

Amherst Public Art Commission

November 18, 2017

Members Present: Emma Ayres, Eric Broudy, Amy Crawley, William Kaizen, Ellen Keiter, and Rene Theberge

October meeting minutes approved as submitted.

Chairman's Report

Rene announced the online map is updated and complete (with new photographs by Rene). He is happy with the results.

Regarding some of the fundraising questions brought up at the October meeting, Rene spoke with Claire McGuinness, co-treasurer for the town, who said the Commission can accept donations and apply for grants, but is not permitted to organize an independent fundraising campaign (i.e. Kickstarter or GoFundMe). This may be done by an independent entity, such as a "Friends of the Arts in Amherst" group, which must register as a 501c3 public charity. Amy volunteered to research the possibilities of establishing such a group.

Ellen noted there is a painting at the Jones Library that was restored with funds from the town's Community Preservation Act. She will investigate CPA guidelines to see if grant money can be applied toward restoration of *Poetic Dialogue*.

Conversation returned to the idea of forming an Amherst Arts Council. The general consensus is it would be a good idea to have a single, cohesive body to coordinate all cultural events in town (ideally, the Cultural District would do this). Eric and Emma noted that the arts council in Easthampton has transformed the town; it is efficiently run and has a strong vision. One of the challenges facing Amherst is identifying an individual or organization willing to take up the cause and unite the various audiences. Another is that an effective arts council requires a paid individual to manage the organization.

Cultural District

Eric attended the most recent Cultural District meeting. The committee has planned a second networking event at Amherst Works on December 5th from 7 to 9 pm. (Emma mentioned a conflicting music event on December 5th at the Unitarian Church.) The evening, co-organized with the Amherst Cultural Council, will inform guests about the two entities and what they do, as well as honor past recipients of Amherst Cultural Council grants. Two acapella groups will provide entertainment.

Currently the Cultural District is trying to recruit volunteers to staff its sub committees. Clear communication and cross promotion of events is a goal of the Cultural District, but it has not taken an active role in organizing yet.

XTCA Cross Town Contemporary Art

Sandy Lichfield from the Department of Architecture at UMASS presented on the XTCA Cross Town Contemporary Art exhibition. She mentioned that the artists are assuming liability for their individual projects, but that UMASS is also liable as the sponsor of the exhibition. Four of the nine installations will require building permits and everything will be handicap accessible.

Rene and Ellen recommended that Sandy meet with the Town Manager, the Building Inspector, the Department of Public Works, the Design and Review Board, and the Select Board.

A reception for the artists will be held on September 21, 2018, with a panel discussion at the University Museum of Contemporary Art the following day. The Public Art Commission voted unanimously to endorse XTCA project.

Treasurer's Report

In Daniel's absence, Rene reported a balance of \$657.00.

Percent for Art

Eric said the Select Board re-approved its request to the State of Massachusetts to establish a Percent for Art fund. The paperwork has been returned to the State for passage of the Special Act to authorize borrowing to a special Public Art Fund, to be followed by review and approval by the Attorney General.

Town Hall Gallery

Amy has received two applications to date for 2018/19 openings; she will increase her publicity efforts. Amy will notify the current artist that his photographs require framing or studier supports as they are detaching from their boards.

Planning Board Meeting

As a representative of the Public Art Commission, Eric attended the recent Planning Board meeting. Eric drafted a request to the Planning Board asking members to have conversations with private developers about the possibility of including public art in their projects. (Private developers on private property are still required to go before the Planning Board; the board could encourage developers to consider public art.) With the passage of the Percent for Art act, the town can now demonstrate strong citizen support of the idea. Eric noted the Planning Board seemed open to the idea. Public art will not be mandated for private projects, but some towns do trade-offs, such as granting special permit variances if a developer agrees to pay for public art.

The next step is to send the letter to Christine Bestrup, staff liaison to the Planning Board. After comments and editing, the letter will go to the Design and Review Board and then to the Select Board. The Commission voted unanimously to send Eric's letter to the Planning Board.

The Commission will be notified in January if it received funding from the Amherst Cultural Council for painted electrical boxes.

Meeting adjourned 1:45 pm

Next meeting: December 21, 2017

