

**Gloucester Committee for the Arts  
Minutes of Meeting Held on 13 December 2022  
City Hall Conference Room**

**In Attendance:**

Karen Ristuben, Chair

Miranda Aisling, Secretary

Philip Storey

Judith Hoglander

Rebecca Reynolds

David Fields, Community Development Coordinator

Roger Armstrong

**Called to Order at 8:39 am**

**Approved the November Minutes**

**Discussion of Tablet Rock**

- The committee discussed the proper process for restoring the bronze plaque at Tablet Rock. Roger Armstrong joined specifically for this discussion. Several years ago, Roger raised \$11,000 plus dollars which is sitting in the Gloucester Fund to restore the plaque on Tablet Rock. In the past few years, there hasn't been a good process to preserve or restore city owned artwork because maintenance, restoration, and conservation are not specified in the ordinance. In the past several years, a number of private citizens have done their own work.
- The Mayor reached out this morning to say that whatever we do to go forward with this will have to go through the RFP process.
- Roger has worked with a restorer on several projects and Rebecca has a different conservator in mind specifically for the granite surrounding. She's spoken with Jim Montgomery, a local restorer and artist about the bronze plaque. He also lives in Gloucester. Roger has spoken with Steven Roy. They worked together on a sculpture in Haverhill. Both Jim and Steven have worked in foundry and often do restoration work in the field. They're usually less expensive than conservators.
- Rebecca shared that a conservator is technically someone who is a scientist with training and certification, they approach the artwork through science and do a lot of analysis and study of the materials to determine how to treat it. A conservator is an academic distinction.
- If we put out an RFP, where would the funds come from? Roger has raised private funds. We've also talked about applying to the Community Preservation Committee. The next round opens in February. They can accept off-cycle proposals. We could ask the Mayor if there's any money from the ARPA funding.
- The process for the RFP would depend on where the money is coming from. If the city issues the RFP, the city council would have to accept money as a gift prior to the RFP.

- David has suggested that the bronze plaque and the surrounding stonework would be considered one project. If the process goes through the city the RFP's could be split into multiple projects.
- We're talking about three projects: cleaning the plaque, stabilizing the rock, possibly tinting the rock below the bronze. Creating additional signage to contextualize the content in the plaque is important but should be done separately, rather than in the same RFP.
- If there was an RFP process, Steve and Roger would be open to applying for the process using the funds.
- The committee makes a motion to approve the process of creating RFPs to preserve or conserve the plaque at Tablet Rock and the stone around it. Karen suggested the motion, Judith seconded it. Motion approved.
- This will require sourcing funds for the RFP, even if an application comes in fully funded. The committee's next step to be will be to discuss funding with the Mayor

### **Committee for the Arts Ordinance**

- David Fields has sent the Administration the draft ordinance that the committee worked on during the last meeting which suggested that the ordinance refer to a separate Policies & Practices document. The draft can continue to be worked on while we find out the process to get the Ordinance to the City Council. The committee discussed how to get the ordinance approved with a separate document. David suggested referencing how both the Conservation Committee and Planning Board have ordinances that refer to outside documents which set precedent.
- Karen and Miranda met to discuss broad topics that could be used for the Policies & Practices document which have been shared.
- The ordinance has been changed already to take the Mayor out so we have an open seat with a maximum of seven members. Does the Mayor have other candidates and can the committee have a say in who is accepted.
- What we want on this committee is to think broadly about the work going forward.
- The committee had a discussion around who we could suggest to the Mayor as a new appointee to the meeting. Committee members will reach out to their networks.
- David sent the draft language for the ordinance to see how it should be recommended to council. Miranda and Karen will continue to work on the draft ordinance which will go to City Council in the New Year.

### **Frank Davis Portrait**

- Rebecca has spoken with a Elizabeth Merlin, a local conservator, about the portrait who estimates that it will be simple to restore, about \$1,400. The frame would need separate restoration work.
- The committee discussed how to fund works like this and the general lack of funding for the arts. David suggested making a priority list of art that is already owned and needs funding for restoration documenting what needs work, how much it will cost, and what the priority is. Judith and Rebecca R. will work on this.

- There also needs to be an annual budget for work from the Committee for the Arts going forward. The budget will be worked on starting in the New Year. FY24 runs July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024.

#### **The WPA Murals**

- The WPA Murals around City Hall are an outstanding project that previously had an RFP. Williams College Conservation Center was awarded the RFP but the work has not been done. Judith will start working on this and David will look into the funding.

#### **Diane Chen Installation**

- The Committee got the engineering report that says this project cannot go ahead because the existing wall is in poor shape and needs its own maintenance. In their opinion the concrete retaining wall is not suitable to host a wall. The committee has been asked to make a recommendation for other sites that could host the artwork. Putting the artwork on self supporting structures would limit accessibility, so the accessibility ramp is not a place that will work.

#### **New Work**

- Deb Taylor is proposing a new plaque to commemorate the homeless. This was sent to the Committee by Pamela Tobey from the Mayor's Office. The appropriate policies are being established.
- Miranda suggests that we create regular public times for public art submissions when the committee is committed to review.

**Moved to adjourn at 9:58 am.**