

Minutes – December 20, 2021 – BRC on Arts & Nonprofits

Russ called the meeting to order at 12:02 pm.

Members in attendance: Russ Grazier, Courtney Perkins, Robin Albert, Kathy Somssich, Nihco Gallo.

Members attending remotely: Barbara Massar, Tina Sawtelle, Beth Falconer, Renee Giffroy.

Non-members in attendance: Ben VanCamp, Nancy Carmer.

Non-members attending remotely: Stephanie Seacord.

As there was not an in-person quorum, acceptance of the last meeting's minutes was not possible.

It was announced that this was the last scheduled meeting of the BRC on Arts & Nonprofits. However, interest in continuing this committee has been expressed by members of the new incoming City Council. A summary of the BRC's Year End Report will be presented tonight (12/20) at the City Council meeting. [Note: The full report is posted on the BRC webpage: <https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/city/brc-arts-nonprofits>]

A discussion of the process by which members of this Blue Ribbon Committee will choose to continue or end their tenure followed. It is assumed that members who are leaving the committee will be able to recommend others from their art, culture or history nonprofit organizations to replace them. However, the ultimate decision of who is on the committee remains with the mayor.

Russ took this opportunity to thank the members of the committee with whom it was an "honor to work." Further gratitude was expressed to Russ and Barbara for their leadership and to Nancy and Stephanie for their invaluable help.

Artist Relief Grants

Nihco reported that the subcommittee (Nihco, Courtney, and Nancy) met on Monday and reviewed their proposal for individual artist grants. Their next steps are to get it to the City Manager and present it to the City Council by the end of February or early March. The budget remains at \$16,500 for 10 grants at \$1500 each, and \$1500 for a paid administrator. The key point is to promote inclusivity and diversity on the panel which will award the grants and also of the artists who will be the recipients of the grants. Grants will be radius-based and will not be awarded to Portsmouth residents only, but to those artists who impact Portsmouth's art scene, regardless of residence. He emphasized that the panel will not commission new public art but will review art that is already done based on merit and impact, will promote potential projects in the future, will create something that engages the community and will encourage the possibility of future funding. Although this proposal is not a relief program, economic need might be a consideration. He foresees the panel being a combination of sub-committee members, artists, and members of arts organizations.

Russ mentioned that the BRC on Arts and Nonprofits will ask the City Council for 4% of the ARPA funds that Portsmouth is receiving instead of an itemized list of suggested projects such as the \$16,500.

Nancy reminded the committee that because the ARPA funds come to the city, city personnel must be involved in the approval and distribution of the funds as per city ordinance.

Marketing

Ben reported that the marketing campaign will have a March roll-out to accommodate Spring messaging promoting the upcoming arts season. The PR component, led by Martha Sullivan/Sullivan Communications (the Chamber's destination marketing PR agency), will start first, targeting media visits starting in February. Sullivan and Darci Creative plan to conduct a series of in-person/zoom meetings with performance venues, galleries and organizations to identify key messages and examples of Portsmouth's arts, culture and history. In the short term they are seeking images and videos that can be used on the marketing platforms such as GoPortsmouthNH.com and for pitching media. The Chamber will coordinate media visits: lodging, meals, performance tickets and visits to artists' studios and arts venues. These visits will include schools, individual artists, and small performance spaces.

AFTA Study

Robin announced a Zoom meeting for participating organizations on January 26 at 10 am to discuss the AFTA plan and hold a Q & A session. The meeting and Zoom link will be on the calendar on the City website. There will be two orientation and training sessions: February 23 in person at the Portsmouth Public Library and on February 24 as a zoom repeat on how to conduct the survey and submit information to AFTA. Nancy reminded the committee that the City has already transmitted \$6000 to AFTA to undertake the survey, analyze the data and prepare a report and has budgeted the fee for an AFTA speaker to travel to Portsmouth to present the report. The City Manager has approved the budget to hire a project manager for 200 hours. There will be other small expenses such as brochures, refreshments, ID buttons for those conducting the survey.

Russ and Barbara have used information from the last AFTA survey in the Year-End Report and a request of funds for this project should be the easiest ask due to the importance of the data it provides.

It is not known whether the City Council will make any decisions about funding at tonight's City Council meeting. The next years are critical because federal funds for COVID relief won't be available.

Additional Topics

Courtney brought up the recent demonstrations by 12 to 15 neo-Nazis at Seacoast Repertory Theatre in protest of SRT's production of a family-friendly show featuring a performer in drag. Courtney expressed her dismay at this demonstration and recommends that all of us be aware of this hatred in our midst. Russ reiterated our commitment to access, equity, diversity, and inclusion at all of our venues and organizations all over the state, country and world and noted that the demonstration elicited a lot of support and donations for SRT.

Barbara reported, in a similar vein, that despite the destruction of ice sculptures in Dover, Pro Portsmouth will have ice sculptures and fireworks for First Night Portsmouth this year.

Russ adjourned the meeting at 12:55.

Submitted by Kathleen Somssich