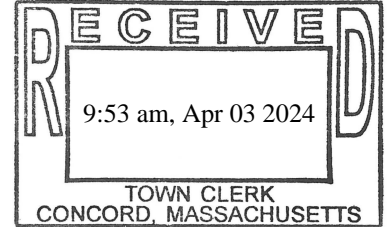


Town of Concord, MA., Meeting of the Concord Arts Committees: West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee; Concord Center Cultural District Task Force; Concord Cultural Council; Concord 250th Arts, Literature and Music Sub-Committee

March 27, 2024, 7:00 PM, Town House Public Hearing Room

Minutes



Attending:

Members of the West Concord Junction Cultural Council: Carolyn Bottum, Sue Beck, Jen Hurley-Wales, Anne Mauk (remote), Helene Clayton (remote)

Members of the Concord Center Cultural District Task Force: Richard Fahlander, Tanya Barteveyan, Carole Wayland

Members of the Concord Cultural Council (who did not have a quorum): Betsy Levinson (remote), Amy Beamer (remote)

Members of the Concord 250th Arts, Literature and Music Sub-Committee (who did not have a quorum): Di Clymer, Margot Kimball, Carole Wayland, Maura Clarke (remote)

Among guests present: Mike Sprague, Pamela Dritt (remote), Mimi Graney, Mary Hartman, Sue Gladstone, Howard Amidon, Wendy Rovelli, Mark Gailus

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, the West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee and the Concord Center Cultural District Task Force convened a meeting both in-person at 22 Monument Street in the Public Hearing Room and via Zoom at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, March 27, 2024.

Carolyn Bottum called to order the West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee (WCJCDC). Sue Beck confirmed that the members present were Carolyn Bottum, Sue Beck, Jen Hurley-Wales, Anne Mauk (remote), Helene Clayton (remote) both physically present and via Zoom.

Richard Fahlander called to order the Concord Center Cultural District Task Force. Susan Beck confirmed that the members physically present were Richard Fahlander, Tanya Barteveyan, and Carole Wayland.

The Concord Cultural Council and the Concord 250th Arts, Literature and Music Sub-Committee had members present as noted above, but did not have a quorum.

Carolyn Bottum welcomed the participants and stated the purpose of the meeting, to bring together the four arts-related town committees with the hope of forming some meaningful collaborations. Each chair will give a short presentation about their committee.

WCJCDC, Carolyn Bottum, Chair: Our charge is to encourage development of resources and sustain cultural assets in our district. Some of the things we've done in the past year include creating of the West Concord Sizzle video, organizing the Porchfest musical day (which gets 2000 to 3000 people each year), assisting businesses to create profiles on the Visit Concord site, providing partial financial sponsorship of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail mural, joining with the business community to provide activities at Discover West Concord Day, participating in the Holiday Stroll and Spring into West Concord Day, and hosting a large meeting of Concord's and other regional cultural districts with Michael Bobbett, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council. In the coming months, we will complete an up-dated brochure/map of the district, a signal box painting project to be completed this summer, a Poetry Phone near the Rail Trail, an expand June Porchfest, a community art project funded by Concord Cultural Council and a sidewalk decal project that will incorporate art from local schools. Our wish list for the future includes new public art every year, new ways to support the arts community beyond public art displays, new ways to support the diversity of the business community and continued expansion of collaborations with other groups.

Concord 250, Di Clymer, Chair: We are not an on-going committee, as we began in 2023 and will run through 2026. Our goals include developing a plan for celebrating the 250th anniversary that includes the contributions of the indigenous peoples and Black Concordians. We want to make sure that activities promote diversity and inclusiveness and allow everybody a chance to participate. Our mission is to promote diverse, stimulating and entertaining arts programs that lead to the creation of original pieces to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the beginning of the American Revolution. We want to reach as many people as possible to stir interest, suggestions and attendance. We note that Minuteman National Park is extending the timeframe of the celebration: they have three themes that will take us to 2032. Our subcommittee is comprised primarily of the directors/leaders of the various art, literature and music organizations in Concord. Our current goal is to craft programs that encourage the creation of works of art commemorating the 250th. We now have two calls for poetry and plan to have a call for art. The high school is having an essay contest. We hope to have more participatory events using the symbol of the lantern. We might plan a community sing. Our biggest wish would be to have an outdoor amphitheater that could be used by the entire community.

Concord Center Cultural District Task Force, Richard Fahlander, Chair: Our goals are to drive economic growth and to strengthen distinctive local character. Since the original Cultural District Committee stopped functioning during the lock-down, we were charged with spending

this year's allocation of funds from the Mass Cultural Council. We earmarked 7K related to Freedom Silhouette by Liz Helfer to be installed in Monument Square by September 2024. The remaining 8K will be for programming related to that installation. We hope the that benches will inspire lots of conversation. We are looking for options for the new committee. Some towns have municipal departments run this, some have made it a municipal committee, others have a non-profit art association. We are basically up for adoption.

Concord Cultural Council, Betsy Levinson, Chair: We are a non-profit chartered by the Mass Cultural Council, which gets funding every year from the Mass legislature.

Massculturalcouncil.org is mother organization. Concord's Select Board and Town Manager give a portion of the budget yearly to support local Concord grant applicants, and we administer those grants. Guidelines are on the MCC web site. Applications are submitted in the fall and we allocate money in December, operating on a reimbursement model. We have an on-going relationship with many of the grantees, not all of whom are from Concord. We get grants from organizations and individuals all over the state. Last year the MCC gave us \$7000 and the town gave us \$2000. We had 48 applicants who wanted almost \$30,000, so not everyone gets a grant. There are seven members on our committee, but we can have a lot more.

A discussion period followed.

1. We have three committees that spend a total of approximately \$39,000 a year. No other funds have been sought, but WCJCDC is currently applying for an MCC Festival Grant.
2. The future use of the land which the prison now occupies was discussed. Selectman Mary Hartman stated that this is all still under discussion, people are definitely considering the arts. She reminded us that the land belongs to the Commonwealth.
3. Various ways to support the arts came up in discussion. Rather than simply thinking of funding individual projects, committees were encouraged to think about an endowment for the arts, creating a performance/gallery space, encouraging existing businesses and organizations to be open to holding public events such as sing-alongs and open mikes and a gathering space for education. The example of Western Avenue Studios in Lowell was cited.
4. The idea of affordable housing for local artists was raised, citing the Fitchburg Arts Community, which is being developed with 68 artist-preference apartments. In addition to housing for artists, it would be great to include artist studios and a gathering place for arts education, collaboration and gallery space.
5. Carolyn Bottum asked the attendees to think of the following questions:
 1. What are our existing strengths?

2. What makes Concord unique?
3. What are opportunities in our environment?
4. Are there common themes or concerns that we have?
5. What kinds of changes do we need to make in the way we work?

The following discussion raised these points:

1. \$39,000 is a relatively small sum, especially if we are working in our own little silos. Could there be an advocacy organization that's also an entity of the town?
2. Individual artists and performers need venues to show their work. Concord restaurants haven't been able to sustain an atmosphere that encourages events like open mike night, sing-alongs and trivia nights. Could funds from the MCC be used to help local businesses create local events?
3. There are larger grants available, but they require more infrastructure. If our small committees join forces, we might be able to apply for larger grants.
4. There is currently a group hoping to turn the historic Wright Tavern in Concord into a gathering place, but it will take some time. They are raising funds and will need to renovate the space. Other spaces in town like the Scout House could be brought back or new spaces occupied for arts.
5. Could a local non-profit be created to raise funds especially for Concord artist space? If dispensing of funds stays within a public committee, the process would be more open to everyone. Different kinds of artists have different needs.
6. Mimi Graney's role in helping our committees is as the town's Economic Vitality Manager, with an interest in promoting the use and enjoyment of our town centers. If we are interested in having a town employee tasked with a focus on the arts, we should take that up with the Town Manager or look for grant opportunities to fund such a role.

The question of whether to hold another gathering of the four committees was raised. Mimi Graney suggested that we might make the next step the creation of a directory of local artists and then meet to discuss other projects. Sue Beck, a member of the WCJCDC, agreed to help create a directory.

Upon a Motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the Concord Center Cultural District Task Force.

Richard Fahlander - Aye

Tanya Barteveyan - Aye

Carole Wayland - Aye

Upon a Motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee which was seconded and approved by the Committee.

Carolyn Bottum - Aye

Sue Beck - Aye

Jennifer Hurley-Wales — Aye

and Helene Clayton - Aye

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 PM.