



MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 18, 2021, 7:00 P.M.
(Via Zoom)

PRESENT: John Sharp, Grace Shackney, Nora Pagel, Mark Harris, Deb Kmetz, Carolyn Hamming, Terry Kohl, Lynne Mueller, Cody Grabbe, Judy Lee, Helen Geary, Nancy Goldberg, Sheri-Rose Rubin, Joe Castranova, Adam Fensterheim, Mickey Waring, Meg Loftus, Shaun Suchan.

WELCOME:

Co-chair, Judy Lee open the meeting at 7:05 p.m. with a welcome to all and an acknowledgement of the Sunshine Open Meetings practice.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM AUGUST 16, 2021:

Judy Lee asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the August 16, 2021 meeting. Mark Harris so move. The motion was seconded by Lynne Mueller and carried by all present.

FINANCIAL/BUSINESS REPORT:

- **Finance Update** - Nancy Goldberg reported that the Arts Council's 2021 budget of \$8,500 was approved by the Mayor and Council in August. As of this date, \$9,564 has been paid on our 2021 program expenses. The Friends of Metuchen Arts Council contributed towards the cost of the Jazz Education program, some band fees for the Art & Music Festival, the Metuchen Rocks series and the grant to Mignolo Dance in support of their premier performance of their new dance piece *Visitors Parking*.
- **2022 Slate of Officers** – In Bob Diken's absence, Grace Shackney read a statement from Bob expressing his decision to move off the Arts Council in 2022 to concentrate on getting FOMAC off the ground and to avoid any conflict of interest between the two boards. He pledged to continue active support as an Advisory Council participant and will continue to supervise the Arts Council website, work with Grace on the Windows of Understanding project and ArtCycle outdoor gallery creation pending a grant from Middlesex County and to continue to work with Lynne on Metuchen Jazz activities. In his statement Bob expressed confidence in Judy Lee's leadership going forward. Grace stated that she will be in touch with Arts Council members before our November meeting to confirm terms of office.

2022 PROGRAMING ITEMS:

- **Windows of Understanding Art Project \$1,000** – Grace reported that we have four agencies along with four artists to work with this year under the topics of Economic Justice, Climate Change and Protest to Policy. We will be working with the Metuchen Presbyterian Food Pantry and artist Dave LaMort; the Urban AG Lab at Rutgers and artist Melisa Gerecci; The Citizens Campaign and artist Olive Bryan; and the League of Women Voters of Greater New Brunswick and artist Ria Mongo. We are responsible for the four artists' commissions of \$250 each. Grace and Bob are in discussions with Berkshire Hathaway to use their windows on Middlesex Avenue for the exhibition as well as to receive a monetary sponsorship for the artists' commissions. The exhibit will be up starting on Martin Luther King's birthday, January 17, 2022 through the end of February.
- **ArtCycle Outdoor Gallery \$9,000** (pending \$7,200 grant from Middlesex County) – Grace reported that our grant application was submitted in the beginning of September. The project involves commissioning 12 artists to create artwork out of recycled road signs that would be placed at the entrances to the Greenway in Metuchen. The works will link stories that illuminate a general community interest in sustainability, open space conservation and how those things can counter the effects of climate change locally.
- **Continuation of the Piano Project with the MDA** – It was agreed to discuss this in committee for further discussion at our next meeting.
- **Galleries of Metuchen Initiative** – Joe Castranova, who will be the Rotunda Gallery Director in 2021, outlined his idea for themed group shows around the theme of artists and activism. He also is developing plans to get all six Metuchen galleries together to coordinate events and art show openings to generate more traffic to the galleries. He suggested a gallery walk/holiday art sale in December. He will involve the members of the Teen Arts Council in creating content for social media posting. Lynne mentioned that several groups: Metuchen Downtown Alliance,

Borough Improvement League and St. Luke's Church are all having events on Saturday, December 4, 2021. It might also be a date to consider for the art walk Joe is suggesting.

- **RiseUp Chorus** – Terry Kohl request the Arts Council support of \$328 for their concert of an original piece of music on June 12, 2022. The money would cover the cost of the high school auditorium rental.

PROGRAM UPDATES/REPORT:

- **Teen Arts Council** – Joe Castranova reported that he will be working with members of the Teen Arts Council to help with Metuchen Gallery events. He will be in touch with Sam McDonald to update him on his meeting with Initha.
- **Virtual Jazz Education Series** – Lynne Mueller reported that five out of the six lectures have been completed via live streaming. They are available on the NJ Jazz Society website www.njjs.org. Twenty-five people attended the October 17th presentation by baritone saxophonist Frank Basile. The last in the series is scheduled for Sunday, November 21, 2021 at 3 PM at njjs.org when author David Hajdu will present: “Ellington and Strayhorn: Alone and Together.”
- **The Rhino Project** – Nora Pagel reported that she has contacted three restoration companies for quotes for the rhino restoration. She is waiting on a final quote and will report back at our next meeting.
- **Metuchen Rocks Concerts** – Grace reported that the Tara Dente concert that was scheduled for August 21st was cancelled due to bad weather at the last minute. The musicians offered to reschedule at some time in the future. The Lonesome Pines/Jivestock concert on September 26th at the garage on Jersey Avenue was well attended and great fun with food and libation provided by Hailey's Pub and ice cream served from What's The Scoop's new food truck. Grace expressed an interest in scheduling future summer concerts in different neighborhoods around town, in addition to, using the plaza.
- **Mignolo Dance presentation of Visitor Parking** – Mark Harris reported the performance was presented in the community tent on Amboy Avenue in Edison on October 10th to an audience of approximately 30 people. A larger production is scheduled to take place in Jersey City in December.

MDA UPDATE:

Lynne Mueller reported the following:

- The MDA's Metuchen monthly newsletter is now available. You can sign up for it on their website at www.downtownmetuchen.org.
- The tents on New Street are coming down in November and not going back up. The MDA is looking for storage and/or opportunities to share or sell the tents.
- Upcoming MDA events include Small Business Saturday on November 27th; a Winter Bazaar on December 4th from 11:00 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the Plaza; A December 30th New Year's Eve Party on the Plaza.
- The MDA raised \$11,000 toward a matching community grant opportunity for which they were not chosen. The MDA is determining how to draw down the money raised.
- The New Street parking lot will be repaved and the meters will be replaced with parking kiosks.
- The following promotional videos are being created: For October – a short video on downtown life; for November – a “Metuchen's Got” promotion; for December – a holiday shopping video.
- Public Art – Public meetings were completed and the artist associated with Rutgers Mason Gross School and his conception for a mural on the side of Angie's Café was given approval.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- The Westerhoff Gallerie *Heritage* show is on our website.
- Bob Diken and Linda LaStella have art showing at Papillon.
- Transformations Gallery at the Old Franklin School is opening their outdoor gallery show, *Shattered*, on October 30th.
- Mignolo Arts is hosting an artists gathering on the 3rd Thursday of each month in their studio. On October 21st there will be a discussion about reaching out for exhibition opportunities.
- Mark Harris is participating in Art Fair 14C in Jersey City on November 12, 13 & 14. Go to www.artfair14c.com for information.

All business being completed, the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

The next Arts Council Meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 15, 2021.

Submitted by:

Grace Shackney, Secretary, Metuchen Arts Council