

City of Portsmouth-Public Art Review Committee (PARC)

Meeting Minutes-August 27, 2025

In attendance: Chris Dwyer, Ellen Fineberg, Ernie Greenslade, Jennifer Meister, Lennie Mullaney, Mara Witzling, Beth Harnett

Staff/City Council: Sean Clancy, Councilor Kate Cook

Absent: Robin Lurie-Myerkopf, Alyssa Murphy, Nancy Pearson

1. Welcome and agenda review

Meeting called to order at 5:18 pm

2. Vote to accept minutes of July 30 meeting

Motion to approve by Ellen Fineberg, seconded by Mara Witzling. Passed unanimously.

3. Updates

Resignation:

Chris reported that Alyssa Murphy will be stepping down from PARC. She is drafting letter for city council. Wants to continue working on the LGBTQ project as a volunteer. Mayor will fill the vacancy. Chris invited PARC members to think about potential candidates, especially those with an architectural background.

Spiraling Serenity:

Chris shared the idea of incorporating landscaping (possibly ferns and aloes) that mirrors the sculpture's use of the Golden Ratio for this recently installed Peirce Island sculpture. Landscaping would come from PARC funds. Also discussed an event in the fall to officially unveil the sculpture. Suggested partnering with Strawberry Banke, which is in walking distance of the sculpture. Possibly an unveiling at the site followed by a lecture by Vito DiBari, who is a futurist and a featured speaker. Chris and Sean will reach out to Vito to discuss ideas.

Chamber Street.life:

Street.life on August 13 brought 400 people to Bohenko Gateway Park, highlighting public art through table displays, the program, and the community art project.

North End Monument Dedication:

PARC members are invited to attend on August 29, 11 am.

NH Culture Summit, Concord, Sept. 15:

Kate Cook reported that PARC and Arts and Culture Commission members are encouraged to attend this all-day summit on Sept. 15. A focus will be on how arts organizations move forward in light of the cuts that have been made to arts and culture in the state.

Cabot Lyford Panel

On Sept 2, the Portsmouth Historical Society is hosting a panel of artists talking about Lyford's influence.

City Hall Art Gallery:

Ellen Fineberg reported that there is now an art hanging system installed in the space. She shared an overview of the space, along with ideas for consideration. Lennie Mullaney and Mara Witzling volunteered to help Ellen with this project. Councilor Cook noted that Mandela Pruett from the NH Art Association volunteered to assist; she is also on the Arts and Culture Commission.

Public Art Inventory Update

Beth has identified additional works of public art that need descriptions; individuals signed up to provide descriptions by the end of October.

Fairy House Sculpture

All involved are pleased with the proposed home of the sculpture. Ernie will represent PARC at the unveiling to be held at Strawberry Banke with the Fairy House volunteers. The sculpture will be on display at the Visitor Center during the weekend of the Fairy House tour.

4. Bohenko Gateway Park

PARC voted formally to release PARC funds for the design of a Nebi maquette (\$2500) and bookmarks to promote the Nebi sculpture (\$207.71). Funds are from the Ruth Blay gift. For the first, Chris made the motion and Beth seconded. For the second, Chris made the motion and Lennie seconded. Unanimous approval. Ernie reported that the August 20 fundraising kick-off for Nebi was a success. The fundraising committee is now following up with potential donors. Ernie will send PARC members copies of the campaign materials. The goal is to raise \$125,000 and PARC members are encouraged to share ideas with Ernie and/or Chris for potential donors: individuals, businesses and corporations, and foundations. The sculpture will be funded entirely by private donations. Ernie will provide materials, including donor forms, to PARC members.

Chris reported she's been in talks with Bob Thoresen about creating a bench by Sijia Chen honoring Sue Thoresen, a champion of public art who passed away last year.

5. Vaughan Mall Advocacy Statement

Chris reviewed statement drafted by Nancy Pearson. Beth asked that a line be added indicating that we are looking forward to engaging with them in the future. Statement will be addressed to Peter Rice with copies for Karen Conard and the mayor.

6. Plaques for public art discussion

Jen reported that the goal is "to develop a standardized and easily-implemented plaque program for public art" and shared the guidelines she drafted. Questions include whether plaques need to follow city's sign guidelines and who will fund. Chris and Jen will meet to take the recommendations further and bring back a draft.

7. Feedback on recommendation re: Toni Morrison textile

Chris showed the original 44x35-in. acrylic painting on canvas which will be donated to the city on behalf of friends of Vernis Jackson in her name. The donors are recommending placement of the art in the Portsmouth Middle School (Vernis had a connection there), but are open to other ideas. Recommendation will go to the city council and eventually to the school board.

8. Plan for competition for 400th Anniversary Education and Public Art Trust

Nancy will draft an application, outline, and timeline. Ernie volunteered to work with Nancy.

Adjournment: 6:45 pm

Next meeting

Wednesday, September 24, 5:15 pm, School Board Conference Room

Minutes Prepared by Ernie Greenslade.