

City of Portsmouth – Public Art Review Committee (PARC)

Meeting Minutes – July 30, 2025 | 5:15–7:00 PM

In Attendance: Chris Dwyer, Ellen Fineberg, Ernie Greenslade, Beth Hartnett, Jennifer Meister, Lennie Mullaney, Nancy Pearson, Mara Witzling

Staff/City Council: Sean Clancy, Councilor Kate Cook

Absent: Alyssa Murphy, Robin Lurie-Myerkopf

1. Welcome & Administrative Actions

- Meeting called to order; agenda reviewed.
- **June 25, 2025 minutes** – Motion to approve by Jennifer Meister, seconded by Beth Hartnett. Passed unanimously.

2. Project & Committee Updates

A. Temporary Art Guidelines

- Final version presented by Mara Witzling and Jennifer Meister.
- Motion to approve by Beth Hartnett, seconded by Jennifer Meister. Passed unanimously.

B. Public Art Installations

- **Peirce Island Sculpture**
 - Installation completed with exceptional DPW support ensuring stability.
 - Local photographer David Murray documented the process; potential to install a temporary camera to study public interaction.
- **Fairy House Sculpture**
 - To be installed at Prescott Park entrance (triangle off Mechanic Street).
 - Discussed likelihood of children climbing on sculpture; possible temporary camera monitoring.
- **Cabot Lyford Sculptures**
 - Three of four existing sculptures in Portsmouth lack artist signage.
 - Committee to create consistent labeling and consider plaques
 - Stephanie Secord identified as a resource.

C. Connie Bean Center Artwork

- Ernie presented PARC's recommendation that it was more appropriate to treat the proposed display under its donation guidelines, rather than public art.
- The City Council accepted PARC's recommendation and voted to refer the donation to the School Board for review.

D. Legal & Fundraising Considerations

- Ernie and Chris met with Tom Watson, an attorney and chair of the Trustees of the Trust Funds. Tom confirmed that donations to the Portsmouth NH Public Art Trust are tax deductible under IRS guidelines. Cash, checks, stocks, and donor-advised funds can be accepted.
- Bob Sullivan, former City Attorney, has agreed to serve as the **legal consultant** for PARC on donation and contract matters.

E. Portsmouth Historical Society(PHS) Event (July 29) on Vaughan Mall

- Chris Dwyer and PHS Curator Gerry Ward each presented slides on **local sculptures**, including public, private, and historical grave markers.
- Gerry Ward will share his presentation with PARC so we can **update our sculpture inventory** with some newly identified works.**F. Vaughn Mall Redesign**
- The public hearing was heavily attended.
- The proposed plan features **specific sculpture locations and types**; PARC will draft a formal response to the proposed artwork plan.
- **Nancy Pearson** will review the official drawings and solicit committee input.
- The planning process is ongoing with potential for revisions based on both **public and PARC feedback**.

3. Community Events & Engagement

Street Life Celebration

- **August 13** (rain date **August 14**) – community lobster bake.
- PARC will host a table; **Beth** provided photos for display.
- PARC members are encouraged to wear **lobster-themed attire**.

Nebi Sculpture Project

City Council approved moving forward with the project including DPW assessment and soil testing.

- There is a planned event on August 20 from 5:30–7:00 PM at The Green House to promote the sculpture and raise funds for the project.
- Committee **approved funds to create a maquette of the sculpture**, which will support both fundraising and public engagement of the project. Beth Hartnett moved; multiple people seconded. All vote in favor.
- **Legal department** will draft a contract with the sculptor.

4. City Hall Exhibit Space

- **Ellen Fineberg** to oversee and develop:

- Guidelines for art display and sculpture installation.
- A 4-month rotation schedule for exhibitions.
- A **working committee** to establish parameters and selection process.
- Potential collaborators: Arts and Cultural Commission, Art Around Town, and **Amanda Kekesler** (NH Art Association).

5. Art Donation – Vernice Jackson Memorial

- Donation from colleagues of **Vernice Jackson** (Portsmouth Middle School educator, African Burial Ground leader).
- Artwork: **Portrait on canvas over text from W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk***; inspired by Toni Morrison.
- To be **hung at Portsmouth Middle School**; City Council approval required.
- This Committee recommends **protective framing** and **interpretive signage** explaining the portrait's significance.

6. Future Planning & Initiatives

- Invite artist **Vito** to Portsmouth in **fall 2025**.
- Review **Market Square plan** for recommended public art placements.
- Commit to **Education and Public Art Trust competition** and future **parking garage public art**.
- Explore **artistic benches** for public art viewing.

Adjournment: 7:00 PM

Minutes prepared by: Ellen Fineberg