

Brattleboro Town Arts Committee 8-5-14 Draft Minutes

Members present: Kate Anderson (Chair) Doug Cox (recorder pro-temp), Hugh Keelan, Nicholas Biddle, Jacob Roberts, Donna Macomber (Selectboard Liaison)
Guests: Karen Cribari, Rod Francis (Planning Director)

The Meeting convened at 4:05 in the Selectboard meeting room. It was confirmed the meeting was warned. A quorum was present.

Public Input: None

CoreArts: Biddle chaired this portion of the meeting to allow Anderson to speak from her role on the CoreArts project management team. We reviewed questions collated from TAC input and statements on the Arts District idea from TAC members. Francis and Anderson responded to the written questions and discussion ensued.

Reports and videos of the CoreArts sessions to date can be accessed at the CoreArts website: *brattcorearts.org*. The team expects to have a findings statement from Track II finalized within 8 weeks. It is expected the findings will summarize the themes and issues covered in the Panel discussions in Track II of the project, and identify topics for further exploration. The CoreArts Project Team are still considering the most effective mode of circulating findings and obtaining stakeholder feedback.

The objective of CoreArts Project Track II is to make available information and resources gathered from the sustained discussion on the Arts community and Brattleboro's sense of place. The findings and video recordings of the Panel Discussions will be able to inform the direction and substance of future arts community actions.

Francis clarified that some US states have cultural districts enabling legislation (see Massachusetts and Louisiana), currently Vermont does not. Unlike historic or enterprise districts there is no tax credit program or special assessment (added tax on properties) implemented with Cultural Districts. For the most part the creation of cultural districts is an organized local initiative to foster cultural tourism. Because there is no Vermont enabling legislation there are no state administered benefits to be derived. There is no legislative barrier to Brattleboro designating a cultural district, if the Town chose to do so.

The downtown area of Brattleboro has its own Zoning District (Urban Center) this is a broad mixed-use zoning district intended to protect and sustain the existing built-form and historic character of the district. No zoning amendments would be needed to establish a cultural district in this area of Town. Generally cultural districts don't require zoning amendments to allow for their creation, they are simply a designation to boost or focus cultural, entertainment and related activities in a particular area. It is unlikely the Town would consider any taxation advantage for such a district.

CoreArts has spent about \$25,000 cash expenses plus in-kind staff time (Town, VAC) so far. The first request for NEA reimbursement will be made soon.

Track III, a community art work, can be organized while Track II is being completed. The team expects about \$50,000 to be available for this phase, some portion of which will be needed for project management, legal costs, and other administrative needs of the Town. A “Request for Qualifications” and proposals is being prepared. The current thinking is that an artist or artists may engage in an interactive process with a wide segment of the community to produce a work reflecting and building on sense of place. The Team is expecting to name a panel to review proposals.

Keelan suggested that TAC is the appropriate body to review proposals and the Town Public Art Policy an appropriate review document.

The Chair encouraged TAC members to submit any additional questions about CoreArts in writing.

Mural in Harmony Place: Cribari reports that the project is being worked on internally at Youth Services. It is expected the wall repair and prep work will happen in early September. She clarified that the images will be made by qualified working artists with youth mentees; that the work will not be “youth art”. BABB has offered storage space for public art materials.

Downtown Brattleboro: Roberts distributed draft copies of a new brochure orienting visitors to downtown.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30

Next Meeting: September 9, 4:00, Hannah Cosman Room.