

Minutes of the Hightstown Cultural Arts Commission Meeting
Wednesday, February 18, 2015
7:30 PM
Caspersen History House 102
Peddie School

People Present

Mike Fabian
Barbara Harrington
Sue Howard
Kat Liao
Ann Marie Miller, ch.
Frank Rivera
Catherine Rodrigue
Jonathan Shahn
Adam Welch

Kerrie Peterson (Public)
Rick Pratt (Public)

Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, pursuant to Public Laws of 1975, Chapter 231. Said notice was advertised in the Trenton Times and Windsor-Hights Herald, as required by law, and is posted in the Borough Clerk's Office.

Ann Marie called the meeting to order. She distributed the read-out from surveys soliciting feedback from Hightstown residents. Ann Marie highlighted some of the comments included in response to the surveys. She said there were a decent range of responses, and she and Sue also printed the surveys on paper. She said Barbara had the idea of having a drop box at the library. Jonathan suggested distributing through the local churches as well, which might have an interest in the culture of the community. Rick asked about reaching out to the schools.

[Committee paused for introductions]

Kat mentioned the virtual backpack as a possible way to disseminate information.

Ann Marie said after the last meeting we wanted to zone in on things we might do this year. Eduardo Garcia was here the last meeting and shared some of his experience at the West Windsor Arts Council. Ann Marie said visibility was targeted and multiple options shared: RISE bowls, lecture series, studio tours, field trips. She said the best we can do is leave with a sense of what we might zone in on and how to pull in volunteers. Ann Marie said the borough clerk has put information on the borough website. This will help get word out that we're here.

Barbara asked about discussing the ideas Ann Marie mentioned.

Mike said generally something like this happens organically. For example, if you have Seward Johnson in town, then something happens. Ditto places like art centers in cities where people are there. Mike said we don't have the people there. If we have an event, who will come to it. He said Hightstown has a history of unfortunate decisions vis-à-vis town development. He questioned whether or not Hightstown is willing to make a longterm investment.

Rick said he thinks Hightstown now has a really good council and planning board interested in doing something to develop and promote the town.

Ann Marie said it's the will of the people who live here to do something. Adam said we cannot expect it to be huge right away. He said there is a surprisingly large community of artists. Adam said one of our jobs is to give visibility to what's happening already.

Rick said the Council and Planning Board are behind the Cultural Arts Commission. Rick said this Commission is part of the borough's master plan. He said the latter is an overall idea of what the town wants. As developers come to town, the borough can share elements, e.g., the parts that make-up the larger picture. The master plan is available online. The latest was completed in 2014, and it reexamined everything back to the original master plan.

Ann Marie asked Rick to distinguish between an arts master plan and public art master plan. The latter is more sculpture, painting, murals, land use, etc. Rick said we want to be able to identify places where Hightstown might place public art or hold public performances. This would help developers see the town as a viable investment.

Adam said he had put together the start of a document that encompasses both aspects of the arts. He said we do have something started. Kerrie asked for clarification. Rick said he thinks the arts master plan might be on the agenda. Ann Marie said we might make that part of each meeting.

Frank said Adam's document is a working document and evolutionary. He said he thinks the Commission is getting its arms around it. Frank said in a previous meeting, the Commission had talked about the possible future use of borough hall. Frank said the building or rooms somewhere are so important. He cited the arts station as an example. Mike agreed that a bricks and mortar facility that becomes the focal point is important. He asked about the possibility of sharing the historical commission facility.

Kerrie cited the gazebo an example of a space used after it was built. She said they are looking for spaces for theater classes.

Rick said the mill owner/buyer are up in the air right now.

Mike said he's hearing we need to develop a master plan and get some stuff started this year. Do we want to start on the meta plan before we start doing things or do we work from both ends.

Jonathan asked for clarification on what's meant by master plan. Frank asked Rick if he has an idea of a model that's a good fit for this town.

Jonathan said it will take some time for a space to be secured. He noted that exhibits and performances can be done without a settled place. He said the Commission might otherwise wait a long time.

Kerrie said the Commission can also become a source that supports local artists. Ann Marie encouraged the group to attend the opening at Twelve Farms. Kat asked about possible spaces for showing. Adam said the fire station is a still a possibility, but the department makes money charging for use of that space. Ann Marie mentioned churches as a possibility. Kerrie mentioned the rescue squad.

Barbara said in October we have a lot of attendance that the Fair. Why don't we try to have an event at the Fair. We might use that as a way to introduce the Commission to the town. Mike suggest we use these sorts of public events to increase visibility. Adam agreed that we should focus on October. Ann Marie said she is looking into a website and has asked Barbara about a logo.

Barbara suggested we bring ideas to the next meeting for the October Fair. Twelve Farms opening is 4:30 Sunday.

Adam thanked the group for continuing to participate in the Commission.

Ann Marie moved we adjourn. Adam seconded. Meeting adjourned.