

Minutes of the BRC on Arts & Non-Profits, March 15, 2021

Russ called the meeting to order at 12:03.

Committee Members in attendance were: Russ Grazier, Barbara Massar, Jason Goodrich, Tina Sawtelle, Renee Giffroy, Courtney Perkins, Robin Albert, Nihco Gallo, Martha Fuller Clark, Larry Yerdon, Kathleen Somssich.

The motion to approve the minutes was made by Robin, seconded by Jason and the minutes were unanimously approved. Renee abstained because she hadn't received them yet.

Tina gave an update for her survey sub-committee. Input from committee members is being incorporated into the survey. Tina proposed that the sub-committee and Music Hall employees will test out the survey. Testing will be completed and the survey will be sent to committee members by the end of the week in Google Forms. The committee members will distribute the three surveys to patrons, artists and venues. In two weeks the data will be compiled.

Russ thanked the sub-committee for its work and said the survey will be presented at next week's City Council meeting and remarked that it is the first interface this committee will have with the public.

Courtney gave an update for the Safety Guideline sub-committee. The sub-committee had a meeting on March 10 with Kim McNamara and Kristin Shaw from the City Health Office. Kim and Kristin stated the 6' distancing and 6 people per party is still in force. Long standing events which require crowd control (such as Pro Portsmouth's events) will be taken up with the Healthy Dept. The State of NH has drafted new guidelines which require 3 ft distancing, but they have not yet been approved.

Renee asked about Sheafe Warehouse and its indoor guidelines. Courtney suggested Renee talk to Kim. Russ and Robin added that museum guidelines call for 6' distancing while moving and that capacity is based on size.

Larry reported that Kim toured Strawberry Banke with him and gave specific comments regarding safety measures.

Russ has talked to Patricia Tilley of the NH DHHS (Dept. of Health & Human Services) and reiterated that the City will follow the guidelines of the State.

Robin reminded the committee that Art-Speak had a website "Street Canvas" that brought vetted artists together with private property owners who were looking for murals for their buildings. Robin asked if it was appropriate to start up that program again.

Jason asked if this program should be on a thematic basis to ensure a core message throughout the City.

Russ suggested the upcoming 400th anniversary of Portsmouth's settlement could be a viable theme, but otherwise it would be difficult to impose a theme and that most owners would want communication with the city regarding any content of a mural.

Martha suggested that any murals should be painted on plywood and not directly on the brick to protect their facades.

Nancy Carmer mentioned the temporary art on Portwalk streets and emphasized the importance of paying artists appropriately.

Barbara stated that the Art-Speak website was a marketplace bringing artists and property owners together, but the murals must be vetted by the City and cannot be a sign or advertising. The website would need an IT person to run it and take responsibility for it. We can recommend reactivating the website to City Council.

Russ stated that the committee's role could be to retire or continue what remains of Art-Speak and help with any loose ends. This would require a conversation with Nancy as she was closely aligned with Art-Speak.

Barbara and Russ commented that the name Art-Speak now belongs to a casino. They denied having gambled.

Larry asked Tina about having to go to Google Forms first to complete the survey and asked if adding another level of action to the survey would discourage people from taking the survey.

Tina replied that committee members would receive a hyperlink to the survey to distribute to constituents who will then have direct access (no Google login required). The committee will filter for duplicates by email address. Tina is including a comment on the survey that the survey takers should respond only once to the survey. They can, however, fill out a survey for all organizations they work for/with.

Martha gave an update from the Reopen Committee regarding the plan to paint the Jersey barriers around outdoor restaurants. The barriers are to be painted by Portsmouth High School students working together with professional designers to give the barriers a uniform and attractive look. Restaurants are planning an April 1st outdoor reopening.

Russ commented on PHS's long history of arts education and his acquaintance with many of the talented students working on this project with design professionals.

Barbara added that there will be changes from last years' barriers to give a more cohesive and consistent look to outdoor dining in Portsmouth.

Martha reported that there has been more discussion in the Reopen Committee on street closures. There has been a positive response in town to the new picnic tables, which businesses can purchase.

Nihco reached out to the Executive Director of Portland Downtown and will meet with him. Committee members will receive a Zoom link to this meeting. Portland had some negative feedback about their program and may scale it back this year.

Suzanne Powers of the Portsmouth Symphony Orchestra introduced herself and would like to join forces with the committee. Stephanie.powers@portsmouthsymphony.org

Russ has further plans for this group and will add those plans to the agenda as the committee moves on to other projects. He will add Martha's update from the Reopen Committee to the agenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:53.

Submitted by Kathleen Somssich

