Minutes – December 6, 2021 – BRC on Arts and Nonprofits

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

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

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

Larry made the motion to accept the minutes from October 18, November 1 and 15, Jason seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Recovery Survey

Russ shared his results and recommendations of the Arts and Culture Nonprofit Recovery Survey. Russ will be adding responses and soliciting opinions from the BRC members by email in the meantime in order to present a complete picture of Portsmouth-based arts organizations to the City Council as part of the Year-End Report. The results of the survey show that although Federal and State relief funds and patrons came to the rescue of arts organizations by means of contributions, audience numbers remain~~ed~~ greatly reduced throughout the pandemic. Audience numbers initially increased when the vaccine became available, but have been dropping off again in the last 2 to 3 weeks due to variants and increased infection rates in NH. Attendance increases when proof of vaccination is required to attend events.

Year-End Report

Russ and Barbara will write the year-end report and present it to the City Council on December 20. It will include three parts: An Introduction/Summary of the committee charge and work completed; Data from Surveys; Recommendations. There are six proposed recommendations:

- Continuing financial support for the upcoming AFTA Arts and Economic Prosperity Study including rollout of results.
- Financial support following the pilot initiative (which is funded) for a Marketing program to promote Portsmouth as an arts and culture destination as a measure to aid in the economic recovery of arts organizations.
- Support collaborative community projects led by Portsmouth arts and culture nonprofits to fuel the local creative economy in 2022 and 2023 (potentially in connection with PortsmouthNH400).
- Direct support to independent local artists through Artist Relief Grants.
- A 2-year extension of the BRC on Arts and Nonprofits.
- The creation of a new cultural plan for the city of Portsmouth.

The report will contain a message of gratitude to the Mayor and City Council for creating this BRC. It was also suggested that the report include information about the steps organizations took to increase the safety of their patrons and to encourage patrons to return to their venues. It was noted that the pandemic and the work of this BRC increased the collaboration between organizations and benefited the arts scene in Portsmouth. One of the topics previously discussed as within the scope of the BRC was affordable housing and workspace for artists and it was suggested that this topic be included in a future cultural plan. The Community Campus has 30 acres of undeveloped land and should be considered for

this use. The best course of action would be a 2-year extension of this BRC to create a cultural plan that would involve all stakeholders and reflect what the city wants.

Marketing

Ben reported on the status of the marketing program. The 3-month pilot program will include two marketing strategies with a mix of digital, streaming and print in collaboration with Sullivan Communications and Darci Creative. This approach will include PSAs, Instagram/Facebook, Google Display & YouTube, among others. Paid media is estimated to cost approximately $10K a month. $3K in already-allocated Division of Tourism funds assigned to Restaurant Week will be reallocated and added to this budget. An earned-media PR campaign will be conducted by Sullivan Communications, the Chamber's destination marketing PR firm.

Both agencies will be asking the individual arts organizations for photos and videos to be used in the marketing program.

A discussion followed regarding the timeline of the rollout of the marketing program. It was asked if a February start was too soon for those seasonal venues who produce summer events and would a May start be better. It was suggested than an early start to the marketing program would offer more data and encourage the marketing program to be continued beyond April 30th. It was stated that the start of the marketing program could be adjusted by the new City Council depending on the status of ARPA funding.

C & J Bus lines and Allegiant Airlines expand the reach of Portsmouth's arts community and the PR program should aim for those geographical areas as well as the local community.

When asked about industry benchmarks marking the success of the marketing program, Ben stated that it would be difficult to measure the impact on individual venues, but that the "rising tide lifts all boats" theory would apply. Tina reiterated that marketing funding is essential for the survival of the arts and that every individual organization has a social media presence which should be used to further the reach of the marketing message. Darci Creative will have ideas for each organization to use and will be making improvements on the message throughout the pilot project. One partner suggestion was Jimmy's Jazz and Blues Club to help market to a broader clientele.

AFTA Study

Robin and her subcommittee are still building a list of participating organizations and ~~is~~ updating the list of contacts. A Zoom meeting in January with participating organizations is planned to explain the AFTA Study and how it works. The actual training will be in February of 2022. Materials offered in February will include a QR code for the survey.

Artist Relief Grants

Due to the length of the meeting, the topic of Artist Relief Grants was tabled until the next meeting.

The next meeting will be on Monday, December 20 at noon.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:23 PM.

Submitted by Kathleen Somssich