

Minutes Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting

Wednesday, May 13, 2020, 5:30 pm

MEETING CONDUCTED VIA ZOOM

Attendance:

Committee Members: Chair Karen Paul, Councilor Ali Dieng, Councilor Joan Shannon

Doreen Kraft – BCA, Sara Katz – BCA, Mary Danko – FFL, Cindi Wight – BPRW, Luke McGowan - CEDO, Cindi Wight – BPRW, Tyeastia Green – Director of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Lea Terhune – community member

Meeting called to order at 5:43pm by Councilor Paul

Approval of agenda

Councilor Shannon moved to approve the agenda. Councilor Dieng seconded. All were in favor.

Approval of draft minutes from March 4, 2020

Dieng moved to approve the minutes. Shannon seconded. All were in favor

Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 5:45pm. Lea Terhune requested to speak following the Church Street Mural update, and the committee agreed to this request. As no one else from the public wished to speak, public forum was also closed at 5:46pm.

Agenda Items

1. BCA

a. BCA Update

Doreen Kraft provided the committee with a presentation detailing BCAs current happens on multiple fronts. Much of their education and exhibition work has moved to digital platforms. This includes online clay studio demonstrations, artist home studio tours, Family Art Saturdays, and an online exhibition of the 33rd Annual Children's Art Exhibit. Summer art camps and member studio access are being

restructured to follow city, state, and federal guidelines. The hope is to be able to offer these services in the safest possible way with the assistance of the research and analytics team. They are also coordinating the summer Artist Market with the Farmer's Market organization, continuing the art sales and leasing program as situations allow, and creating art kits for hospital staff and patients.

BCA is continuing to work with sponsors, donors, and underwriters and intends to put forth a spring appeal for donations. Though major events such as the Festival of Fools have been cancelled, they are planning a smaller scale concert series on Church St in July. Additionally, BCA staff has been working on the community mask initiative along with other RRC (Resource & Recovery Center) initiatives. The first draft of the Public Art Policy has been sent to the city attorney's office and BCA is awaiting revisions.

The BCA Foundation has created an artist's relief fund that has raised \$44,000 and provided grants to 71 artists who have lost income due to contract cancellations.

Dieng asked how the pieces for the Children's Art Exhibition were selected. Kraft responded that BCA collaborates with schools, art teachers, and principals, and art teachers ultimately select the work to be displayed. The BCA education team helps to mount the exhibition. Though the event that usually accompanies the exhibition was cancelled students will be sent their awards at a later date.

Paul asked about the criteria and application process for the artist's relief fund as well as the average grant the fund provided to artists. Sara Katz responded that that any artists who contribute to arts and culture in Burlington were eligible for grants. They had to provide BCA with information on their loss of income (generally cancelled contracts). The highest amount awarded for any grant was \$500.

b. Church Street Mural

Kraft recapped the work that BCA has done to satisfy the City Council resolution concerning the Everyone Loves a Parade mural on Church St. The requests detailed in the resolution have been completed with the exception of the relocation of the mural. BCA has made recommendations for relocation options and awaits a response from the council. Kraft reiterated that, while ELAP was not a BCA project, they have done their best to work with all parties involved.

Kraft did have an opportunity to speak with Lake Champlain Maritime Museum in regards to taking the piece. Unfortunately, it is not part of their mission and they currently do not have the funds to move, maintain, or research the piece. Moving the mural to LCMM where it might be interpreted in greater depth is not an option.

BCA also did receive the grant for which they applied regarding new public art in ELAPs current location.

At this point in time, Director of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Tyeastia Green read a prepared statement in regards to ELAP (see attached documents).

Following Green's statement, Dieng asked if Kraft could remind the committee of the relocation options as well as provide them with a rough idea of when the recommendations will come before the council. The locations suggested were either the airport or a place where the work could be reinterpreted such as LCMM. It seems unlikely that there will be an acceptable spot in the city to relocate the mural. Green restated her stance that, as a symbol of racism, the mural must be removed.

Dieng asked of BCA had reached out to the business who originally contributed to the mural to see if they would like to take their panels and display them in their stores. BCA has not contacted businesses. Kraft was impacted by Green's statement and will take her ideas into consideration moving forward. She agreed that a creative solution may be in order, but that solution also needs to be legal.

Shannon was also enthused by Green's statement. She commented that, while ELAP may not be able to be the financial priority that it was before the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is still a priority, and the city should look for ways to address the issue that are fiscally responsible.

Paul commented that there is a resolution concerning ELAP coming before the full council at the next meeting, and Councilor Brian Pine has ideas for a removal plan. She also hopes that Green will attend the next council meet. She asked Kraft to provide more information to the council at the next meeting.

At this time Lea Terhune was given her opportunity to speak. Terhune expressed her frustration with the entire mural removal and review process. She feels the grant which was not approved was inappropriate and not properly vetted. She also reminded the committee that there is a mural underneath ELAP that was gifted to the city by local artist Gina Carrera. ELAP artist Pierre Hardy purposefully preserved this original mural when creating his own work. Terhune feels that ELAP should be removed, stored, and the original mural be restored (also see attachments for statement provided by Terhune before meeting).

2. Fletcher Free Library

- a.** Mary Danko took the committee through how FFL handled closing and what they have done to continue their work during the shutdown while their 46,000sqft

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building closed and their 27 staffers working from home. Changes have been made to the FFL website, specifically directing patrons to new online resources and providing users with a web chat feature for immediate assistance. Staffers have created a large amount of new online content and virtual events and activities are shown on their virtual calendar (these are either vetted or in-house produced events/activities). FFL has created a YouTube channel, they are holding Zoom classes, and are doing lots of work and promotion on social media (Gnomes!) in an effort to connect with the community. As with most city departments, some staff has been reassigned temporarily to the EOC or RRC. FFL has teamed up with BSD and staffers travel to meal pick-up sites to provide families and children with books. They have also worked hard to promote the census.

Pick up services have been reinstated and returns will start to be accepted again in a week or two. Books need to be quarantined for four days before they can be processed by staff and go back into circulation. Currently there is no consensus on when they will re-open. They are also waiting for guidelines from the state concerning summer programming.

Danko concluded by stating that Libraries are a much needed resource, and critical when times get tough.

Shannon asked if presenters from outside the department have the equipment they need (such as webcams). Danko confirmed that they do – online events are mixed between city employees and artists.

Dieng asked what the library is doing for seniors at this time. Danko spoke about Alyssa Pierce who is the outreach librarian. She has lost a lot of her patrons in the last two months and it has been a difficult, painful time. The city has started a senior task force (Alyssa is part of the task force), and they are looking for more ways to serve our senior population. The goal is to improve the quality of life for seniors in isolation. Dieng also asked how often the Friends of FFL meet and if their meetings are open to the public. Danko responded that, while the group is a 501C3, their meetings are usually fairly open and they meet monthly.

Paul asked that Danko reach out if FFL needs anything from the city council and thanked Danko and Assistant Director Emer Pond Feeney for their hard work. Danko returned that it feels great when the council or city leadership acknowledges hard work. She stated that, though everything is taking longer than it used to, she's grateful for everyone's patience.

3. BPRW

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- a. Cindi Wight provided the committee with a presentation detailing the new and different efforts BPRW has been making during the pandemic shutdown. Though Kids Day was cancelled, events planner Emma Allen headed the move to a digital Kids Week instead. Activities and videos were shared on the Kids Week Facebook Event page, and a youth talent show was conducted via video as well.

The Rec team has been conducting meal deliveries three times a week in partnership with BSD and Champlain Senior Center. They are also making phone calls to seniors to check in and connect with this isolated population. The hope is to find ways for seniors to get together safely in the near future. The Rec team is also working on plans for summer camps. Recently, allowed group sizes were increased from 10 to 25 as long as physical distancing rules are followed which will make summer camps much easier to produce. They hope to have a final list of offerings available by Monday 5/18. They are also hoping for more guidelines from the state level to help them create safe programming. Wight specifically pointed out the work of Recreation Superintendent Gary Rogers, who has been extremely helpful in multiple ways during the shutdown. She also pointed to the work of new Grounds Manager Paul Morris who has been assisting in improving playground compliance in addition to his regular duties.

The Parks team has planted 2,000 new daffodil bulbs and is working to prepare the parks and public spaces for summer. 265 New trees were also planted over the course of 2 days. Some were planted as future replacements for Ash Trees that we anticipate will be effected by Emerald Ash Borers. 190 trees were planted at our tree farm up at UVM, and 400 additional restoration trees were planted at Oakledge. The marina opening has been delayed, and all prep work that can be done while complying with social distancing guidelines has been completed. The next steps to opening will take place as soon as guidelines relax.

ANEW Place at North Beach is in the process of developing a tent site for individuals who were previously staying in state rented campers. Homeless individuals who were staying in the campers will be returning with their own tents and will be provided with access to bathrooms and support services. The campground will not be opening to tourists this summer, and while it will be a loss of revenue, Wight sees it as a positive – the safety of Burlingtonians is more important. Once this area is completed cars will once again be able to access North Beach (currently people can only walk or bike in). They are also working on exposure control plans for if and when the beaches reopen. There are many other small construction projects that are underway at North Beach as well.

Most waterfront events have been cancelled for this year, and likely the few remaining events will be cancelled as well. Leddy Beach Bites also likely won't happen under the current circumstances, but the organizers are looking at options.

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Wight anticipates that the new dog ordinance will go before the city council in the next month or two.

Due to the city hiring freeze, BPRW will not be able to hire seasonal employees this year. They are looking to the RRC to help recruit volunteers.

Smaller construction projects are now underway. The bike path renovation at Perkins Pier is almost complete. The lake level currently stands at 97.4 (about 1' below average). In order to start work on the barge canal area of the bike path the water level needs to be at 96.5'. As water levels continue to drop Wight is hoping that they will be able to secure permission to start work on that area ahead of schedule. Another small construction project is the development of a new section for burial at Lakeview Cemetery. Lakeview Cemetery Office Assistant Holli Bushnell was particularly enthusiastic about this development.

Dieng thanked Wight and BPRW for all their proactive work. He asked about the possibility of social distancing at beaches and if that's something that could be enforced by the beach patrol. Wight answered that the beaches are currently closed at the state level. Beach Patrol is under BPDs purview, however BPRW is looking to put together a roaming volunteer beach patrol. As with most departments, there is not a lot of revenue coming in. The hope is that some funds will become available when the marina opens and staffing can be supplemented. Currently it is unclear if they will be able to hire lifeguards for the summer season or if the beaches will be reopening any time soon.

Shannon commented that, quite a long time ago, it was suggested that North Beach become a site for homeless individuals. She's glad to see that it's working@

Paul asked about the work on City Hall Park. Wight responded that work is currently a month behind due to the shutdown, and they are hoping to have everything completed by the end of September or early October. On the plus side, the delay means that new plantings will go in at a better time of the year (lower temperatures). Wight is excited for this new, welcoming, wonderful park to open soon. Paul thanked Wight along with Kraft and Danko for their hard work, quick responses, and the tremendous amount of behind the scenes work they have been doing over the last two months.

4. CEDO

- a. Luke McGowan and the CEDO team has spent most of the last two months working on the RRC and other interdepartmental efforts all over the city. That said, he was able to provide updates on a couple of CEDO projects from before the closure.

Consultant Jeff Glassberg has been working with Brookfield Properties to get an update on City Place.

Due to COVID-19, development of Memorial Auditorium has been placed on hold. It is unclear when it will become a priority again, but likely it will be at least a year. That said, McGowan is optimistic that TIF deadlines will be extended at the state and federal level.

Once the construction moratorium was lifted work began on Moran. They are starting with hazard work, water removal, and other critical prep work. The new restrictions have added additional challenges to work on the site, but work is under way. A site walkthrough was scheduled for 5/15/2020. CEDO is working with HUD on timeline compliance requirements. A ceremonial ground breaking will happen at some point in the future.

Dieng was encouraged that work on Moran is moving forward. He also thought putting Memorial on hold was a good decision. He asked where the Language Access Plan stood. McGowan responded that Brian Lowe is heading the project and they hope to bring it before the council soon. The effort on the Language Access Plan has been a collaboration, especially in light of the leadership changes at CEDO in recent years.

The committee thanked McGowan for all the work that he has done during this difficult time.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:55pm. The next meeting will be scheduled as needed.