

Minutes of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Arts and Non-profits – Monday, Febr. 15, 2021

Russ called the meeting to order at 12:03pm

Committee members present:

Russ Grazier – PMAC, representing musicians, performing artists

Kathy Somssich – WSCA, NH Theatre Project, Historic New England, rep. theaters and historic homes

Tina Sawtelle – Music Hall, rep. professional performing artists, live indoor and outdoor venues

Larry Yerdon – Strawberry Banke, rep. history community

Bill Humphreys – formerly with PPMtv, rep. local tv, filmmakers and theater actors

Robin Albert – Ports. Historical Society, rep. artists and museum spaces

Jason Goodrich – Seacoast Repertory Theatre, rep. community members

Nihco Gallo – Seacoast Jazz Society, rep. performance artists in public spaces

Courtney Perkins – PPAF, rep. outdoor performance and performing artists

Beth Falconer – 3S Artspace, rep. visual and performing artists and non-profits

Barbara Massar – ProPortsmouth, rep. arts community

Also present: Mayor Rick Becksted, Stephanie Seacord -- Public Information Officer, Portsmouth, Josh Denten – PopUpNH, Nancy Carmer – Economic Development Manager, Portsmouth

All together 22 participants on call.

Mayor Becksted welcomed the committee and emphasized the city council's interest in giving a voice to the arts & culture organizations in Portsmouth.

Larry made a motion and Robin seconded that Russ and Barbara serve as co-chairs of the BRC. The motion passed unanimously.

Russ reiterated the mission of the BRC.

Tina emphasized the need to collect data quickly in the hope of opening performance spaces in May with audiences feeling confident about their safety.

Russ suggested using our organization's email lists to reach out to the community.

Barbara informed us that there are a number of heads of non-profits that are willing to help, but cannot commit to weekly meetings.

Courtney recommended all organizations come up with a consistent and united message that we can all follow regarding opening this summer.

Barbara asks that we consider the whole region, not just Portsmouth and coordinate with other towns to avoid overcrowded events.

Larry suggested a coordinated and positive marketing approach to let the community know our organizations are open and active.

Russ added that messaging should be done at every stage of re-entry.

Nihco encouraged language that includes the artist community outside of non-profits: buskers and arts & culture workers, and to establish channels of communication with them.

Josh Denten – PopUpNH - asked that organizations get a consistent message regarding city guidelines such as social distancing.

Russ identified 3 areas of action:

1. Collection of data and identification of common themes
2. Marketing the arts & non-profits to the community regarding safety to gain audience confidence
3. Work with City to better communicate plans for safety guidelines.

Tina, Beth, Jason and Nihco will formulate a survey regarding challenges the arts and non-profits are facing and the help that is needed.

Tina suggested a community-based arts and culture calendar to keep the public informed.

Courtney, Kathy, Robin and Bill will work on getting a consistent message from the City regarding safety guidelines. They will work with Health Office Kim MacNamara and Economic Dev. Manager Nancy Carmer.

Nihco suggested getting busking guidelines as well.

Russ called for suggestions for the next meeting.

Tina and Larry commented on the public's cooperation regarding masks and distancing at their respective venues.

Tina asked about the need for a higher level of communication with audiences regarding proof of texts and vaccinations.

Russ introduced Stephanie Seacord who is a part of getting any communication or messaging out to the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 1pm.

Minutes submitted by Kathy Somssich

