

BRC/Arts & Non-Profits - Meeting March 1st, 2021 – Minutes

Committee Members attending: Russ Grazier, Barbara Massar, Tina Sawtelle, Beth Falconer, Courtney Perkins, Larry Yerdon, Bill Humphries, Kathy Somssich, Nihco Gallo, Robin Albert, Jason Goodrich.

Also Speaking: Josh Denton, Laura Brown, Michael Labrie.

Jason made the motion and Larry seconded to accept the minutes. They were approved unanimously. There were no changes or additions.

Jason gave an update from the Survey Team. They are continuing to work on completing the survey. They solicited comments and suggestions from the committee members. They will share the results next week.

Larry asked to have the survey draft redistributed again.

Barbara asked input be submitted by end of business Tuesday.

Courtney presented an update for the safety protocol subcommittee. She met with Portsmouth Health Officer Kim McNamara Kim is looking at 3 issues:

1. Virus infection rate
2. Vaccination rate
3. Business & Community needs

The city wants to know what organizations need in order to be viable. Kim hopes the BRC can collect information from organizations and present it at next week's meeting.

Tina stated that many of our organizations are working with the state-wide conference and the Governor's task force to establish state guidelines. The Music Hall is closely adhering to the 6' distancing, but the 25% capacity is not sustainable. They need the guidelines relaxed and are aiming for full capacity as soon as it's safe.

Kim would like feedback from organizations regarding members of audience, size, and how many infections.

Beth mentioned that they are looking for guidelines that reflect the seated & standing audiences.

Barbara mentioned that we should consider the entire region since Portsmouth attracts visitors from all over.

Robin asked about how capacity effects required spacing.

Courtney replied that her spreadsheet would address this.

Beth recommended that organizations adhere to State reopening guidelines as a path forward. Individual venues can impose their own stricter guidelines.

Russ remarked that if we move too fast there could be a negative impact on future audience sizes and that science should guide our decisions.

Russ asked Kathy to attach any pertinent documents to the minutes.

Josh Denton, President of PopUpNH Board of Directors, presented his proposal for PopUpNH 2.0 including the changes for 2021 season, from May 1 to October, including use of some parking spaces in the Worth Lot, 2 sheds for prep & storage, portable toilets, sanitizing station, tables and a stage to be used only for Portsmouth performing artists. Josh emphasized that his question to the committee was whether or not the arts organizations represented by the members of the committee feel that PopUpNH would be beneficial to them.

Tina (The Music Hall), Kathy (NHTP), Courtney (PPAF), Jason (SRT), Beth (3S Artspace) and Russ (PMAC) all thanked Josh and expressed gratitude and admiration for the hard work, enthusiasm and commitment to the community of PopUpNH and its Board of Directors and volunteers, but because each organization was concentrating on its own success, survival and hopes for expansion this summer, their resources, time and staff were needed at their own venues.

Michael Labrie was concerned that PopUpNH at The Worth Lot would negatively impact his Jazz Club which is slated to open Sept 1, 2021. He specifically mentioned how amplified concerts and the loss of parking spaces would negatively impact stores, medical offices and tenants in the area.

Josh Denton offered the PopUpNH sheds to any non-profit that could utilize them.

Laura Brown spoke of her tremendous admiration for the staff, crew and volunteers of PopUpNH.

Nihco asked Josh about PopUpNH's decision not to produce performances, but instead offer performance possibilities to presenting organizations.

Kathy asked if a change of location would help PopUpNH's plans.

Russ expressed his disappointment that City Council would question the non-profit status of a new organization, noting that it takes time to be granted non-profit status and that an organization can be allowed to operate and fundraise in the interim. He noted it took PMAC 18 months to receive their certification as a non-profit.

Russ will reach out to Josh and bring the topic up again at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be on Monday, March 8 at noon.

The meeting was adjourned at 1pm.

Submitted by Kathleen Somssich

Attached to this email are

1. The first draft of the Survey by Tina's Survey Team
2. Courtney's questionnaire for committee members to provide info to Kim McNamara.