

Meeting of the Arts and Cultural Commission

July 15, 2024

In Conference Room A at Portsmouth City Hall

Attending: Emma Stratton, co-chair, Linnea Grim, co-chair, Jeffrey Cooper, secretary, Theresa McDowell, Jessica Dickey, Karen Rosanio, Genevieve Aichele, City Councilor Kate Cook, Eli Kaynor, Catherine Saarela by Zoom

Guest attending by Zoom: Chris Dwyer, of the Public Art Review Committee, PARC

Meeting called to order at 1:00 PM

Minutes for the June 17 meeting were approved.

Workgroup reports:

1. Jessica Dickey summarized the DEAI workgroup meeting of July 12, 2024
2. Karen Rosania summarized the Collaborations and Resources workgroup meeting of July 1, 2024, noting that since the meeting David Schleyer of Chinburg Properties has agreed to attend our August 5 workgroup meeting
3. Theresa McDowell summarized the Communications workgroup meeting of July 3, 2024. Follow up discussion focused on how to communicate to Portsmouth residents about our Commission and our goals,
 - a. including a “Contact Us” link on our webpage.
 - b. Shareable online documents editable by ourselves and viewable by the public

The **workgroup meeting worksheets** are included with these minutes as attachments.

Burning Issues

1. Karen reported that **Home Occupation 1 and 2** were passed unanimously 2nd and 3rd reading by the City Council. Karen has applied for HO2 and will keep us posted.
 - a. Home Occupation 1 allows up to 2 clients at one time by right
 - b. Home Occupation 2 allows up to 6 clients at one time by continuing use permit
2. Emma reported on **Solar Panels in the Historic District**
 - a. The process entails an amendment to an amendment, but the proposal being voted on at the July 15 City Council meeting outlines 6 criteria for solar panels in the historic district that if met the panels are approved. The review process is to be done by a City staff person; however, at this time no staff member is trained

in historic preservation. City Manager Conard is supportive providing that training.

- b. (Note that after the meeting this proposal was passed by the City Council in a 5 to 4 vote.)
3. Counselor Cook reported that an RFP has gone out for re-use of the **South Meeting House** and the application deadline is Wednesday July 17. We do not know at this time whether or not an arts organization has submitted an application.
4. **Other burning issues**
 - a. Genevieve Aichele suggested that our commission could benefit from communicating with other cities which have established arts commissions.
 - b. Genevieve also reported that our Commission will become eligible for National Endowment for the Arts "Our Town" grants when we have been active for 3 years
 - c. Theresa McDowell noted that she has heard feedback that people would like to see more murals in town
 - d. Eli Kaynor asked about the status of finding an alternate to replace Robin Albert-Lehman, who has resigned. Answer: The opening needs to be posted.
 - e. Genevieve Aichele asked for clarity on the rotation of terms. Sean Clancy will need to look into this, but generally the organizations have the longer terms because they cannot repeat.

Emma introduced our guest, **Chris Dwyer, Chair of the PARC**

Some highlights of Ms. Dwyer's report:

- The PARC was established last fall with 10 members -artists, art historians, an architect, people with business management skills, etc.
- They meet monthly or more often as needed
- It has a page on the City website that describes their priorities
- They have a set of guidelines to insure both flexibility and consistency
- Their goal is to foster and develop awareness of public art
- Their purview is basically public art on public property. Such projects are often the beneficiaries of Percent for the Arts funding
- They act in an advisory role for artwork on private property that is viewable by the public. Such projects also must go before the Planning Board and HDC as appropriate, sometimes reviewed by Dept. Of Public Works. Discussion is underway for zoning changes to clarify and consolidate the City ordinance
- They are currently in final review for public art at Pierce Island, for which the RFP was created with considerable public input
- A donated piece by Carl Austen Hyatt is scheduled to be installed at City Hall
- A new project is in the works for Bohenko Park, designed by Terrence Parker

- Friends of the South End are currently working on a proposed public art donation for Prescott Park
- A number of years ago the City created a Public Art Trust Fund to hold both public and private contributions for public art. During this budget season, PARC was able to advocate for including \$25,000 per year for public art in the Capital Improvement Plan—those \$ will go into the Public Art Trust. We anticipate those \$ may go for maintenance of public art as well as grant matching funds.
- PARC has recommended to the Council to change the parameters for the base amount of money from capital projects that public art commissions from the current amount which is 1% of projects valued between \$2-\$15 million to 1% of \$5-\$30 million. A project like the police station that will cost more than \$30 million would yield \$300,000 (rather than \$150,000) for public art. AC&C can be helpful with advocacy when this comes to the Council.
- PARC is creating an inventory of public art in the City, with over 50 sites on public and private properties, and identifying potential sites for future public art installations

In the follow up discussion:

- Jeffrey Cooper noted that a main pillar of the Commission is to attract, support and retain artists in our community, and asked to what extent support for local artists is “on the PARC’s radar screen.” Karen Rosanio and Eli Kaynor asked questions in a similar vein. Ms. Dwyer’s response was that their mission is primarily focused on the quality of the art installations, seeking public input when considering public art installations, and the processes by which they are approved, but noted that local artists had applied for the Pierce Island project as well as regional, national and even an international submission.

Meeting adjourned at 2:20 PM