



**Public Arts Commission  
North Adams, Massachusetts**

Meeting Minutes

January 10, 2018

The North Adams Public Arts Commission held a public meeting on January 10, 2018 at the Eclipse Mill Gallery at the Eclipse Mill Artist Lofts, 243 Union Street #102, North Adams.

Members Present:     Julia Dixon, Chairperson  
                              Erica Manville, Vice Chairperson  
                              William C. Blackmer, Jr.  
                              Eric Kerns

Absent:                 Cynthia Quiñones, Secretary  
                              Gail Kolis Sellers

Also Present:           none

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Dixon called the meeting to order at 5:50p.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Dixon informed the commissioners that Nancy Ziter resigned from the Public Arts Commission effective December 31, 2017. Dixon has requested a meeting with Mayor Bernard to discuss the vacant seat, budget, and goals. Manville and Kerns requested they attend the meeting as well. Manville motioned to approve the following slate of officers: Julia Dixon as Chairperson, Eric Kerns and Vice Chairperson, Eric Manville as Secretary. Kerns seconded. All voted in favor. None opposed.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Kerns moved to accept the Public Arts Commission minutes from its October 23, 2017 public meeting. Manville seconded. All voted in favor. None opposed.

PROPOSAL: ANNAMARIA SEBASTINO: CREATING MAGIC TREES IN THE BERKSHIRES

As Ms. Sebastino was not present at the meeting, the commission agreed to table this item for a future meeting.

#### OLD BUSINESS: PAC EMAIL PROCESS DISCUSSION

Dixon explained that the process agreed to by the commission at the previous meeting did not determine the person responsible for the checking of emails (as she, as the Chair, is not able to check the account regularly) or public comment expectations. Kerns asked why we need an email account at all, to which Dixon replied that she does not want her private account used by the public for commission comments. He suggested switching to a Gmail account, which he agreed to monitor if emails are forwarded to him. Dixon agreed to check with Kathy Wall as to whether the city will find this acceptable. Commissioners agreed that all officers will check the email account, and Dixon noted that any commissioner had and has the right and ability to access the email system at any time. Commissioners also agreed to the following language in an email auto-reply message:

Thank you for your email! We are a volunteer commission with no dedicated secretary, but we will get back to you as soon as we are able. Thank you for your patience.

Dixon then noted that the Public Arts Commission has not set any rules governing the treatment of emails to its city account. As it stands, the expectation is that members of the public may make public statements in person at commission meetings. Emails containing reasonable content that include a request to be read at a meeting are attempted to be accommodated, and emails that do not include a request to be read at a meeting are not. After a brief discussion, commissioners agreed that no emails are to be read at commission meetings unless they pertain to a proposal under review. Commissioners agreed that the following language be added to the website FAQ section as well as the email auto-reply message:

If you wish to make a public comment to the Public Arts Commission, please attend one of our meetings. You may send the commission a written communication and request that it is read at a meeting only if you are an applicant and the comment is related to your proposal. Applications can be found [here](#).

Commissioners then discussed the nature of the questions sent to the city email account by Mr. Smith. Commissioners agreed that individual members cannot engage in arguments, carry on debates, or express opinions about unresolved issues while representing the commission through the publicarts@northadams-ma.gov email address. An individual commissioner can assist members of the public in his or her capacity as a citizen, but cannot speak on behalf of the commission. Therefore, any questions of this type will not be answered electronically, but can be answered or addressed in person at a commission meeting where a quorum is present.

#### OLD BUSINESS: REVIEW OF JOSEPH SMITH MEMO

As per the process established regarding emails, members did not discuss the questions Mr. Smith posed to the commission via email. All members urged him to attend a meeting and raise any concerns he has in person.

Dixon provided an update on Mr. Oberst's proposal to conduct a restoration test on an overpass pillar. Mr. Oberst informed Dixon earlier in the day that he and Christina King met with Joe Thompson and Bruce Odland, one of the two Harmonic Bridge artists, mid to late December 2017. He described the talk as "congenial" and "general" – Mr. Oberst and Ms. King discussed the history of their mural project but did not mention their desire to restore the murals and they did not discuss the restoration proposal. When Dixon asked why they did not mention the proposal, Mr. Oberst said his intentions were "already out there" and expressed dissatisfaction at the commission for not voting in favor of the proposal. Dixon reminded Mr. Oberst that the majority of commission members urged Mr. Oberst to reapply as a joint proposal between both parties after coming to an agreement themselves. Mr. Oberst said that it's not necessary for the commission to mediate, and mentioned that Mr. Thompson said he will "be making the next move."

#### OLD BUSINESS: EAGLE STREET INITIATIVE

Kerns reported that he spoke with Ben Lamb about several Eagle Street Initiative projects involving decorative signage and a parklet and asked him to present the group's plans to the commission for approval before being finalized and installed.

#### NORTH ADAMS CULTURAL DISTRICT UPDATE

Dixon reported that the Cultural District Core Group met on January 3, 2018 to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges in the district. The group set short- and long-term goals and applied for a \$5,000 matched grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council to create and distribute a brochure and rack cards as well as install maps of the district at MASS MoCA. Dixon will send commissioners a list of Core Group members and continue providing monthly progress updates.

#### PUBLIC ATTENDEES CONCERNS

None presented.

#### MEMBER CONCERNS/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Manville expressed concern over the public's view about what the Public Arts Commission is. She suggested that this be addressed in the meeting with Mayor Bernard, leading to a conversation about a budget which will give the commission authority and a purpose beyond vetting applications and making suggestions. Kerns suggested we choose two pieces of city property that we advocate contain a public artwork in 2018. Dixon, on behalf of Quiñones, suggested the retaining wall on Route 2 just after the overpass. Manville suggested in front of City Hall. Kerns suggested the future splash park. Kerns also recommended we stipulate that each artwork involve the collaboration of a local business (providing supplies or equipment), reminding commissioners that the artist doesn't need to be the component of the project that is local. He said this could be an excellent way to bridge a connection between industries.

Future agenda items will include Annamaria Sebastino's proposal review and a Cultural District plan update.

#### NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Public Arts Commission will be determined by an online poll established by the chair.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other business to discuss, Manville moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:47p.m. Blackmer seconded. All voted in favor. None opposed.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Dixon, Chairperson