Retail and Personal Services, Events and Performances, and Educational Programs. He discussed the information being requested on each form. He explained the intent is that there is a partners' section on the website where the forms are located.

Mr. Vozzella stated he thinks this is a great idea. There was never a good way to collect the data, and this is a straightforward way of entering the data. Chair Schoen thanked everyone for their work on the forms. Ms. Trahan stated the next step is to involve Ms. Tracey to get this on the website. Mr. Taberner requested getting this live by February 1st. He suggested sending partners communication about this and asking partners to submit their data forms from January 1, 2021. Ms. Trahan suggested sending a letter to partners explaining the need for the forms and how to use them. Chair Schoen asked Ms. Pandolf how they get the information from their partners in Natick; it is an expectation for the partners to fill in the forms. Ms. Trahan noted that she has spoken to Mr. Alan Mercer of The Black Box about the importance of completing these forms.

Town of Franklin Economic Development Subcommittee Business Listening & Networking Sessions

Mr. Taberner stated that the Town has been conducting their listening sessions. The last session will be held this Wednesday at 6:30 PM on the topic of construction and housing. The information will be used for outreach and attracting the right businesses; there are a lot of purposes for this type of networking session. The meeting link is available on the Town's website and calendar.

Guest Speaker Athena Pandolf, Executive Director Natick Center Cultural District

Chair Schoen welcomed Ms. Pandolf and reviewed her background and education. Ms. Pandolf said that when she thinks about Natick and the success they have, it comes down to partnerships. Things are only successful in a cultural district if the partnerships are successful. She relies on her community partners a lot. She reviewed some of her partnerships including Recreations and Parks, DPW, merchants, and artists. She explained that if they were not able to do things alongside these people and groups, they could not benefit the town as much. She stated that when they partner with groups, it is important for the group to have a clear vision of their mission and what goals the group is trying to reach. When one organization is not clear in what they want to do, they can get overpowered by another organization that knows what they want to do. She reviewed that the Natick Center Association is the non-profit organization in Natick that runs the cultural district. They created a clear vision. This created a unified group which is important when partnering. She said patience and transformative collaboration takes time. She provided an example that she has had the most success lately with someone who was the most difficult in the beginning. Overtime, shared goals and visions bring people together. As well, learning from mistakes and seeing them as outcomes that were different than expected is good; it is good to take chances. She suggested that sometimes, it is the wrong fit but try it to see if it works. Learn from mistakes and do not stop taking chances. She stated that the Franklin Cultural District has a good partnership with the Downtown Partnership. She stated that building a name for the Cultural District with the website and newsletter and figuring out how to partner with businesses is good; it takes a lot of time. She noted that it is good to have an organization that has all kinds of points of view. She reviewed that they have had some small setbacks in Natick, but they realize what things would and would not work for Natick. They work with what they have. She suggested to go with what you have and capitalize on it; know the strengths and cultural inventories that you have that delineates you from other cultural districts. She explained that the partnerships in Natick that they have with the local artist community has helped them. She stated that it is wonderful that culture has a great way to bring people together through art and partnerships.

Questions/Discussion

Chair Schoen noted that on the Natick website there is a list of events that they have sponsored and asked how did they get those going. Ms. Pandolf reviewed some of the events that they have started themselves, as well as events that they have partnered with others such as Natick Days which involves their collaboration with the Recreation and Parks Department. This event is a way for the non-profits in town to get exposure in the community. She reviewed some of the other groups they

have partnered with and the associated events. She explained that for some of the events they may have non-profit groups provide food for the events just to get exposure and give people information. She reviewed different ways to partner. She discussed that many of the events that are held are their own events; the Natick Cultural District holds their own events about once a month. Therefore, about half of the events on the district list are solely Cultural District events. Mr. LoPresti asked about fundraising. Ms. Pandolf said they have a contract with the Town of Natick and receive \$80,000 annually as a non-profit, they receive money from the membership fees, and they have an annual fundraiser which raises about \$12,000. As well, they receive grants from the MCC and private donations from the local banks. Mr. LoPresti asked for the makeup of the committee members on their board of directors. Ms. Pandolf said there are about 14 members: artists, merchants, downtown property owners, a member of the Cultural Council, and Town staff members. She stated they alert the town to the concerns that merchants may have. Mr. Steve Sherlock noted that as Ms. Pandolf mentioned, patience and consistency are important. He noted that Natick's organization is a non-profit. The Franklin Cultural District Committee is a committee of the government; as such, they are structured differently. However, they both build partnerships. Ms. Pandolf said they are separate, but she does have close relationships with the town departments. She said the partnership aspect is key. Ms. Trahan asked who is doing the work in Natick for all their events. Ms. Pandolf said that she is full time and has a few part-time people working with her. She is not doing all the work but is doing the majority of the work. However, for the partnered events, the partners do most of the work. She explained that having someone who is the point person or a full-time employee makes it easier as they become the face of the whole thing. Ms. Pandolf expressed the importance of collaboration. She stated that people will appreciate the diversity and culture and the great work that the Cultural District Committee does.

Next Partner Meeting

The next Cultural District Partners Meeting is Monday, May 17, 2021, at 7:00 PM.

Chair Schoen thanked everyone for their hard work.

Adjourn

With no further discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Trahan to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Mr. LoPresti; voted and approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary