

Minutes – BRC, March 22, 2021

Russ called the meeting to order at 12:02

In Attendance: Russ Grazier, Kathy Somssich, Jason Goodrich, Beth Falconer, Tina Sawtelle, Robin Albert, Martha Fuller Clark, Bill Humphreys, Renee Giffroy, Barbara Massar, Courtney Perkins, Larry Yerdon, Nihco Gallo (by phone), and Nancy Carmer.

A motion to accept the minutes of the March 15 meeting was made by Martha, seconded by Jason and approved unanimously by roll call.

Tina updated the committee on the progress of the survey. So far there have been 6 responses from artists, 25 from patrons and 5 from organizations.

Larry: Surveys are going out from Strawberry Banke today

Barbara: Pro Portsmouth sent out the survey and has received some responses of surprise that it is not anonymous.

Tina and Russ suggested recipients of the survey be told that the surveys are not anonymous in order to avoid duplicates and that email addresses will not be used for identification purposes.

Russ: PMAC sent out the survey to its faculty.

Robin will send the survey out to a few thousand people this week.

Jason: The survey will go out to 15,000 in SRT's database this week.

Beth: 3 S Artspace will send out the survey this week.

Stephanie: a link to the survey will be on the City website and she will submit it to the (Un)official Portsmouth FB page.

Courtney updated the committee on safety guidelines. The State did not reduce social distancing to 3 ft. She will report next week after a meeting with Patricia Tilley to get clarity on this issue and follow up with a meeting with Kim McNamara regarding the triggers that will change the guidelines as the summer goes on.

Russ remarked that the State is giving Immediate guidelines and not guidelines that are needed 3, 6, 9 months down the road. As the State has pulled back from giving future guidelines, he hopes the committee can talk to local authorities on the City level to plan ahead by looking at phases and triggers.

Nancy will share with Kim about the need for future planning.

Tina: The Music Hall's ability to plan for the future is critical. They must be able to make commitments with artists now. She wonders what the effect of vaccinations will have on venues.

Russ distilled the conversation to 3 points:

1. We have to wait for more State information before we meet with Kim.
2. Kim should come to our meeting in order to be provided with the information she needs.

3. We should work together with the Health Dept to ensure a uniform approach despite unique situations.

Russ will bring these concerns to Trish Tilley at the State level. He suggested that we might have to take action on a local level and let the State catch up with us.

Martha: Update from the Reopen committee.

1. Work is going ahead with P.H.S. painting the barriers. Restaurants plan on opening in April.
2. Discussions on street closures are ongoing and not yet settled. They are considering the need for entertainment on closed streets.

Barbara reminded us that Pro Portsmouth has received approval for Summer in the Street starting July 10th for 4 consecutive Saturday nights. She cautioned that a process should be in place to approve and schedule musicians.

Martha would like to see this process be done by this committee.

Jason asked if tax incentives could be given to business owners who support artists.

Nancy responded that the City can't alter property taxes, but that the City always encourages performers.

Robin reminded the committee that we will need schedules from the other downtown performance venues.

Russ divided street performers into 3 groups:

1. Curated performances such as Pro Portsmouth
2. Street closures done by Reopen with street buskers in a controlled manner
3. Free for all public busking to create art without a permit such as the Vaughn Mall stage

Russ suggested a pilot program on a limited basis.

There was no Public comment.

Nihco met with the Executive Director of Portland Downtown to debrief about last year's project. Portland faced challenges such as deliveries and take out space. He will send info to the committee members on this exchange.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:51

Submitted by Kathleen Somssich