

Watertown Public Arts and Culture Committee (PACC)

Board Meeting, Monday, January 24, 2022, 6:00 pm

In Attendance: Roberta Miller, Chair; Archy LaSalle, Vice Chair; Dawn Evans Scaltreto, Secretary; Liz Helfer, PACC Planner; May Cort, Leah Craig, Carole Katz, Kara O'Neill, Erin Webb, Sally Young, Board Members; Steve Magoon, Assistant Town Manager, Town Planner, Emma Boast, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Michael Albana, Mount Auburn Cemetery, Janis Hudson, Jeanette Schepis, Elodia Thomas, WCA-TV

Call to Order and Welcome, Roberta Miller

Land Acknowledgement and Moment of Silence, Archy LaSalle – In recognition of the Pequosette, Nipmuc, and other First Nation People, recognizing over 400 years of erased history for the First People of this land and their descendants.

Procedures – Assembling volunteers and organizing task groups, getting to know each other. We will figure out work plans, our shared values, Mission, and governance. We will welcome visitors at meetings and welcome their comments and input. Our meetings will be:

- a. Agenda Driven, task oriented and reliant on volunteers. Any Board Member will be able to request to add agenda items and it will be assembled into a working agenda by Archy and Roberta. ACTION ITEM Task Group volunteers are Roberta, Carole and Dawn Email ideas for this committee to Liz for this task group.
- b. Our Values and Goals, Public Arts Master Plan – This will be reflected by the work done in creating the Public Arts Master Plan (PAMP), and includes fostering diversity, bolstering community life, engaging Watertown's past, present and future, encouraging nature and sustainability policies, identifying and securing funding for projects. ACTION ITEM Create a Mission Statement Task Group that will create a clear mission statement [and values statement]. Group volunteers are Leah, Sally, Erin and Archy

Why is this committee valuable? How do we want our committee tenure to make a mark? Roberta Miller –

Archy – Working through challenging situations, listening, most important showing respect and making sure we give everyone a voice. We want to be an inclusive Universe

Leah – Visibility is important, acknowledgement of all people, keeping lines of communication flowing, allowing people to tell their stories. Being in a classroom as both a student and teacher, bith an artist and consumer of art, she understands the importance of communication.

Erin – Representation and presenting different viewpoints. Access to public art is powerful, some people will not walk into a museum but will enjoy art in the public realm. Community can tell those stories and share their experience. No one should have to pay to see art.

May - Integrity is important. She attended a Quaker school throughout her 18 years. She remains loyal to the core of making public art accessible. As her future hurtles toward her, her integrity is constantly tested.

Dawn – I have been an arts activist and see the power of making the arts accessible to all in the community. Through my own public art in Boston Children's Hospital, I recognize the healing power of art for all. I hope to celebrate all artists, and recognize that we are shepherds of the future of art in Watertown.

Kara – As part of a small but powerful art community at WHS, she wishes to build community. She is adopted, and has always felt welcomed by her family. She wants to make sure everyone feels welcomed.

Carole – She has not brought her own agenda, and remains open to new ideas. She hopes to bring her marketing experiences at Watertown Savings Bank to assist the committee in achieving its' goals. It will be challenging without a newspaper. She is impressed with Watertown history, and wants to improve communication, listening and knowledge of history.

Sally – Sally recognizes the power of storytelling and the flipside – listening to stories. The power of diverse voices is important. She wishes to create and foster an environment that welcomes communication. Her Peace Corps experience was not welcoming to women. Everything was richer when the group was diverse.

Roberta – Roberta had a traditional Black college experience, and found that being a student in the minority was stressful. It can be a challenge to reach someone with a different experience. Sometimes we make mistakes. Diversity and understanding is the key. Don't be afraid to make mistakes.

Liz – Definitions were sent by email to help frame a deeper values conversation.

Janis Hudson – Is interested in becoming more involved.

ACTION ITEM Task Group for establishing a Values Statement will be combined with the Mission Statement Task Group, Archy added to that group.

Acknowledgement of People Who Worked to Get us Here, Roberta – There was a longstanding volunteer group who worked very hard to establish the Public Arts and Culture Committee, and we want to mark their contribution. ACTION ITEM Sally and Carole will work together to find a meaningful way to acknowledge their contribution and legacy

Work Statement, Public Arts Master Plan (PAMP), Liz – What are our next goals, what do we want to accomplish in the next year? Are there projects that may fit?

Sally – A strategic plan is needed and conversations are needed to set priorities. We need to take inventory of people's terms [on the PACP Committee]. Two ideas that she has thought of is, 1.)

Expand the Hosmer School International Festival with our committee taking on producing an international festival featuring art, music, dance and food representing the vast diversity of our community. And, 2.) Project Edible Watertown inspired by Denmark's "Taste Arhaus" identifying local native leaves and plants that are edible or have healing properties, raised beds for growing, and visiting people's gardens in town to see what they are growing to consume, which is a natural follow-up to Yard Art. QR codes could be used for people to learn about the plants. A project might include a storytelling program.

Steve Magoon, in Point of Order – Regarding committee terms, in establishment of the committee, the terms were randomly staggered so that continuity would be assured and not everyone's term would end or come up for renewal at once. When an individual's term ends, they will be able to request to extend that term, or choose to retire from the committee.

Kara – Would like to see public art installations in new buildings being constructed. She is already part of a group at WHS that is talking about Charles River public art installations and native plant connections.

May – The WHS group is talking about invasive species and animal tracks. It is important that people know we exist.

Leah – Place-making along paths, with many paths under construction in town. She is interested in edible gardens, people growing things in their own yards, and Native American medicinal plants. History and story-telling elements could be involved.

Erin – Would like to see a review of the Town Seal. She looked up the Latin inscription, "Founded in Peace," but were Native people displaced, how did the founding impact those who lived here? There is a Native person depicted in the logo. World in Watertown and Citizens for Peace groups are looking into this issue also.

Emma, MAPC – Would like to see a Living Heritage conversation recognizing the people are working on it.

Roberta – Loves "Edible Watertown" and there are lots of things that can be done to connect with other cultures that are multi-discipline. She loves music, and asks, "How do you create a hotbed of music?" Her daughter loves dancing, and would like a place where real music at a place like Victory Field can occur that invites people to come out and dance. People remember fondly the Joy of Movement center in Watertown Square that used to host weekly open dance opportunities.

Dawn – I have a lot of ideas! I would love to do something with art on utility boxes throughout town. The Merchant's Row alley between CVS and the Otis Building is a natural "canvas" for something to happen. The existing mural is faded and defaced, should we replace or repair it (conservation)? There are many things that could happen there like a monthly art market featuring local artists (like arts/ alley in Quebec City). Seating and tables in a "pocket park" could encourage more use there, teens and elders would have a place to enjoy rather than just a pass-through. I would like to see Sean from the town

create an LED light installation that was year-round. An important issue for all artists is a lack of create-space. We need artist studios and art display spaces. Roberta was able to get the Arsenal Project (now Arsenal Yards) to provide the use of an old bookstore space for the “Innovation Space” which was able to be used in all sorts of community programs for people of all ages – and made an especially good gallery space. We could work with developers and new businesses to use under-utilized spaces for similar facilities.

Carole – How do we get in touch and let people know what is happening? She would like to see programs like the Joy of Movement center in Watertown Square. On electric utility boxes, the city of Newton has done gallery wrap on boxes to highlight each Newton Village with vintage images. She loves what Forest Hills Cemetery has done in the past, holding annual temporary public art installations along with permanent sculpture installations. There is a similar temporary public art show in the Berkshires. Sally’s International Festival is a very interesting project, and could involve and welcome recent immigrants and reach people through Project Literacy and ESL programming through the Watertown Public Library.

Steve Magoon – Michael Albano from Mount Auburn Cemetery (MAC), much of which lies within Watertown, is here at this meeting, highlighting MAC’s interest in what we are doing on this committee.

Archy – Gallery space is very big for him. It is important that artists and musicians are paid, receiving compensation for their creative work is vital. We should put our money where our mouth is! He would like to see the development of story-telling, a collection of stories perhaps highlighting the history and narrative of notable people connected to the community like James Taylor. Watertown Square is a centerpiece, it would be meaningful to install a piece of artwork that celebrated the indigenous people of the Pequossette Tribe.

Public Art Policy, Liz –The Public Art Ordinance sets up funding streams to make sure artists and creative contributors are paid for their efforts. We will produce Calls for Art when seeking contributors. We have \$15,000 in Capital Improvement Project funding for use through June, 2022, that rolls over into FY2023. In 2023, there will be a total of \$30,000 in CIP funds available. We were selected as part of the “Making it Public” program through the New England Foundation for the Arts, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and Forecast Public Art. which includes a grant for \$10,000 that could be used for a Call to Art for a temporary public art exhibition or other program. She shared screen to show the overview of the PACC website on the City of Watertown website. It includes contact info and bios of each of the Board Members, an Arts Calendar illustrating that there is quite a lot going on in Watertown, 14 concerts are already booked for the Watertown Summer Concert Series, there is a hefty list of Arts Organizations active in Watertown with links to their websites and events. We need to build on this, with a Task Group to do outreach and contact for arts institutions as well as individual artists. ACTION ITEM The Task Group for Outreach and Contact includes Erin, May and Kara. Targeted National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grants may also be available.

Sally – Making it Public has opportunities for artists and groups to take (free?) workshops.

Open Discussion – Elodia Thomas is very encouraged by what she has witnessed tonight. She has lived in Watertown 45 years. She loves the idea of dancing under the stars, utility box painting that has been so successful in other communities, and she is excited and appreciative of our work.

Dawn – would like to see us hit the ground running and try to produce a tangible project before June. If there are things that need to be done in town like installation of a bike rack or bench, could we make it artful?

Carole – Would like to see “Tracing Native Trails” on some of the paths through town.

Liz – One of her pet projects would be to create a sculpture walk or garden, and she has begun dialogue with the people from the New England Sculpture Association. Burlington, MA, has an interesting public sculpture garden.

Roberta – Don’t forget about Yard Art coming soon!

The Land Acknowledgement will be said at every meeting, all agreed. We will take turns, and Carol will do the next one.

Meeting adjourned at 7:32 pm, next meeting is scheduled for the fourth Monday of February, February 28 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Evans Scaltreto

Descal@rcn.com

Dawnarts.com

January 28, 2022