Minutes – October 17, 2022 -- Portsmouth Arts and Nonprofits Committee

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

Members in attendance: Barbara Massar, Robin Albert, Courtney Perkins, Jason Goodrich, Genevieve Aichele, Larry Yerdon, Councilor Kate Cook. Remotely: Tina Sawtelle. Not present: Nihco Gallo, JerriAnne Boggis, Russ Grazier, Beth Falconer, Nihco Gallo, Renee Giffroy, Ben VanCamp

Non-members in attendance: Sean Clancy, Stephanie Seacord (recording secretary)

September minutes approved with correction from Genevieve. (NOTE: August minutes remain held over for approval.)

AFTA Update: As of October 6: AFTA has processed 503 Portsmouth surveys, 103 on paper. 800 goal by April 30, 2023. AFTA committee must file a report including the types of nonprofits participating. Still no word on the new financial reporting for smaller organizations. Robin expects training and roll-out on that may be in January.

ARPA Request:

Councilor Cook reported that the City is still going through the process of evaluating requests. COVID Response Task Force (social services) started its work in August and asked for an end-of-year deadline. The City Council can make decisions on allocations at any point but is disinclined to do so before the full scope of requests is received.

Cultural Plan

Councilor Cook reported that 7 people have filed applications for the subcommittee. Application process is still open. (Go to: https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/city/arts-nonprofits-committee-cultural-plan-subcommittee)

Barbara asked members of the Committee to confirm their interest in serving on the Subcommittee. (Courtney, Tina, Beth, Jason, others?) Larry asked that someone from Strawbery Banke be included – on the Subcommittee and also as his replacement on the full committee when he retires in January.

As noted previously, Russ and Barbara suggest that it might be better to gather the group and answer the leadership question of co-chairs, organically. Robin suggested that one of the co-chairs be a member of the full committee to keep communication flowing. The other co-chair should be from outside the committee and probably not an Executive Director.

Barbara noted how unusual and valuable it is to have a committee comprised of Executive Directors but also recognizes the time commitment and other demands they must manage. Councilor Cook noted they might ask a deputy to serve on the Cultural Plan Committee.

One member of the public, Michelle Wirth, local music teacher, member of Portsmouth Symphony and director of the Piscataqua Rangers fife and drum corps had several questions:

Q. Does this committee control arts funding? A. No. Decisions made by City Council.

Q. Does the committee process ARPA requests. A. No. Requests are going first to the City Manager and then to City Council.

Q. Does the committee determine the 1% for the Arts that's in the ordinance? No. The City Council makes those decisions. The process is that when there is a qualifying City project, the City commissions public art for that site and the City Council authorizes. The City Council is currently reviewing the concept of creating a Public Art Review Committee so the City Manager doesn't have to form an ad hoc committee to review every proposal the city receives for art.

Q. The Vaughan Mall Master Plan seems to be inactive? The Blue Ribbon Committee on Vaughan Mall crafted a vision and the Master Plan. Then it went to the Planning Board for review and approval for the Capital Improvement Plan.

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Funds are allocated in the FY24 Budget. Once that is approved, an RFP for design goes out to choose the vendor to create a design for City Council consideration for funding. The pandemic, especially in terms of subsequent use of the Mall for outdoor dining, has also impeded progress on the project. Councilor Cook invited the resident to speak during Public Comment at a City Council meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 12:25 pm. Next meeting, Monday November 21 at 12 noon.

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