

Watertown Public Arts and Culture Committee

Board Meeting Minutes, January 27, 2025

Attending - Swati Biswas, Barbara Epstein, Matt Hannah, Elizabeth Helfer, Roberta Miller, Dawn Scaltreto, Erin Webb, Jay Wilson, and guests Elyse Brown, Morgan Henderson, WCATV

1. Opening Inspiration – Roberta – The River of Light was a big success! Lots of hard work by many devoted people and everyone enjoyed it. Lots of cocoa was shared by all!
2. Approval of November Minutes - Dawn makes motion Barbara seconds all approve.
3. Subcommittee and Project Team Reports –
 - a. Outreach
 - i. Monthly Arts Bulletin – Matt reports that the latest issue went out
 - ii. River of Light – Hired Danielle Drapeau to help with social media, and the Commander’s Mansion December event helped out with outreach. Lots of people came out on a rainy cold day.
 - iii. Cultural Leader’s Meeting on January 30 – It says 9 to noon, but some people were confused by that. The first half hour is usually schmoozing. It is at Gore Place, hosted by PACC for convening cultural leaders. Gore is doing a lot on the 250th anniversary celebration of the USA. There will be discussions on Thursday.
 - b. Governance and Funding –
 - i. Watertown Cultural Council - We received \$3000 from WCC for River of Light. The event established a great partnership to produce events together that are successful.
 - ii. Watertown Community Foundation – The Program Grant funding cycle is coming up in April and we want to apply, possibly for the Edible Watertown 2025 – 2026 season of Edible Plants. Erin mentions that we are talking about building up the artist stipend for the sculpture walk.
 - c. River of Light –
 - i. Event on January 18 at Mosesian Center for the Arts - Liz presented a video from WCA-TV. Danielle took a lot of pictures of the event and we will find a way to showcase them. Liz loaned her tools. There is a lot of enthusiasm from participants to do it again next year and make it a yearly event. We received a very resounding response for doing the event again. It brought lots of community groups involved and the people who participated really felt a part of the action, not just going to see a performance or art but that they were part of the art. We did have lots of opportunities to communicate with the community. Liz mentioned that we could have the Chinese American community come and showcase how the lunar New Year Festival of Light connects to their community. Swati would like to bring the Indian community forth to present the Diwali Festival of Light which happens in the fall. We could ticket indoor events, even if it is a free ticket. Barbara asks if we will have a theme next year. Next year will be the 250th Semiquincentennial celebration of the United States and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. An idea may be to celebrate Watertown’s contribution to “Innovation”, including Hood Rubber, frozen pizza, Stanley Steamer and other highlights. Watertown Flora and Fauna could be a

good theme, conservation, and “Watertown Grows”. The bookmobile was inspired. People loved it. One popular theme other cities have done is outer space. Fundraising may be an option to help add more events.

- d. Edible Watertown – All of our teams are doing wonderfully, and everyone is getting ready for next month’s meeting. Looking for permission to paint a mural at the Watertown Dam and removing the dam. There is a group working on the lifespan of a tree. One group is talking about making seating using invasive species.
 - i. Expert Paintings - The Wednesday before our next meeting, each group will present for about 10 minutes with a Q&A and then we will vote to approve each project or ask for revisions. Barbara asked that we receive the materials sooner if possible.
 - e. Murals –
 - i. Update on 100 Years of Arshile Gorky - We have an installation from Brandon Marshall. He will be starting the layout on April 15 and he should be done by May. The Well, a big lab building across Grove Street, will give him some storage space for materials. He is looking for two assistants who will help him the 6 weeks he is here. That will be High School or College students. Live Well Watertown will tour the sites related to Gorky and discuss mental health along the way, a program called “Walk with a Doc”.
 - f. Community Sculpture Walk –
 - i. All contracts are signed and on the way.
 - ii. Opening Reception - There may be several student bands along the way. It is scheduled for May 17, same day as Porchfest, but earlier in the day. Dawn suggests breaking it apart. Swati had few people come to the Porchfest event she hosted. The die has been cast since the artists have already signed their contracts to be there that day and talk about their projects. We will move ahead with that. Rick Saunders will assist in securing music for the event.
4. Old Business –
- a. Watertown Cultural District Update
 - i. Yard Art – two workshops are planned, one with Susan Jones and one at Hatch.
 - ii. Porchfest - We have some board members from the Mosesian Center for the Arts. It is the week before the Mosesian event. Should they participate in Porchfest? There was not as much happening in the area, and last year Arsenal Park was closed. Jay says he feels that where most of it is private porches it seems like MCA should not participate. Matt suggests that it may be an idea to have a Porchfest After Hours event at Mosesian.
 - iii. New Website is BUILT! Soft launching has occurred to the Cultural District group, will officially launch to the public March 1. The site invites Watertown arts and culture organizations to get a profile on there. It is built by Artsopolis, and it is a Wordpress site. They have a great reputation. There is a currently a Call to Artists to create a logotype for the Watertown Cultural District. Deadline is the end of February.

5. New Business

- a. Launch of the 2025 – 2026 Edible Plants Call to Artists and Culinary Artists and create a cookbook, the collaboration with chefs will launch in June.
- b. Utility Boxes - In 2022 we talked about decorating utility boxes. It is an idea that is gaining traction, there is limited funding but will feature groups of boxes in various sections in town.
- c. Newsletter - Are we going to keep doing the newsletter once the Watertown Cultural District calendar is out? It should shift as a responsibility to the new hire for the culture district. No more PACC newsletter as of April or May. That WCD paid employment commitment is 5 to 10 hours a month.
- d. Dawn expressed interest in creating a fiberglass form painting project around town similar to projects she has worked on in Lexington and Arlington (Semiquincentennial-themed life-sized horses), and Liz mentioned that there is interest in using creative fiberglass forms as way-finding for a future project. We will regroup on this idea after meeting regarding Barbara's project, Watertunes.

Roberta's connection was unstable so she left the meeting.

- 6. Visitor Input - Margaret is happy to see what the PACC committee is doing! Elise has lived in Watertown for a while and is an arts administrator with a background in theater.
- 7. Erin moves to adjourn, Barbara seconds, unanimous meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Evans Scaltreto

February 23, 2025