

Meeting of the Arts and Cultural Commission

June 17, 2024

In Conference Room A at Portsmouth City Hall

Attending: Emma Stratton, chair, Linnea Grim, chair, Ken Goldman, vice-chair, Jeffrey Cooper, secretary, Jessica Dickey, Eli Kaynor, Karen Rosania, Robin Albert Lehman, Genevieve Aichele, Jessica Dickey, City Councilor Kate Cook;

Attending by Zoom: Catherine Saarela, Jason Goodrich and Courtney Perkins

Welcome – Linnea Grim

Minutes from May 20 meeting approved unanimously

Emma Stratton briefed the group on **future meeting general format**

1. Burning issues will remain early in the meeting. If a member has an issue to discuss in this section please forward it to Emma or Linnea in advance of the meeting
2. Special Guests
 - a. Reagan Ruedig to present on behalf of HDC later this meeting
 - b. Chris Dwyer, chair of Public Art Review Committee – July 15 meeting
 - c. Andrea Pickett – Portsmouth Housing Authority – August meeting
3. Beginning in August, reports from workgroups
4. Breakout sessions for the workgroups.

Karen Rosania suggested members of our commission may visit the meetings of these organizations as well. The suggestion was well received.

Emma reviewed the workgroup assignments, which have been circulated previously. Emma noted that work groups:

- May determine their own leadership within the group
- Are expected to meet between meetings,
- Are encouraged to suggest special guests for future meetings,
- May communicate amongst themselves by email using Reply All, as their numbers don't consist of a quorum

Burning Issues

1. Karen Rosania reported on the status of the Home Occupation ordinance, to have 2nd reading the evening of this meeting, with a public hearing opportunity for us to speak in support
 - a. Note that at the July 17 City Council meeting the ordinance passed unanimously, and a 3rd reading was held at that meeting as well, so it is now officially adopted. Details of the change are in the May 20 minutes.
2. Genevieve Aichele reported on grant opportunities noting Federal funds available for creative communities, and the Our town grant for communication. The grant process generally takes two years to complete.
 - a. Gen also took the opportunity to announce that she has been selected as this year's NH Artist Laureate. Congratulations, Gen.

3. New Business - Ben Van Camp of the Chamber Collaborative has written to the City Council asking permission to post temporary branded 'Open' flags for participating galleries in First Friday's Art Round Town. Councilor Cook spoke briefly about the signage ordinance in place.

Note: Subsequent to the meeting the City Manager has determined that the ART flags meet our existing rules/ordinances and therefore will not need to go to City Council for review etc.

Special Guest Reagan Ruedig

Highlights of her presentation:

- Reagan has been on the HDC for 11 years, chair since January this year
- The HDC originated as a response to urban renewal in the 1970's
- HDC has 7 members and 2 alternates
- The area of their coverage is downtown and the South End plus in town portions of the major entry corridors to the downtown
- HDC sees itself as a helper organization, helping property owners develop maintain their properties with knowledge about historic preservation
- Historic preservation is Pillar 5 of the Culture and Arts Plan
- New construction such as in the North End presents a special challenge because it is in the historic district
- Art components of any project is left to the property owners, noting the difference between artwork on private property and on public property, though they do approve items on private property that is visible to the public, like the Ruth Blay painted wall. When artwork is on private property, developers may voluntarily consult with the PARC
- Regarding the solar panel controversy
 - HDC's goal is to have a set of sustainability guidelines that accounts for different building materials, building orientation, and such.
 - Most solar panels are approved, with the goal of being 'minimally visible.'
 - Regarding the proposal to take jurisdiction over solar panels away from HDC, the HDC and Planning Board drafted an amendment outlining guidelines by which they would make decisions on solar panels, but this amendment has been amended by a 5-4 vote of the City Council so that it now reads that if certain criteria are met the panels will be allowed by right, approved by a **city** staff member. HDC would like assurance that the staff member is assigned be trained in historic preservation. This will have 2nd reading at the July 15 City Council meeting.
- Preservation awards have been given to homeowners who have rehabilitated properties in the Historic District with sensitivity as a way to encourage rehabilitation rather than **teardowns**
- The Arts & Cultural Commission can be helpful in communication and advocacy

Robin Albert-Lehman announced her resignation from the Commission due to her pending move to Florida. Best wishes on your new home, Robin.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 PM, followed by informal meetings of the workgroups.