

Watertown Public Arts and Culture Committee

Minutes, May 20, 2024

In attendance: Barbara Epstein, Matt Hanna, Liz Helfer, Archy LaSalle, Roberta Miller, Dawn Evans Scaltreto, Erin Webb, Jay Wilson, Sally Young, WCAC, Guest Michael Albano from the Watertown DPW

1. Call To Order
2. Opening Inspiration – Matt - The Watertown Porchfest took place on Saturday the 18th. Despite ominous weather forecasts, the event went forth with no rain! Over 150 bands and 70 porches, driveways, lawns and other spaces were filled with smiling, enthusiastic people enjoying the day. He remarks that our event appeared to be a much more family-centric event compared to other Porchfests he has attended, and more well attended with more musicians and venues than many other Porchfests he knows of, even ones that have been established longer. It appears that Watertown is hungry for music and these sort of events. Dawn remarked that Matt went way above and beyond in handling of the scheduling for the event, even handling changes right up until showtime. The Porchfest committee will do a post mortem, but will seek to find ways to share more of the burden of responsibility through the committee. The whole committee was wonderful, and Danielle Drapeau was really great with publicity for the event.
3. Minutes – Jay makes a motion to accept the April minutes, Archy Second, unanimous approval of the minutes.
4. Subcommittee and Project Team Reports
 - a. Outreach – Matt reports that a new bulletin is coming out this week, likely tomorrow. Councilor Gardiner reached out to Liz with positive feedback and said she would forward our bulletin to her constituents. The third Monday, June 17, at 6 pm is next meeting
 - b. Governance and Funding – Roberta reports that we received the grant from the NEA in the amount of \$20,000 to fund Expert Pairings. Liz had thought we missed the window, but received an email saying that we received the money. It means that we need to adjust our schedule for Edible Watertown. We have applied to both the Watertown Community Foundation and MCC for festival grants - we are awaiting results. We received support from Mount Auburn Cemetery for the Gorky Mural Project. WCC and PACC have both applied for funding from the Watertown Community Foundation as separate entities as well.
 - c. Murals – Liz we are about to launch the Gorky Project because we have funding from MAC. The MAC is very invested in this project – just the sort of community building project they are interested in. There will be a commemorative plaque, but we may need to be a vote on that in June. See the highlighted text in the draft call to artists. Sally moves that we accept the draft, Barbara seconds, unanimous approval.
 - d. Community Sculpture Walk – Liz reports that the opening reception was really lovely, the tuba guy was there, the artist talks were interesting and informative. There was a path clean-up on May 8, and the Story Map is fully online with lots of information. Zachariah Hickman, the Tuba Guy, really made it a parade.
 - e. Edible Watertown – The lecture series with Russ Cohen, was well attended, 17 people in attendance. We have one more coming up, co-sponsored by Watertown

Community Gardens. Rebecca McMacklin did a great talk with the technical difficulty of no video in the lecture hall at City Hall. Russ will do a Foraging Walk later in June which we will publicize as dates are set.

- i. Liz and Sally are going to every 5th grade classroom in the city next week and draw plants. The illustrations they create will be used to make garden markers for the school gardens. Sally's grandson is a 5th grader, and is drumming up enthusiasm for the project amongst his classmates. We have received a lot of cooperation and enthusiasm from the teachers and administration in the schools and throughout the community.
 - ii. Applications are done for the Middle and High School Garden Intern Program. 29 applicants came in for 10 spots in grades 7 through 12. Many students asked the science teacher to write letters of recommendation for them. Lots of good applications with diverse interest in participating – climate change, composting and more. Their applications are under review.
 - iii. Expert Pairings will replace Edible Plants in 2024 – 2025. Edible Plants for visual artists and foodies will now launch 2025 – 2026. On July 1st there will be a call for scientists and visual artists. The call will be reviewed at the June meeting.
 - iv. Watertown Cultural Council did not send paperwork in time to do funding for restoration of the Sculpture Path mural. The funding did not go to the artist, Gregg Bernstein, for fixing up the mural in a timely manner. As a result, his payment came out of our funds, mostly cleaning out our account. Stones were installed at the base of the mural to protect the piece from splash-up from the grass and dirt. There may be funding through the DPW as a safety net for preservation of community murals in the future, Liz will look into that.
5. Old Business –
- a. River of Light – Roberta and her committee is exploring locations for the River of Light Parade. We need a clear and visible path with a cozy place to gather afterward and have snacks and drinks. Possible locations include Mosesian Center for the Arts and Hosmer School. The willow to create lanterns is ordered and on the way! We have scheduled MCA for the training sessions for the project. What is the process for selecting people for training? Will the general public be accepted? In October we are scheduled for a teacher training on a Friday, which will include public school teachers, public library staff and others. Saturday and Sunday is the two day training for artists and people who want to make the larger-scale lanterns. Monday will be open to community members who want to take the training. Sally remarks that we should think about how we publicize it among artists and the arts community. Since it will take place in October, Barbara thinks we should publicize it among the art teachers and performing arts curriculum coordinator to get it out to teachers before breaking for the summer so they are ready for it in the fall. There is no flexibility on the days, the artist, Gaori Savor, is already scheduled with us.
 - b. Next old project is the Metro Bridge Project from Boston University. Students were invited to work on urban planning projects. Ours was about getting music in restaurants and Matt and Liz attended. It was a somewhat mediocre output. We may be able to glean a few usable items from their research. We did not learn anything we did not already know. It was interesting for students to think about that problem. Now with the success of Porchfest, we may be a community more well

- known for music, and we can try to find an easy way for restaurants to have music in their establishments. We should continue to work on it. Dawn remarks that the Porchfest musicians are interested in keeping the musician community that we have built cohesive and engaged, and music in venues around town would be a good way to engage them. Barbara wonders if we have any discretionary funding to help fund performers in the restaurants. There will be a final report coming soon.
- c. Swati was an artist in residence at the Mount Auburn Cemetery, she did a great job but there was not a whole lot of people there. There were young dancers, and Archy remarks that it was very well choreographed. It was raining, and only about 15 people were there. They danced in the rain, people really enjoyed it.
6. New Business –
- a. Watertown Pride – We will have a table there. June 2nd 12 – 5 pm on a Sunday. Sally and Dawn will do face-painting and tie-dye on bandanas. Erin and Barbara also want to assist. The tie-dye materials have been donated to us from HATCH. It takes 4 people and Liz will not be there that day, so we have to get tables and other materials set up ourselves. Tie dye will be from 2 – 4.
 - b. Summer Concert Series kicks off on June 26, with the Nonconformists, a trans and non-binary orchestra. Kids night this year is a uke night on July 24 with Anne Ku, Andrea Gaudette and Paul Sedgewick. They will bring books for children and show how to teach ukelele. The schools are loaning about 20 ukeleles for the evening.
 - c. Arts Market is OPEN and yes we should have a table. We can finalize our plan for that next month. Face painting was a big hit last year.
 - d. New art space. Archy – The Cambridge Scientific Labs have moved to Watertown. They have dedicated art spaces in their building including a small classroom and gallery and they are showing 4 artists of color. They are located at 155 Arlington Street (the corner of Coolidge Hill Road). We want to get them to partner with Watertown Business Coalition, and they will represent BIPOC artists from Watertown, Cambridge, Arlington, Brighton and the area. Barbara inquires whether there may be a connection with them for our call to artists and the scientific community for the Edible Watertown upcoming projects. All agree that seems like a good ask. The Opening Reception is June 6, 3 pm to 6 pm, and Barbara Pearlman is the director of the arts space over there.
 - e. Jay mentions the Annual Benefit at the Mosesian Center for the Arts on Tuesday, May 25. There will be WCT and other performers, and a new exhibition on display. If you have time and can support the arts center join the event.
7. Motion to adjourn by Jay and second by Erin, a unanimous vote to adjourn at 6:59 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dawn Evans Scaltreto
June 5, 2024