

**MINUTES - Norwalk Arts Commission**  
**February 10, 2015**

**Attending:** Susan Wallerstein, Chair; Kathy Hebert, Tony Velez, Chris Bradley, Jeff Price, Diane Jellerette (Historical Society), Julyen Norman (Consultant)

Commissioners not attending: Becki Christopherson, Lynn Massey, Sophia Gevas

Business

- Meeting called to order by Susan Wallerstein.
- January Minutes – Approved unanimously with additional language explaining Kathy Hebert chaired the meeting, those absent in January abstained.
- Financial Reports – Reviewed and discussed briefly with approval deferred until March. Expenditures approved but not yet encumbered include
  - Costs associated with Mayor’s Gallery (painting, panels, curator, etc.)
  - Public art walking tour(s)
  - Van/bus tour to various WPA mural locations in Norwalk (match for NEA grant).
  - New WPA wayfinding brochures once murals relocated at City Hall
  - Digital Media Plan (\$1K local/\$2800 grant) which Julyen and team is working on.
  - Staff development, docent training refreshments
  - Norwalk Arts Festival booth
- Finance Director has recommended \$14,305 for 2015-16, subject to BET and Common Council review/approval.

Project Updates

- **Public Art Policy** – Discussion about content and process for gaining support.
  - Change “approved” to “adopted” throughout doc as process will entail gaining consensus public endorsement by various stakeholders rather than Council vote or ordinance.
  - Add language to preface explaining that this is to be considered a dynamic document subject to change.
  - Roll out to City staff to get input/modify, then to their various boards, commissions, elected officials.
  - Pitch: Explain how this policy – informed by other cities, large and small - will help promote high quality public art and address absence of inventory, maintenance/risk management plan, etc.
  - Both new cultural/tourism position and policy referenced in DRAFT Economic Dev’t. Plan.
  - Change new position to Director of Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Preservation, noting that the position could be filled on a short-term project based contract or consultant with ties to Economic Dev’t. and Mayor’s office.
  - Note fact policy not expected to cover school system or City assets under jurisdiction of Historical Commission; also incorporate exclusion for type of program described by Sophia Gevas e.g., Brookside-Fodor Farm-Silvermine.
  - Re: City agencies list on page 5, Sec. II B.: Delete Building Dept., Engineering, Transportation & Parking as they are all divisions under DPW. Add Parking Authority, Transit District, Historical Commission and Norwalk Public Schools.
  - Need to find out if there is any public art “in the pipeline.” Something to find out at staff/department meeting to review inventory and DRAFT policy.

- **Mayor's Gallery** – Tony and Jeff shared current thinking/options based on work they have done individually (Tony spoke at length with person who handles Stamford Town Hall gallery) and together. While Sophia Gevas has had difficulty making our meetings due to work schedule, she has been an active participant in this group. Current thinking with final report/recommendation, including proposed budget in March. All subject to final OK from Mayor's office.
  - Rationale/Benefits:
    - Opportunity for exhibits focusing on local themes/organizations/artists.
    - Contribute to aesthetically pleasing experience for employees and visitors.
    - Both a “pass through” experience as well as a “destination”
  - Engage a curator responsible for executing theme-based plan developed by Commission, publicity/press release & reception.
  - Themes/Concept
    - January – April **DIVERSITY** (Black History, Women, etc.)
    - May – August **CREATIVE ECONOMY** (frame shops, galleries, etc.) & **ARTS ORGANIZATIONS**, Norwalk's Cultural Assets
    - September – December **YOUTH** (schools, organizations, etc.)
  - Infrastructure – Paint walls, fixed display of Norwalk-related pieces on curved walls @ entrance, fabric covered/framed homasote for rotating exhibits. Get Norwalk-related books, small items for permanent exhibit in credenza/book case with glass doors.
- WPA Docents, etc. – Susan updated on various docent groups including Briggs/Carver and Housing Authority 20 West students.
- Partnership conversations – Susan suggested we postpone February conversation to March given impact of weather, Becki's absence, not enough time, etc.
- Public art inventory – Will be part of presentation to/conversation with representatives from stakeholder City departments along with DRAFT Public Art Policy.
- City Hall capital improvement project – Susan announced the mural move will take place on Thurs. & Fri. 2/25 – 26. Group suggested alerting press as especially move through atrium will be interesting to watch!

#### Connections & Sharing / New Business

- Susan suggested we consider releasing an op ed piece capitalizing on buzz generated by the “Outsider Art” group. After brief discussion folks asked Susan to draft something for group review/edit.
- Music Theater of Connecticut (MTC) has been a welcome partner on the Norwalk arts scene. They are looking for Norwalk board members and have already started working on programs with Housing Authority.
- Traffic Graphic – Interest in using any funds available this year to continue the program. Susan said 20 West students interested in working with Jahmane on a new box. Will finalize plans at March meeting.
- Celebration and Recognition event in June. Suggestion that we recognize and celebrate those who have made contributions to art in public place in Norwalk – Dennis for Art in the Windows, Traffic Graphic, etc.; Brec Morgan and Wirth-Salander murals, etc. More discussion in March.
- Discussion about arts related activities in community including mall and Housing Authority arts center. Tony to follow up at meeting in Village Creek (ended up postponed due to weather), and Susan will follow up with Housing Authority to learn more about what they are planning.