

Public Arts and Culture Committee Minutes

April 28, 2025

In Attendance: Sally Young, Jesse Needleman, Matt Hanna, Liz Helfer, Roberta Miller, Dawn Evans Scaltreto, Jay Wilson, Barbara Epstein, Swati Biswas, Stephond Goler, WCATV

1. Opening Inspiration – Jesse Needleman Weather and Yard Art has been inspiring
2. Welcome – We welcome our newest member Jesse Needleman, who was here last meeting. He is the Vice President of Marketing, Sales and Communications of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and lives in Watertown.
3. Approval of March Minutes – Barbara moves to approve, Swati seconds, unanimously approved
4. Subcommittee and Project Teams Reports
 - a. Governance & Funding
 - i. We have applied for an MCC Experiences grant in the amount of \$5000
 - ii. We have applied for a WCF Engagement grant in the amount of \$5000
 - b. Outreach
 - i. Monthly PACC Arts Bulletin – Matt says that it went out with typical number of opens and clicks. Next month Danielle will take it over with a similar structure. It went to over 944 people, and over 60% open it. Five to ten new subscriptions have been received but we have also had a few losses. This is the last one we will be doing, but it will shift onto the WCD website. All of our events will be posted on our website.
 - ii. We are posting events on Watertown Cultural District website
 - iii. As a memo on MA250 celebration – Collaboration between the PACC, Watertown Historic Society, Mosesian Center for the Arts, Pigsgusset Initiative and the Massachusetts Tribe, MicMaq and Mallicit leaders from Maine will be coming to Watertown and creating an installation on the lawn in front of Mosesian Center for the Arts. The Mass Office of Travel and Tourism have given funding toward this project. The Massachusetts people will be here for the 250th celebration of our country and our event is very different than what other communities are celebrating, quite unique. Treaty Day is July 19, and there will be a dinner the Friday before. This is the keystone event as part of the celebration, Gore Place is celebrating, our (city) economic developer is developing a listing. The Greater Boston tourism group, Meet Boston, is very excited about our event. We are waiting to hear about the grant, maybe summertime. Much

of this effort has been built through our Cultural Leaders meetings, who together have been able to produce something much bigger.

- iv. Report on Spring PSA Day at WCATV Studio. Dawn and Erin created a segment highlighting the next few months of arts activities with PACC and some of our partners. Erin wrote the script.
 - c. Edible Watertown
 - i. Expert Pairings is underway. All the locations have been selected, including Arsenal Yards this fall, most dates have been confirmed. We are using the arts to inform the public about the natural world around us, highlighting conservation. Artists created the first Edible Watertown project, then visual artists and writers were part of the second project. Both culminated in an auction. We had a series of experts talking about native and invasive plants, a foraging expert and the Project Director of Brooklyn Bridge project and several others. This most recent phase is pairing a scientist and artist in diverse disciplines to create a temporary art installation. Our final project will take place in 2026, and local chefs will use native plants to create a recipe that will be served throughout the 9 months of the project. We have been able to create gardens and programs at each of the Watertown Public Schools, and a big grant came from the MAPC and NEA, along with local WCC, WCF and other funding programs. The Planning Department has taken over the Summer Garden Intern program, which will resume in 2026. Over 90 applications were processed for this very successful project!
 - d. Murals: 100 Years of Arshile Gorky
 - i. Brandon Marshall on site painting! He has hit the ground running. The project should be complete by the end of May. Sally will be hosting a dinner, and Jack Dargon is hosting Brandon at his house. Liz remarks that we have chosen correctly. There are many other projects in play that are part of the 100 Years of Gorky, including the just announced Harvard University Art Museum exhibition of Gorky Drawings, now on display. A film, “Without Gorky,” is on Netflix right now.
 - e. Community Sculpture Walk will kick off with an exciting event on May 17 before Porchfest. The artwork “Octopus’s Garden” is being installed as we meet.
5. Old Business
- a. Porchfest – We have 74 locations and 180 bands so far!!! The schedule may be announced, about the same hosts, about 30 more performers. It is very well spread around town, with more performers in the West End than last year.

- b. Yard Art is happening! Matt led the walk. It will be better to have the lamp post signs come down for the rest of the year. There is an event tomorrow night.
 - c. Browne House is having their very first ever community event this Saturday, May 3rd, which will include tours of the historic house and family friendly activities, PACC, the Library, Bookmobile and more will be there. Expert Pairings team Leah and Nicole Weber will be there doing an interactive part of their project there.
 - d. Watertunes is a project that will encourage the public to write or say something about a meaningful piece of music. We are aiming for an event at the Summer Concert Series in 2026, we want to get people to start submitting their music this summer. We want to engage people and the last Wednesday in August 2026 will be our big dance party. We will also collect people's songs at the Farmer's Market, Library, Town Hall and events like the Browne House event.
 - e. Mosesian Center for the Arts celebrates their 20th Anniversary Celebration on May 22 from 6 – 8 pm. Jay described some of the performers that will be there that night, including music and theater events, Watertown Children's Theatre, Actors Shakespeare Project, music from Watertown High School Orchestra, the Light Dancers from River of Light and other excitement.
6. New Business
- a. River of Light planning for 2026
 - i. The new date will be January 17, still Martin Luther King weekend, on Saturday afternoon. This project will include a comprehensive program including workshops and teacher training with Watertown Cultural Council was a programming partner.
 - ii. We have done some outreach to the Chinese American Association of Watertown. At the event, cocoa and the Bookmobile were big hits, with a diverse audience including participants from Perkins School for the Blind.
 - iii. Swati Biswas is developing "Walking Toward the Light" which will include some dance components reminiscent of Diwali celebrations.
 - b. "Open For Business" is funded through the Economic Development Committee of the City. This initiative will be helping the commercial districts survive and thrive during construction projects in the East End/Coolidge Square area.
 - c. June 17 will be a celebration at the Commander's Mansion that celebrates the boards, committees and departments of the City of Watertown. RSVP and attend this exciting event!
7. Visitor Input - Stephond Goler is a Waltham resident who wanted to check out what we do on our community. He has an organization that supports people of color and creates meaningful music and arts events. His organization is at the intersection of

who is represented by creating events with performers and businesses that uplift the black and brown community in underutilized spaces. Citixen Joy is his organization at Citixenjoy.com

8. Our next meeting will not be on Memorial Day Weekend. June 9 will be a virtual meeting so that we can catch up on all the avalanche of May activities, and that will be our only meeting in June representing both months. July meeting will be on the 28th. We will be off for August.
9. Adjourn – Barbara makes a motion, Jesse seconds, all are in favor!

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Evans Scaltreto

June 6 2025