

Watertown Public Arts and Culture Meeting

Monday, November 27, 2023

Attending: Swati Biswas, Barbara Epstein, Matt Hanna, Liz Helfer, Archy LaSalle, Roberta Miller, Dawn Scaltreto, Erin Webb, Sally Young, WCAC, Guest Meg Ramsdell

Called to order at 6:09 pm

1. Opening Inspiration: Archy provided opening inspiration, expressing his ambivalence about Indigenous People's month--inadequate to pay sufficient attention and respect--and Thanksgiving --a holiday that brings people together, mostly unmindful of the history behind the celebration. He cited the longstanding practice, continuing into the latter half of the 20th century, of removing Indigenous children from their families and placing them in boarding schools to assimilate into white culture. He also gave examples of continuing attempts to subvert sacred land and practices in Arizona and Kansas and the new laws against teaching African American history in Oklahoma public schools. He exhorted us to speak up and take action to challenge these injustices.
2. Minutes of last meeting were approved with proposed edits on a motion by Erin, seconded by Barbara.
3. Subcommittee Project Teams Reports
 - a. Outreach
 - i. (Erin) Since all new members expressed interest in Outreach, it will be transformed in a committee of the whole and will be the first item on future agendas. Erin remains chair. Special outreach meetings will be convened as needed.
 - ii. (Liz) Watertown Design Charrette starts tomorrow night 6:30-8:30, running through Thursday, and there will be a lot of opportunities to talk about making the Square a destination through creative placemaking and using the arts to enhance the area, as well as the convergence with the Cultural District. All are encouraged to participate in at least some part of the workshop. Roberta invited comment and questions from our committee. Erin mentioned getting through the intersection is difficult and making it easier to get around to the Watertown Cultural District. Barbara participated in a Kitchen Table talk, and all attendees expressed similar difficulties navigating the Square. Roberta mentioned that this is an amazing opportunity to discuss with top notch designers. Archy mentioned that at his kitchen table discussion, participants talked about families getting through the intersection, bikes, motorcycles, skateboards, cars coming from so many directions. Car-less families especially are challenged. Electric bikes should also be regulated, the speeds are very excessive. Barbara pointed out that, from the standpoint of the arts in the past, she participated in a New Rep project that involved walking around the Square. There is no place where it is comfortable to sit and watch the world go by, it is loud, noisy, dirty, filled with car exhaust and not pleasant. Having a place where it is pleasant to linger would be very important. Swati agreed with Barbara, she has thought of Harvard Square, where people do meet up and have

performances. Another idea would be to have a small community garden, that would increase the green footprint, and create community. Lexington has a nice program where artists are invited to exhibit in windows. Liz is always looking for opportunities to have more public art. Matt put forth a comment – it would be nice to have more public art when Merchants Row comes up, there is nothing to do there. How do we incorporate art into the city in a more interesting way? Roberta indicated that the city plan they hoped to have a café on the corner. Dawn talked about a Quebec City art alley that is a tourist destination. Archy has also visited and enjoyed the Quebec City space and thought the recent holiday arts market at the Mosesian Center would be a similar model.

- iii. (Barbara) New Rep Letter – A small committee discussed and wrote a letter about the Mosesian Center and New Rep closing, and it was sent to Boston Globe, Charlie Beitrose, and Watertown Press. It may not have been printed in the Globe. Also went to the newsletter for the WBCC.
- iv. (Liz) NEFA Idea Swap- performing arts across genres with organizations that book the artists. In Nashua, got to sit next to the NH artist Lauriat who is an African drummer. Where are things at with the performing arts? What people are saying across New England. It was very informative, got to meet a lot of artists, and discuss performing arts right now, which is generally struggling, lack of performing arts space.
- v. (Erin) – Monthly arts bulletin, will be upcoming, and she is talking with Matt to have a back up to create newsletters. There was a stand-alone letter sent about an upcoming Edible Watertown event on Wednesday. She will be on leave through December, but she will also do a Mail Chimp tutorial with Matt before she goes on vacation.

b. Governance and Funding – lots of new energy and everyone has ideas and wants to participate. Barbara will be joining Governance and Funding, all of us will now participate in Outreach.

i. Murals Subcommittee - We may participate in Gorky mural, but rather than have a narrow focus on just Gorky it will be a general Murals Project Team. The floor was opened to comments and questions. Barbara asked if we could structure our project committee to include people outside of PACC? There are useful and interested parties that may be helpful. Liz says that we may have outside people on our project committees, but they may not vote. Barbara inquired how we might make this available to the outside community. We need to set up our internal committee first. Barbara moves that we form the committee, Archy seconds, unanimous vote to move forward.

ii. 2023 Financial Report – Liz presented the budget, the budget is \$33,417 There are grants that will be applied for. We do have some unconfirmed funding. We anticipate that we may get some funding from the WCC. Our cash flow will not go into the red. There is interest in increasing our arts allocation from \$30,000 to hopefully \$50,000. Tenuous projections of 2025. Projected starting total would be \$52,917. There may be a Gorky project grant from NEFA, the Art for Spatial Justice Grant. Increasing the artists' stipend for the sculpture walk will be a future agenda item. The Programs and Festivals Grant can fund a variety of programs, and Swati suggests a performing arts

festival might be wonderful. We could also include other partners. Artists from other communities are always welcome to participate. The Bloomberg grant did not come through but did create a beautiful proposal for the utility box program, and we also did not receive the NEA Projects Grant, they will be providing feedback. Next meeting will be January 22, no December Meeting.

c. Community Sculpture Walk

i. (Liz) There is continued outreach, and the call to artists was posted to the International Sculpture Center website.

ii. Watertown High School students have been engaged to provide feedback, and will select 4 of the proposals, at least one will be selected for installation by the PACC committee. The temporary High School is adjacent to the sculpture walk.

iii. Review Process - We will receive the selections after the close on January 8 and we will each select our top 4 selections. We will see all sculpture submissions, but Liz will indicate which ones may not meet the criteria of safety and durability. Everything will be back by Thursday the 18th so she can have all the responses together by our meeting. Archy comments that we have a very streamlined process. There is an extra pad that has been discussed with the High School and Lydia from the Watertown Senior Center to have a potential community based sculpture.

d. Edible Watertown – Sally was at the library today in preparation for her upcoming exhibit, and saw that there were people enjoying the current exhibit. It will be moving to TILL/Wave Gallery next. Come and support the programming! There is a panel on Wednesday the 29th at the Library featuring 10 of the artists in the show. No writers will be presenting their work this time. The brochure is especially beautiful. At the Mosesian Holiday Maker's Market, people were shown the brochure and were very excited about the project. Everyone should make a list of people to invite to the auction event at the Mosesian. Sally's art will be up from the 1st to the 31st of December and features weeds and wildflowers. Sally is sharing T. Fleischer who is a soils expert, it may not have been as well advertised as we should have and was poorly attended. He has worked with the DPW and other groups, the lesson is to know your speaker and know your audience. Peter Del Tredici and Russ Cowan are popular in the area and may be better attended, but we need to get right on advertising. Environmental and Climate Justice people and Community Gardeners should be invited to participate. Thank you to Sally for hosting.

e. (Liz) Watertown Square Cultural District - The resolution has PASSED!!! The application to the Massachusetts Cultural Council will go out this week. There is a growing interest in the cultural and historical attributes of the Square. Liz will include the committee in notifications about upcoming meetings. The City Councillors were very behind the Cultural District and presented a unanimous vote.

4. Old Business

a. 100 Years of Arshile Gorky - Currently there is a working group convened by Jack Dargon, Liz Helfer, The Armenian Museum, Mosesian Center for the Arts, The Watertown Historical Society and The Gorky Foundation. The working group would like us to take on the mural project at the

Grove Street underpass, and we do have a letter of support from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) as the area gets frequently tagged. There will be a companion exhibit at the Armenian Museum and at the Mosesian Center for the Arts, a walking tour, and a planned dedication of a Square in East Watertown and imprints in the sidewalk marking significant locations in Gorky's life, and possibly a monument. Regarding the mural, it could be commissioned to wrap all the way around the overpass. Barbara asks if we are open to other art media beside murals, lighting, or projection possibly, there is an interesting lighting installation in Lynn. There is a projected budget of about \$30,000. We could consult with Monument Lab about something other than a statue of a man. There would be an open call, RFQ, and they will be paid to develop proposals. The call would go out in February or March 2024, artists selected will have until January 2025 to complete the proposals, then a finalist will be selected based on community input with completion of the mural in summer of 2025. Dawn makes the motion, Swati seconds, unanimous adoption of the proposal. Liz already has a draft for the Grant for Spatial Justice, and subcommittee will include Archy, Dawn, Barbara, and Erin. Meeting will be Wednesday at 9 am virtual, will be sent out by Liz.

5. New Business – Watertunes - Barbara is always thinking of how to bring new people into our realm. Barbara wants to invite people to submit the name of music that is significant to them of any genre, and a short paragraph about why that music is important, and invite the public to come to a party where the music will be played by a DJ, has a dance party and display of the write ups people have written. Music is an entry point for people to build community and can engage with it at a variety of levels. Will be on the next meeting's agenda.
6. Visitor Input – Meg Ramsdell she learned a lot, if you have other thoughts, you can always email Liz.
7. Motion to adjourn by Archy, second by Swati at 7:57 pm

Next meeting will be Monday, January 22, 2024, 6 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Evans Scaltreto

January 18, 2024