



Watertown Town Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

ELECTED
OFFICIALS:

Report of the Committee on Economic Development and Planning Meeting Date: February 4, 2021

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

Caroline Bays
Councilor At Large

Anthony J. Donato,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Angeline B. Kounelis,
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Kenneth M. Woodland,
District D Councilor

The Committee convened on Thursday February 4, 2021 at 6:00 pm by Zoom, in accordance with the Governor's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A, §20, relating to the 2020 COVID-19 emergency. Present were Kenneth Woodland, chair; Lisa Feltner, vice chair; and Vincent Piccirilli, secretary. Staff present were Steven Magoon, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Community Development and Planning; and Laurel Schwab, Senior Environmental Planner. Also present were Councilor President Mark Sideris, Councilors Caroline Bays, Anthony Donato, and Anthony Palomba, plus members of the public (see attached list).

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Public Arts Master Plan (see https://www.watertown-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/30818/WPAMP_Report-Final_2021128) Mr. Magoon introduced the plan, emphasizing the importance of arts and artists in our community, and that this is an important opportunity for us to take steps to promote arts and culture in Watertown.

Ms. Schwab provided an overview of each section of the plan and reviewed the recommendations. Mr. Magoon addressed three key recommendations from the Implementation Matrix:

1. The first key step 1A is to create the Public Arts and Culture Committee, as the plan will be driven by this committee.
2. After the Committee is created, the second key step 1C is to budget for at least part-time staff to support the program. Ms. Schwab, who has an arts background, plans to provide temporary staff support this year.
3. The third key step 2B is establishing a process for the Town Council to appropriate annual funds for carrying out arts programming.

There was a roundtable discussion, with the key points summarized as follows:

- Arts and culture are important to make our community a vibrant place to live, work, and visit. There was discussion about how "public arts and culture" is defined and experienced.
- The arts are an economic driver, and they provide a livelihood for both artists and local businesses.
- Diversity needs to be a core principle, to insure the public art is inclusive to all.
- It is important to include local businesses and developers as they are critical to funding success.
- The first of five implementation strategies is to establish a staff position in DCDP, and there was concern about hiring this person sooner than later to make sure the committee hits the ground running with adequate support, and funding options were discussed on how to do this.
- There was discussion about the annual program funding, how they would be paid to artists, and is a stabilization fund would be appropriate to carry unspent money over from year to year.
- The plan did not discuss a method for creating the Public Arts and Culture Committee, as this is a policy decision at the Town Council's discretion, and there was discussion on whether it should be done by ordinance or resolution.

- The question was raised if the Zoning Ordinance be amended to include a specific Public Arts requirement for developers.

Doug Orifice from the Watertown Business Coalition provided a letter of support (attached) and stated how important moving forward with this plan is to the economic vitality of local Watertown businesses.

- ➔ Action Item 1: Councilor Piccirilli made a motion, seconded by Councilor Feltner, that the Committee recommends the Town Council adopt the *Public Arts Master Plan*. Voted unanimously 3-0 on a roll call.
- ➔ Action Item 2: Councilor Piccirilli made a motion, seconded by Councilor Feltner, to ask the Town Council refer the creation of a *Public Arts and Culture Committee* to the Committee on Economic Development & Planning. Voted unanimously 3-0 on a roll call.

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 pm, following a unanimous roll call vote.

Report prepared by Vincent Piccirilli

Attachment: Watertown Business Coalition Letter of Support

List of Additional Attendees:

Emily Isenberg
Jeannette Belcher-Schepis
Roberta Rosenberg
Monica Fairbairn
Susan Falkoff
Janis Hudson
Andy Compagna
Janet Jameson
Barbara Ruskin
Deborah Peterson
Darren Farrington
Lisa Gabel
Doug Orifice
Jason Alves
David Stokes

Town of Watertown
Economic Development Subcommittee
Attn: Councilor Vincent Piccirilli
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472

Via email

Re: Public Arts and Culture Master Plan

To Our Economic Development Subcommittee,

The Watertown Business Coalition is delighted about the completion of the Public Arts and Culture Master Plan and its presentation to the Town. The WBC is wholeheartedly in support of the plan and its mission to integrate and elevate the arts in public settings for the benefit of the people of Watertown and visitors to the community.

We believe that art's ability to inspire, explain, and connect has never been more important. The connectedness that art can foster can increase our resilience. Further, art can enable us to express our identity, our values, and our potential as a community.

We created the Watertown Business Coalition 18 months ago around one main goal: CONNECTION. We wanted to connect our businesses with one another, but in addition, as Watertown residents, parents, volunteers, consumers, and entrepreneurs, we wanted to break down "silos" within our community. The silos are evident among renters who work outside town, workers who live outside town, newcomers, multi-generational residents, age groups...it's a long list. How we accomplish our mission at the WBC will depend greatly on the tools we have to unify our community, and we believe that art and culture may just be the most significant tool for connection we have.

We urge the Committee, the Town Council, and the Manager to facilitate the implementation of this Plan by providing support, infrastructure, and stable financial resources. We are confident that many business stakeholders in Town will see the benefits to participating by providing corporate space, employee time and expertise, and financial contributions.

The bottom line is that this initiative advances current and future important town objectives:

- Public art is good for business. Public art stimulates economic health and will promote revitalization post-COVID.
- Public art brings customers into our retail stores and restaurants.
- Public art improves the appeal of the town for current and future residents and businesses.
- Public art creates a sense of place that people can be part of and identify with...it makes people want to come back to Watertown!
- Public art fosters community building through shared identity and community pride.
- Public art bridges differences through examination and celebration of history
- Public art aligns with educational goals and the continued progress of our Public Schools

On behalf of the business community, we at the Watertown Business Coalition urge you, our elected officials and town leaders, to support the Public Arts Master Plan as an initiative which will yield positive results for all stakeholders in our community.

Thank you for your consideration – and thanks to our Town Council for your continued service!

Sincerely,

Doug Orifice & Bob Airasian
Co-Presidents
Watertown Business Coalition