



**ARTS COUNCILS &
COMMISSIONS
OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY
APRIL 9, 2019**

DISCUSSION NOTES

1. Public Art Policy

Cindy Armijo (Weston); Kathie Bennewitz (Westport); Nancy Diamond (Westport) ; Jennifer DiLaura (Ridgefield); Suzanne Kachmar (Bridgeport); Laura Lerman (Newtown); Melissa Matuska (Norwalk); Paige Miglio (Milford); John Varamo (Stamford)

Groups were at different levels and different places:

- Norwalk was trying to fold murals into a municipal Public Art Policy;
- Stamford was currently “open and vague - public art is owned by the City.
- Westport has three divisions covering public art
- Ridgefield is just starting the process

HS (Historical Societies?) versus Arts Commission inventories

Ownership and associated legal issues to sort out. (CT Humanities and CT League of History Organizations might be able to help with documentation).

Suggestions:

Perhaps Councils/Commissions could share their policy documents - perhaps create a shared GoogleDrive for councils/commissions to deposit and share documents? These could include: policies, guidelines, legal documents (loan forms, application and other forms) findable by town. Load these as pdfs.

2. Engaging Young People + Working With Schools

Lee Goldstein (Westport); Bruce Hirsch (Stratford); Joanne Kant (Easton); Tatiana Mori (Greenwich); Beth Schneider (Wilton); Lou Ursone (Stamford)

Suggestions:

1. Work with schools, enlist teachers into the organizations (Stratford, for example, has three working teachers on the Commission).
2. Link all proposed activities to the curriculum
3. Get grants. Westport got grants to connect with specific teachers and to work on making links from curriculum to online databases

4. Collaborate with DoE: Norwalk collaborates with the City's Dept of Education on different projects; the Dept contacts teachers. Stratford contacts Principals.
5. Big area to work on: balancing funding, programming and attendance.
6. Reach young people through social media (examples?...)
7. Put students on the Council/Commission board.

3. Inventories

Cindy Armijo (Weston); Kathie Bennewitz (Westport); Bruce Hirsch (Stratford); Melissa Matuska (Norwalk); John Varamo (Stamford)

Suggestions:

1. Use Omeka, software that enables display and multi-search of documents. Have a tutorial in Omeka. Used by CT Collections. Westport Public Art collection is all indexed on Omeka. Critical to use standardized language when describing items and collections; establish criteria for searching; pay a professional to ensure compliance with information standards so your material can be found by others. PastPerfect NOT recommended.
2. Determine ownership and clarify insurance status of objects: who appraised, who insured it. Resources?
3. Start simple: even a simple list of your collection with photographs on a database is a good start - you can always update. Be aware of the importance of the history of an object - provenance and subsequent ownership history.
4. Volunteers are important - but often difficult to manage.

4. Working with Economic Development

Jessica Casey (Norwalk); Nancy Diamond (Westport); Joanne Kant (Easton); Laura Lerman (Newtown); Jen Tooker (Westport); Lou Ursone (Stamford)

Suggestions:

1. Streamline the process for incorporating the arts in both public and private land.
2. Build partnership with municipal offices and get to know individuals so as to create advocates within local government.
3. work with businesses and stores to support the arts and artists (Cow parade; Beach Parade; Make Music Day; walking and bike tours to explore public art)
4. The Fairfield Five should be sure to include the arts as part of their economic development agenda.

5. Diversity

Jennifer DiLaura (Ridgefield); Lee Goldstein (Westport); Suzanne Kachmar (Bridgeport); Paige Miglio (Milford); Tatiana Mori (Greenwich); Beth Schneider (Wilton)

Suggestions:

1. Find the right balance between cultural diversity programs: address everyone, and avoid the the perception of tokenism. Constantly ask questions, be open and sensitive.
2. Seed leadership to cultural equity groups (see [TEAM Westport](#))
3. Use the arts to support conversations about diversity and hate issues (“The arts are *the* solution”) - but always show sensitivity.
4. Use Martin Luther King Day celebrations to establish conversations through the use of the arts and music.
5. Develop Artists Exchange programs between communities: celebrate crossing cultural lines.