

ARTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting of Tuesday, 03 April 2012  
Mansfield Community Center (MCC) Conference Room

MINUTES

. The meeting was \_ at 7:05p by Kim Bova. \_: Kim Bova, Anke Finger, Scott Lehmann, Blanche Serban, Joe Tomanelli, David Vaughan. \_ Tom Bruhn. \_: Ilias Tomazos (Greek Theatre, from 7:50p), Jay O'Keefe (staff). Anke was welcomed as a new member.

. The draft \_ of the 06 March 2012 meeting were approved as written.

\_The Children's Committee has announced two meetings to gather suggestions on the design of a playground to be constructed behind the MCC. One has already occurred; Blanche plans to attend the other one on 28 April and will report to the Committee. The arts component of such a play-scape would probably be limited to decoration, since safety regulations will probably limit equipment to what can be purchased from manufacturers. But artists might also be able to help define a theme for the playground.

\_Kim, Blanche, & Scott met with Christopher Levesque of the Connecticut Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at lunch on 22 March to discuss the possibility of a \_\_\_\_ Scott's report to the Committee on this meeting is attached.

THE COMMITTEE AGREED THAT WE SHOULD □ 1 GATHER INFORMATION ON SUCCESSFUL GALLERIES OF THIS SORT AND □ 2 ATTEMPT TO INTEREST THE COMMUNITY IN PURSUING SOMETHING SIMILAR HERE AND TO IDENTIFY INDIVIDUALS WILLING TO TAKE SUCH A PROJECT ON. KIM WILL SEE WHAT SHE CAN FIND ON THE INTERNET ABOUT SUCCESSFUL GALLERIES IN OTHER COLLEGE TOWNS □ SUCH AS KINGSTON, RI NORTHAMPTON, MA AND ANN ARBOR, MI.

To assess or generate interest, the Committee might (a) invite artists to a meeting to discuss the idea and (b) solicit input from Town residents on what sort of gallery they would like. Joe suggested asking Victor Funderburk how interest was created or channeled to build the Windham Theatre Guild into a thriving arts organization. If sufficient interest can be demonstrated, the Town Council could be urged to get behind the idea, so that such a gallery could be pitched to developers as a Town-sponsored institution. The most attractive vision might be a multi-purpose gallery, displaying art and high-quality crafts, but with space for live jazz or chamber music and facilities for receptions.

Kim has been invited to meet on 05 April with Cynthia Van Zelm and other Downtown Partnership movers and shakers. She will float the idea of a co-op gallery to them and report to the Committee.

\_ Ilias Tomazos reviewed for the Committee the history of the Greek Theatre project on Dog Lane and its current status. The aim is to construct an outdoor theatre here in the U.S., modeled on those used in ancient Greek cities for plays and public meetings. Like Ulysses' fabled journey home from Troy, this project has not gone smoothly or quickly. It ran into opposition from some neighborhood residents, which led to delays, design changes that Mr. Tomazos & his backers thought compromised the original aim of

reproducing a classic Greek theatre, and loss of promised funding. Nonetheless, work on the theatre itself continues, and Mr. Tomazos hopes that it will be nearly finished by September. He envisions the theatre as a site for public events. However, before it can be so used, a support building with restrooms and exhibit space must be constructed. A new architect is now working on new plans for this building. When the new design comes before the PZC for approval, it would be useful to have Committee members and others interested in the arts show up to voice support for completing the project.

David is working on a cover sheet for the art display application form to clarify the options for exhibiting in Town buildings (see item 5d in the minutes for 06 March).

have been received; the local artists Joe contacted have not yet applied. Blanche will coordinate the exhibit of (15 April to 31 May).

Exhibit Period  
ENTRY??CASES

15 Jan — 14 Apr

Kenneth Dubay  
Jan Geoghegan

15 Apr — 31 May  
Mansfield School Art

01 Jun — 17 Aug  
Quiet Corner Photo Club

at 8:42p. Next meeting: 7:00p, Tuesday, 01 May 2012.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 10 April 2012; approved 05 June 2012.

Attachment: Report on meeting with Christopher Levesque

*Kim, Blanche, & Scott met with Christopher Levesque (UConn School of Business and Connecticut Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship) for lunch at Chang's Garden on Thursday, 3/22/12, to discuss creating a cooperative arts gallery in Storrs Center. Here are some notes on Mr. Levesque's very helpful suggestions & advice.*

Starting such a gallery requires (1) thinking through the kind of gallery it will be, both in terms of what is offered for sale and the gallery's ownership structure, (2) developing a business plan that promises to make it work financially, and (3) finding appropriate retail space and coming up with the means to pay for it.

Talk with people who have made cooperative galleries work elsewhere to find out how

they did it. It is important to have successful models to point to. This research should also inform the “foundational documents” that lay out the structure of the business (how co-op shares/jobs are apportioned, etc.) and a business plan.

An arts gallery should be pitched to the Storrs Center developers as a draw for people who rent housing or shop there. If Storrs Center is not an interesting place to live or shop, who will want to live/shop there — aside from UConn students? The developers are investing too much money to want Storrs Center to end up as fast-food emporia, cell phone stores, & off-campus student housing. A co-op arts gallery could be a hard sell if the developers think that there’s already enough of an arts component to the project in its proximity to the School of Fine Arts. However, Mr. Levesque thought that a strong business case could be made for a gallery that pays its way, not through its monthly rent checks, but by attracting shoppers and residents to Storrs Center.

Should the developers go for a gallery, it will be important to get a long-term understanding with them, so that the gallery is not the victim of its own success — priced out of the retail space market when demand for space picks up.

*When meeting with movers and shakers, it is crucial to present a “crisp vision” of the gallery. The Storrs Center developers are looking for quality; they will not be interested in a “trinket shop.” Art should probably be juried. High-quality crafts in a range of prices could increase retail traffic. Should the gallery emphasize local arts & crafts, or should it emphasize high quality work from a wider area — Connecticut or New England generally? Works by UConn faculty & students could be a draw. What kind of retail space is required for the kind of arts/crafts we are looking for, in terms both of interesting artists/craftspeople in having their works there and of displaying these works?*

A fall-back plan — “Plan C or D” — might be space in another store (such as the UConn Co-op’s new retail outlet at Storrs Center), but space in another store should not be the starting vision.

Blanche thought that local artists would come forward with works to display, but she doubted that many would be willing to help run/staff a gallery. But Mr. Levesque thought an intern program with the Business School to do this was a good bet. The real issues are getting retail space and making a gallery work financially.

Next steps: (a) identify successful models, (b) think about what kind of gallery it should be, (c) contact Ted Hunter (UConn School of Fine Arts & School of Business).

Scott Lehmann, 24 March 2012