

Public Arts and Culture Committee Meeting

Monday, January 29, 2024 at 4 pm

Watertown Town Hall, 3rd Floor Conference Room

Minutes

In attendance: Sally Young, Barbara Epstein, Dawn Scaltreto, Matt Hannah, Roberta Miller, Erin Webb, and Liz Helfer (staff)

Absent: Swati Biswas, Archy LaSalle

Agenda

1. **Welcome (Roberta)** – Roberta presented a tool called “Thinking Hats” encourage the full range of questions to help see projects and problems from all sides. Each hat represents a full range of evaluating whether a project should be done, fits in with our values, if it will work, and what the positives and negatives may be.
2. **Watertown Porchfest (Matt and Dawn)** - Each participant worked on a paper that was shared to thoroughly look at all aspects. The committee has been asked for \$1200 - \$1600 for the development of the website. Sally says that MCA has a monthly Open Mic that is very successful and is bringing in a new demographic. There are no conflicting nearby Porchfest events. We will vote at the next meeting but the overwhelming opinion is that this is a positive event to fund!
3. **Watertunes (Barbara)** – Watertunes was conceived with the desire to create another high-quality, accessible signature event for the Watertown Community. It is centered on music because that is a language that crosses boundaries and provides a way for people to experience and communicate emotion, history, memory, and connection. Every Watertonian would have an opportunity to share a piece of music that is meaningful to them and tell why in 150 words. At the end of the collection period there would be a special event with a DJ to play the music and allow people to listen, experience the stories, and dance. They can come for a brief stay or remain for the whole playlist. Questions raised included whether it could be a continuing event, what are the costs, where would we like it to happen, can there be food or food trucks, can stories be a booklet or may the narratives be displayed in a digital format? The library is currently collecting stories and memories, they have some experience in doing this sort of event, can this be folded into that? How do we gather the stories, what is the length of the playlist? Could it be a community event that brings people together to listen to the music? Barbara’s vision brings people together. “Watertunes Radio” can be something that people could tune into or turn into a playlist. Creating a new community event is challenging. Could it be folded into the 20th anniversary of the Faire on the Square? One approach is for the first year it could be a dance party, second year add the element of the stories, over the years develop the idea into a lasting event that people look forward to each year. Everyone loves the idea of dance songs. (Barbara reminded that the idea was not to limit the music to dance music.) In general, the committee really likes and supports the idea but it needs a little more development. This may not be an immediate project, but will be under consideration by the committee, perhaps as a 2025 project, and retire the word “stories”, make it a one sentence description.

Commented [BE1]: Why? This is what we're about.

4. **Winter Lights/River of Light** – This may not be until January 2025, so we will table this for now until after we install the new sculptures this year. The idea is a lantern festival similar to the lantern festival created by artist, Gowri Savoor, in Waterbury, Vermont. There is an event where people make lanterns, have a band and hold a parade of lights through the town. It is a maker event. It is suggested that we get Zacariah Hickman, the tuba guy, to participate. We'll save this for later. <https://ariveroflight.org/>
5. **Call for Art: Bike Rack Design and Fabrication** – It will be funded by the DPW, we just need to put out the call and participate in the selection process. Unanimous agreement to do this project.
6. **The Dragon Boat Festival** – Will not happen until 2025, and it is likely they will be able to come up with all the funding on their own. Our job will be to promote their idea, support them, but not with funding. We need to talk about the crossover with WCC members and funding at the February meeting. We could perhaps engage the library to have a maker event to create banners or pennants to cheer on Watertown's Dragon Boat Team and have a meeting spot by the river to cheer on our team.
7. **Visitor Input** – No visitors tonight. We can have the proposals distributed to the committee, then have a bonus meeting on March 18 at 4 pm to discuss the "New Projects". In February we can bring up Matt's workshop idea. Upcoming: the YardArt program is coming up in April, and Porchfest in May. May will bring the install of new sculptures on the sculpture walk, summer gardens with our interns, the Edible Watertown exhibit and auction, and Gorky Mural call for art. Lots going on!
8. **Adjournment** – Unanimous vote to adjourn at 5:25 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Dawn Scaltreto
February 24, 2024