

Minutes – March 21, 2022 -- Portsmouth Arts and Nonprofits Committee

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

Members in attendance: Barbara Massar, Russ Grazier, Jason Goodrich, Tina Sawtelle, Renee Giffroy, Councilor Kate Cook, Genevieve Aichele, Beth Falconer, Remotely: Renee Giffroy, Robin Albert, JerriAnne Boggis. Not present: Larry Yerdon, Martha Fuller Clark, Courtney Perkins, Nihco Gallo.

Non-members in attendance: Nancy Carmer, Sean Clancy, Ben Van Camp, Stephanie Seacord (recording secretary).
Guests: Mayor McEachern, Assistant Mayor Kelley.

Mayor McEachern – Wanted to take a moment to that you for serving on this committee and apologize for not making the first meeting in February. I am very happy to work with this committee. It's a bright spot coming out of COVID and will carry on as a standing committee as the Governance Committee is about to recommend.

Arts and non-profits are integral to what we do in Portsmouth.

Growing up, I thought every community had a committee like this or a way to support that part of 'paying your rent on this earth' -- supporting the arts, like paying your mortgage -- was part of everyone's responsibility. I took it for granted. But now I know this is what makes Portsmouth special. Arts and non-profits are the line in the sand we wouldn't give up. As my Dad said (or repeated), "At the end of history, people are remembered by the wars we fought and the arts we built."

I am proud that Portsmouth is known for the arts and proud to be part of a city that focuses on our non-profits so completely and understands the impact they make on other people. When I briefed the new City Council I told them the hardest part of the job might be being questioned, the inconvenience of having to be available all the time but that they are giving up every other Monday night and lots of time in between because the goal is to serve the community.

Non profits who help Portsmouth educate, broaden horizons, bring us together and show our harder truths are all thinking of others and how to serve them.

As Sean and Nancy know, and for this committee it goes without saying, but I want to emphasize the direct economic impact the arts and non-profits have on every person in Portsmouth.

Every time we put up an arch, or create something like the African Burying Ground Memorial we create a reflection on our history and how we grow. That all speaks for what kind of community we are – drawing in other walks of life.

Being "The City of the Open Door" speaks to a good way of thinking about ourselves. Doors don't stay open. They need to be held open, propped open, forced open to keep the door open to others. It's our city motto that this Arts & Non-profits Committee represents.

Russ: We very much appreciate your and the City Council's support for this committee and the cultural plan. We have a wonderful group assembled to do the work at hand. A seat at the table for arts, culture and history is critically important and the plan is necessary to keep it going for the next generation.

Mayor: The cultural plan is a way to envision the city. We know we can't solve every problem, but we, the residents solve our own problems. The government is us. In terms of City Hall and the Cultural Plan -- any assistance we can provide to make it easier for organizations to solve our problems, to give small organizations an easier path of entry in finding grants so the leaders are not spending all your time writing grants – you have our support. This City Council recognizes and will always speak to the taxpayer benefits of the arts.

Marketing

Jason and Ben reported on the status of the marketing program. The web landing page, 15 sec video and print "heART" brand icon and "Go Out Portsmouth" advertising campaign have launched. The campaign now includes a contest incentive to collect more demographic information from those visiting the site – so the campaign can be more tightly

focused in the future. Members of the committee recommended expanding the list of “most want to visit” venues to be more diverse. Both non-profit and for-profit venues are included per the City Council’s directive to the Committee. Non-Chamber members are also included although this took some extra work in setting up the website.

May want to add ‘comedy’ as an option as there is growing demand and supply.

Darci will report on the results of the campaign within 10 days after the completion of each month’s efforts, e.g. May 1 for the campaign 20 Mar – 20 Apr.

Nancy Carmer reported that she included the Committee’s funding requests (the artists grant program, artist housing) in her ARPA suggestions to the City Manager. The EDC supports those recommendations; and the public will have the opportunity to comment when the use of ARPA funds comes up for public discussion.

Other initiatives are already funded:

- AFTA survey
- Cultural Plan development

Councilor Cook reported unanimous consent by the City Council for the City Manager’s identification of funds with the flexibility to get the process started. The Arts & Nonprofits Committee hosts a special meeting, March 28 at noon in Conf Rm A and via Zoom to review the 2002 Cultural Plan with its coordinators Chris Dwyer and Ellen Fineberg. Russ noted that the 2002 plan had a long list of community focus group members and that it’s important that this be a community process so that all of the community plays a role in the result.

Beth suggested a review of best practices, other communities that have recently completed Cultural Plans. Russ is meeting with the Arts4NH coalition. The NH State Council on the Arts and UMass Amherst also have resources to be explored. Portsmouth might want to hire a facilitator.

Russ asked the Committee to consider who might take point as a chair of the Cultural Plan effort, to coordinate with the facilitator. (Chris Dwyer was the de facto chair in 2002.)

AFTA Update:

The survey is scheduled to start in May.

The AFTA committee will host and intro/Q&A session on Apr 14 at 4 pm and in-person training on May 10 or 12 at the Portsmouth Public Library, 9 am.

The committee chairs will train at the end of April and learn more about completing the survey on a device rather than paper (but still must be done in person.)

An invitation to all organizations to learn about the survey will go to all the organizations on the committee list on Mar 28, with a reminder Apr 4.

Nancy commented that AFTA is especially interested in getting a more diverse and inclusive participation.

Nancy Carmer:

Noting this was her last Arts & Nonprofits Committee meeting for Nancy before her retirement Mar 31, Robin led the committee in a round of applause and with deep appreciation for all Nancy has done for the city.

Nancy said, “You are the ones who make Portsmouth the most interesting place to be. That we are a world-class arts and culture destination is to the credit of all of you.”

Meeting adjourned at 12:50 pm.