

Armory Arts District Study Group Meeting MINUTES

February 1st, 2012

In attendance:

Riverfront Lofts: Linda Cohen; Joan Hausrath; Pamela Hughes

Places & Spaces Realty: Linda Dewing

GDS Studio: Gretchen Dow Simpson

Pawtucket Foundation: Thomas Mann

Nathanson Design: Morris Nathanson; Phyllis Nathanson

Gamm Theatre: Brian Platt; Yvonne Seggerman; Jessica Ann Weinstein

Pawtucket Schools: Debbie Cylke

Meeting commenced at 11:35am

1. Welcome and Introductions Yvonne Seggerman, Chair

Yvonne aims to accommodate everyone's schedules and keep our meetings to about one hour.

Motion to approve minutes of last meeting, December 7th, 2011; passed

2. Bike path – direction through center of the city Yvonne Seggerman on behalf of Mark House (will return next month)

• We submitted a letter to the mayor with our votes from our last meeting, regarding the AADSG-recommended boundaries of the bike path. The mayor will set up a meeting shortly so the community can weigh in.

- **There must be input from other communities besides AADSG; Police and Fire departments must weigh heavily**
- **The work we have done in this group has been acknowledged as helpful by the mayor.**
- **An idea arose in the last meeting with the Mayor to incorporate a freestanding cantilever path along the river. Phyllis Nathanson – this sounds expensive; also, previous similar work in that area has been wiped out by flooding in the past (the flooding is recurring and cyclical, guaranteed to happen again); let's get the bike path in a secure location and avoid this issue.**

3. Economic Development and the Arts Thomas Mann on behalf of Richard Kazarian, Special Liason for Economic Development, Office of the Mayor

- **Recent press release – “Culinary Arts Initiative in Pawtucket” was distributed to members before the meeting and at the table.**
- **The Kazarians have a long family history in Pawtucket; they want this city to be a destination with global significance, focusing on healthy food/living, vegan food, etc. as a part of the city's ongoing revitalization efforts**
- **Forming a cluster of restaurants and education facilities for this project, serving more than just Pawtucket; how do we sustain this?**
- **Phyllis Nathanson – possibly coordinate this project with school nutrition initiatives**
- **Morris Nathanson – tie into Johnson & Wales culinary program?**
- **Linda Dewing – recent city initiative: “Healthy Pawtucket by Design”**

- Pam Hughes – the first lady of RI is also passionate about these issues
- Thomas Mann – no concrete dollar amount attached to the project as of yet, but lots of ideas flowing in

4. Governance

a. Review the mission Yvonne Seggerman, Chair

- We have touched upon voting on governance in the last couple of meetings, but still have not established board members, officers, etc. It is important to establish these roles in the event of a vote for key decisions.
- Everyone review our group's mission statement at the bottom of the agenda; does anyone feel we should add to or change our mission? Include more about advocacy?
- Linda Cohen – it feels like we've already put forth a plan; is our mission to make another plan (as it appears in the statement) or to focus more on the execution? How are we interacting with this plan?
- Debbie Cylke – The Pawtucket school committee is also working on better developing our mission, as well as focusing on long-term strategic planning. The AADSG mission statement is currently in the form of an intention/action statement whereas a mission statement should reflect the group's core beliefs.
- Linda Dewing – perhaps we should not include a concrete year (“2020”) in our statement; keep our goals open and future oriented without the suggestion of a deadline.

- Yvonne – Next meeting we will come back with an idea of our core beliefs. In actuality and in practice, we have been called upon several times to reflect on city issues; perhaps incorporate this into our mission statement. Anyone in this group may email Yvonne with further input.
- Joan Hausrath – are there neighborhood issues that this group would address besides physical/aesthetic issues?
- Debbie Cylke – answering that question will lead this group toward forming core beliefs for our mission; ex: “arts enhance the quality of living in Pawtucket” vs. “aesthetics enhance the quality of living in Pawtucket”

Debbie may be able to find someone to lead a workshop for us to develop these ideas more concretely. It would be good for our group to have something concrete to hand to a new member or to another committee to clearly state our focus and define who we are as a group.

b. Bylaws and members

Linda Cohen

- Linda and Yvonne have looked at comparable associations; they were al slow to evolve into 501c3 status. The message is: we can let the course of things determine the manner and speed of our group’s development; can start acting on issues and let those actions inform the nature and format of our group.
- More immediate concern: what constitutes membership in this group? Who are our members? Who represents what? Ex: We have multiple people from Riverfront Lofts, so do they each get a vote or

does Riverfront Lofts as a whole get one vote?

We need continuity, perhaps a minimum meeting attendance requirement to vote.

- If we are to be an advocacy organization, then can members of city government participate?**
- We have not yet talked about board status vs. membership; we at least need to establish membership guidelines first. Perhaps we will appoint officers until we can establish a full board.**
- Linda Cohen – we need bylaws; is membership limited to the boundaries of the arts district? Ex: we already have valued members of our group, such as Gretchen Dow Simpson and Thomas Mann, who do not come from within our neighborhood boundaries.**
- Yvonne – on membership, perhaps it could work to have our members sign a statement that says, for example, “I will attend 4 out of 6 meetings” and thus make a commitment that results in their membership status.**
- Morris Nathanson – consider several years ago we created the “Delta Plan” which drew a delta-shaped boundary around the Blackstone River; the plan made sense and emphasized the importance of community and protected the river. This plan disappeared because everyone who wanted to give input got a variance; we must protect our own committee against variances; we need political involvement to know when variances are allowed; possibly go to zoning meetings to represent and protect our group and this community.**

This group should also have a say in what happens at the Visitors’

Center because the arts community has brought a significant number of people into Pawtucket.

Essentially, for this group to be productive, we need political awareness and advocacy.

- **Linda Cohen – perhaps a 501c4 status would be better suited / necessary for this group, and sooner rather than later. Thus we would be a non-tax-exempt civic organization.**

- **Phyllis Nathanson – zoning has been a constant problem in Pawtucket**

- **Morris Nathanson – we need a 2-3 person task force to represent us at zoning meetings**

- **Thomas Mann – or get on the zoning committee ourselves; the meetings are open to the public and the agendas are posted 48 hours in advance**

- **Yvonne Seggerman – we have a lot of taxpaying Pawtucket residents in our group here, which may give us an advantage when talking to zoning committee**

- **Pam Hughes – the reality of the zoning committee's power is that you can bring up the same issue (like riverfront access) over and over for years with no progress**

- **Morris Nathanson – Motion that this group create a task force whose job is to be aware of zoning and city council**

Motion carries unanimously.

- **Task force will consist of Morris Nathanson, Pam Hughes, and Linda Cohen**

5. Other Business

- **Thomas Mann – We have been studying other committees, want to study feasibility of business improvement district strategy; we will have a Brown student working on it this semester.**
 - **Phyllis Nathanson – any information on the mill in receivership in the AAD? Classic Display building will be sold at auction shortly.**
 - **The Gamm is looking at renewing its Pawtucket Armory Annex lease with Brian Thibeault; a five-and-a-half year horizon and coterminous lease with all other Gamm-used spaces in the building.**
 - **Brian Platt – Welcome Debbie Cylke; with Tolman here, is there a way that the students can get the benefit of being here? Can we connect our group's efforts to the schools?**
 - **Debbie Cylke – Tolman and Shea are statistically low achieving because of their graduation rates; goal is to create an environment in which students can be more engaged. In this art-focused community, sadly, there is not much strength in arts programs at Tolman. We have received large grants for a music program.**
- *Debbie Cylke presented her strategic planning model for the Pawtucket public schools, including goals for curriculum, funding, and career services.**
- **Phyllis – there is a new retail entity in our district, a flower shop called Small Pleasures Ltd. Everyone should patronize it!**

Meeting adjourned at 12:40 pm Minutes respectfully submitted by Jessica Ann Weinstein

MEETING SCHEDULE

AADSG meets every other month on the first Wednesday at 11:30 a.m.

2012:

April 4, 2012 at 11:30 a.m.

June 6, 2012 at 11:30 a.m.

August 1, 2012 at 11:30 a.m.

October 3, 2012 at 11:30 a.m.

December 5, 2012 at 11:30 a.m.

The intention is to put together a sustainable, long range plan for the arts district surrounding the Armory, and to work through details of how this neighborhood of the City of Pawtucket looks in the year 2020.