

METUCHEN ARTS COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 26, 2015

Chairman Grace Shackney called the Metuchen Arts Council meeting to order at 8:05pm. Grace acknowledged that the meeting was open to the public in accordance with the Sunshine Law.

Those present were: Grace Shackney, Henry Chang, Steve Reuter, Dorothy Winhold, Kathy Tardosky, Judy Yin-Chi Lee, Bob Diken, John Sharp, Tamara Hladik, Elizabeth Pallitto, Carolyn Hamming, Carissa Sesitio, Claire Mcclanahan, Nancy Goldberg, Council Liaison Ron Gryzel, and Councilwoman Allison Inserro.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Dorothy Winhold motioned to accept the minutes of the meeting held on September 28, 2015. Bob Diken seconded the motion. The motion was carried by all present.

SPECIAL REPORT:

Councilwoman Allison Inserro gave a report about the ongoing study of downtown management models being conducted by a Stakeholders Committee appointed by the Borough Council last spring. The mission of the Committee is to gather insight and best practices from other towns across the state. Here is a summary of her report:

- Downtown management organizations arise from the creation of a business or special improvement district. These districts operate under the guidance of a board of trustees made up of district stakeholders. The board hires a full-time executive director and, usually, a part-time assistant.
- Allison outlined some of the benefits the study has produced from creating a non-profit downtown management organization include business attraction and retention, sidewalk cleanliness, streetscape design, events coordination and promotion, coordinated advertising and marketing.
- Funding comes from the local government, district assessments to property owners, fund raising and grants.
- The Committee continues to work on identifying district boundaries, budgets, funding, by-laws and organization structure.
- Focus group meetings are being set with Metuchen Chamber members, landlords and businesses.
- A year-end town hall meeting is planned for the public's input.
- The Committee will make its recommendations to the Borough Council in early 2016.

PROGRAM REPORTS:

- **Website Development** - Bob gave a report on the planned website. His committee found a template, and met with the Borough Administrator and hope to have it up & running in January. Claire, Linda & Henry have been working on the website. They would like to have a blog and the ability to push events through email blasts integrated in the website.
- **Community Mural** - Grace reported that the second side of the mural is about finished. There is still some grouting to be done. Will talk with Linda about the dedication.
- **Gallery Brochure** - The Brochure is not finished at this time.
- **Rotunda Gallery** - Grace spoke with Mark of the Rotunda Gallery. The upcoming exhibit (November/December) will consist of 4 artists: Kathleen McKeown and Evan Robbins (art teachers from the Metuchen Public Schools; Pattie Ackerson (art teacher from St. Francis); and Wanda Lei (from the Little Fish art studio). The annex will feature work by Campbell School students.
- **Grants** - Grace reported that two County grants have been applied for: one through Recreation for the METUCHEN ROCKS! outdoor summer concert series (three concerts, with one being Jazz); and a grant to sponsor the DanceSpora Dance Company to perform their outdoor environmental dance piece. The cost for the dance performance is \$4,000 and the grant is for \$2,500. The balance would come from a combination of funds accumulated from our fundraisers and our yearly budget.

PROGRAMING FOR 2016:

- **Newark Bus Trip** - Judy Lee spoke of the proposed bus trip to the Newark Museum, a luncheon and a matinee performance at symphony hall. It will be in February or March. Judy will target Thursdays. The cost would be around \$95.
- **NJ Symphony Orchestra Presentation** - Judy suggested selecting a program with the NJ Symphony to be performed in Metuchen for an older age of students this year. Perhaps a brass ensemble presentation of a variety of music to be held in the high school auditorium. Nancy Goldberg will check on the high school's availability.
- **The Art in the Garden Tour** - Bob Diken is taking over the garden Tour. It will be the last Sunday in June - June 26, 2016. He has three gardens so far. He is looking for at least two more gardens and Arts Council members to join this committee.
- **Family Arts Snowflake Concert Series** - Henry Chang gave the following dates for this concert series. All performances take place at the Old Franklin Schoolhouse. The concert dates are: December 20th (with Danny Adlerman and Yosi), February 14th and March 6th.

OTHER DISCUSSIONS:

- Grace thanked Nancy and Metuchen Recreation for the successful Metuchen Halloween weekend that included pumpkin carving and a pumpkin float at Tommy's Pond.

- Steve Reuter brought up the news that the Forum Theater is for sale for \$1.6million. The group discussed how it would be a shame for the building to be lost as an arts venue.
- Carolyn will inform the Commission on the date for the Arts Council's annual holiday party.

All business being completed, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10pm. **The next Arts Council meeting is scheduled for November 23, 2015.**

Submitted by
Carolyn Hamming
(In the absence of Secretary Terry Kohl)