

Town of Stowe
Stowe Arts and Culture Council
Wednesday, October 11, 2023, 9 am.

Akeley Hall, Stowe, Vermont
And at <https://stowevt.zoom.us/j/82024726002>

MEETING AGENDA

All residents of the Town of Stowe are hereby notified of a meeting of the Stowe Arts and Culture Commission to be held on
Wednesday, October 11, 2023, starting at 9:00 a.m.

Call to Order 9:15a.m.

Peggy will take notes. Meeting start is delayed due to technical glitches.

Present:

- Rachel Moore
- Carrie Simmons
- Mort Butler
- Beth Liberman
- Peggy Freedson
- Don Jones
- Seth Soloway (representing Spruce Peak for Julianne)
- Loren Polk

Absent:

- Kelly Holt

Introductions by group members for Seth Soloway, new Executive Director for Spruce Peak Arts. Welcome Seth!

1. Public Comments & Adjustments to the Agenda

Add 3 items to agenda: Conversation about the website, discussion of Select Board and Stowe Theatre Guild, and discussion of School Board presentation on capital improvement bond

2. Approval of August and September minutes

Action item for next time: Loren will send out agenda, minutes and Zoom link in a separate email (not part of a thread) at least one week in advance of meeting date.

August and September minutes were not received prior to meeting and therefore, will be sent out in an email for review next month along with October minutes. Committee will vote to approve minutes at November meeting instead of today.

Arts and Culture Commission meetings are open to the public.
For questions about accessibility or to request accommodations please call 253-2705.

3. Discussion of website

Mort: Proposal that we replace the unique calendar on the SACC website with a link to the Stowe Association calendar, with a filter to only show Arts and Culture events. Individual organizations are responsible for updating the SAA calendar.

Carrie asked if there is data tracking number of users of SACC calendar. Data shows very few users.

Mort: Because SACC is a member of the Stowe Area Association already, if all events get connected through Mary, we typically are able to promote all events anyway using the SAA calendar.

Rachel provides background: Mort had built SACC website since part of the SACC mission was to promote arts and culture events with a specific website. And to highlight the Stowe Arts Summer. There's a spreadsheet that all members of SACC receive to add events, but this process is not getting much use. Proposal that we continue to have the SACC website that is linked through the Stowe Area Association and Town website.

Mort: Credit for the website goes to Shannon for building the website. Mort maintained. Stowe Area Association calendar needs to be THE go-to calendar.

Beth: Question about whether anyone in the community with an event or question can show up to our meetings. Can calendar be used to promote SACC meetings as well for that purpose?

Rachel responds that these meetings are open to the public and meant to be a place where community members can bring arts- and culture-related concerns.

Committee members agree that if this is the case, we need to promote the SACC meetings via FPF to make this forum more widely known and utilized. Action item to create language to that effect when we post on FPF to warn meetings. More marketing necessary.

4. Discussion of Select Board and Stowe Theatre Guild

Mort raised concern that while Stowe Theatre Guild was told that it could no longer hold events in Town Hall due to air quality concerns, Indigenous People's Day events were welcomed there, in apparent contradiction.

Mort proposed raising the issue with the Select Board to request clarification and to understand implications for future Theatre Guild events.

Carrie questioned the structure and process, noting we need to set something up, asking what our role is.

Rachel noted the first objective in our charge is to advocate and support arts and culture organizations throughout the town of Stowe. It is the role of the SACC to bring such concerns before the Selectboard on behalf of arts and culture organizations, should they request support. They can also go before the Selectboard on their own. Question raised if we see a gap in art support, or others don't know to come to SACC, does SACC sit back and do nothing? No. We are charged with supporting arts and culture and determined that we can take action and bring to attention of committee when we see gaps (note School Board proposal next and STG as examples). Recommended action: suggest that STG come to SACC meeting to discuss a need for advocacy and support, and what outcome they are hoping for. SACC would like to encourage this for any arts and culture organization.

5. **Brief by Peggy on School Board presentation on the capital improvements bond for SHS/MS.**

At the suggestion of the Chair to have an SACC representative, Peggy attended 9/27 meeting at Stowe High School on \$39 million renovation plan and bond proposal. Event was well-attended. School Board did an encore presentation of what they had presented earlier in the month, with a few updates on PCB testing impacts on the proposed plan. School Board members, an architect, and the Superintendent were present.

Community members voiced concerns about overall cost of bond measure, whether the proposal adequately distinguishes between “needs” versus “wants” (e.g. the need to bring the building up to safety codes and to provide improved accessibility, need to resurface the parking lot), versus the proposal for a new track, gymnasium and locker rooms, and whether there is a “Plan B” should the community not approve the \$39 million bond measure (there is no Plan B currently). Community members also voiced concerns that the proposal is skewed towards athletics, and not sufficiently focused on academic facilities.

Peggy spoke up highlighting the importance of the arts in our community and for our students’ well-being and academic success, and concern over the apparent spending emphasis on athletics over the arts. Tiffany (School Board) responded that this perceived favoring of athletics was not the intention of the proposal, that the arts are addressed through a significant proposed renovation of the high school auditorium, and that studio art classrooms will be improved as part of the budget for general classroom renovation, which will impact nearly every space in the building.

The bond proposal will come to vote at the November election. If approved, it is expected to add approximately \$1200 to the annual tax burden on a median-valued home (700K) in Stowe over the next 30 years.

6. **Committee Reports: Strategic Research Committee, Town Plan Committee, Education Committee**

Strategic Research Committee update: Don presented a document produced by this subcommittee during their first meeting that outlines their plan of action.

The subcommittee will be conducting research into the culture and arts associations/councils of 8 towns in the eastern US known to have vibrant arts communities and well-functioning arts associations. They have asked SACC members to forward the names of any communities that should be included on this list.

The subcommittee has outlined goals for the SACC drawing upon our existing charge and the work from our first Strategic Planning retreat. Upon completion of their research, the subcommittee will propose next steps that include specific actions/strategies that build upon what they have learned from existing model arts and culture associations to strengthen the work of the SACC.

Town Plan Committee and Education Committees are still getting off the ground and will present updates at the November meeting.

Adjourn

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Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 8, 9:00-10:00am

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