

Minutes – November 15, 2021 – BRC on Arts and Nonprofits

Members attending in person: Russ Grazier, Beth Falconer, Robin Albert, Renee Giffroy, Kathy Somssich, Nihco Gallo. Remotely: Barbara Massar, JerriAnne Boggis

Non-members attending in person: Ben Van Camp, Nancy Carmer. Remotely: Stephanie Seacord

Russ called the meeting to order at 12:02 pm.

The BRC on Arts & Nonprofits has two more meetings: Dec. 6 and Dec. 20.

Marketing

Ben gave an update of the Marketing Campaign, which is moving forward with Darci Creative. They are looking at a January start, because it makes more sense to avoid a roll-out during the holiday season when marketing is more expensive and more competitive. The State Tourism office offers a matching 1 to 1 marketing subsidy program, and the Chamber has offered (if the state approves) to divert funds previously earmarked to promote Restaurant Week to supplement the pilot. A subsidy would be in the 5-figure range. This state program could also be leveraged in the future for further funding.

A discussion followed Russ's question regarding attendance at venues with indoor events. Renee reported that a recent NHAA event was attended by over 250 people. Beth reported that local and well-known artists are drawing larger numbers than lesser-known artists and those from out of the area and that booking has slowed down all over the state for the winter months based on rising Covid rates. At events that have been booked SRO, 20% may not show up. 3S Artspace requires proof of vaccination or a negative Covid test for performance attendees and masks are required in the gallery. The Discover Portsmouth Center requires masks, proof of vaccination or negative covid test for all indoor events. Barbara reported that there will be no indoor events for Pro Portsmouth's First Night this year. The traditional ice sculptures and fireworks will, however, still take place (if funding is secured for the \$15,000 cost) and Pro Portsmouth's Children's Day is scheduled for May 1st.

Russ asked whether the message should still be a broad: "Come to Portsmouth and experience the Arts" (not specific events or venues) OR "Remember to support local Arts & nonprofits." It was suggested that the message remain optimistic, but emphasize the importance of supporting the arts during another tough winter.

Nancy reminded the committee that the new City Council won't have a formal meeting until the end of January and no committee has yet been formed for the allocation of ARPA funds.

The marketing sub-committee will make a fuller report at the Dec 6 BRC meeting.

Artist Relief Grants

Nihco reported on the relief grants for individual artists. He has met with Courtney and Nancy and the next step is to submit a proposal to the new City Council. The subcommittee feels the scope of the budget (\$16K) is reasonable. They discussed eligibility based on geography and inclusivity and are planning to frame the grants as a pilot program, focusing on compensating them for work done since the beginning of the pandemic, as a way to make up for lost wages and hardship. Russ suggested Nihco's subcommittee meet before the BRC's next meeting on December 6th to summarize their ask so that it can be included in the Year-End Report on December 20th.

Year-End Report

Russ, Nancy, Robin, and Barbara have been discussing the questions that Russ will send out with Survey Monkey to individual art organizations. Data is being compiled for the Year-End Report. It was reported that 2021 has been more difficult financially than 2020, as the first year of the pandemic included the early months of usual income. The relief funds were critical, but with reduced financial numbers, help from the city will be needed. Nancy reported that the only funds now available are EIDL loans that must be paid back when the venues get back on their feet. Barbara identified a misperception that because Market Square Day took place, everything is back to normal for Pro Portsmouth, disregarding the fact that MSD 2021 made only half of its usual amount. Beth identified a pandemic fatigue and wondered about the tone of the year-end funding request letters. Russ noted that relief aid has evaporated, and venues are more vulnerable than ever. The Year-End Report will summarize what will serve as a starting point for the new City Council, make specific recommendations and suggest the potential for a new Cultural master plan. Russ will put together an outline and circulate it to the group before the Dec. 6th BRC meeting.

AFTA Study

Robin will meet with her subcommittee after Thanksgiving. The surveys will start in March 2022 (2 years since the pandemic started) and go to February 2023. She is hoping for funds to hire a project manager. It was noted how important the AFTA Study is in showing how devastating the pandemic has been to the arts community and revealing any trends that indicate a recovery. Nancy reminded the committee that even during a recession the AFTA studies have shown that the arts benefit a community.

Russ adjourned the meeting at 12:44 pm.

The last BRC meetings will be on Monday, December 6 and Monday, December 20 at noon.

Submitted by Kathleen Somssich