

**Westport Arts Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Room 201, Westport Town Hall**  
**February 9, 2016**

The following individuals were present:

**Members:** Frederic Chiu, Miggs Burroughs, Kathie Bennewitz, Sandy Lefkowitz, Eric Chiang

**Co-chairs:** Richard Epstein, Nancy Diamond (TEA Talk only)

**Acting Secretary:** Elise Russi (for Elizabeth Strick)

**Guest:** Trammi Nguyen, Chair PTA Cultural Arts

Nancy welcomed Eric Chiang to the Committee and introduced guest Trammi Nguyen

**Purpose of TEA Talks**

TEA Talks should be thought provoking, educational, and entertaining. We should ramp up the entertaining aspect of the talks and make them more theatrical.

Informal motto: "Universal arts topics made local for Westport."

TEA Talks are also a vehicle to make WAAC's role more visible in the community.

**Future TEA Talk Topics for October 2016**

Note that we should have the topic nailed down by the April meeting so that we can line up speakers and subtopics this spring and summer. We may want to do Horizon Awards with this event, depending on the topic chosen.

1. **Art and Advertising:** How has art served as advertising in the past and how does it serve today? Members noted how successful the New Yorker cover exhibit was by the WHS.
2. **Art and the World We Live In:** How does art affect the choices we make in the broader world – including business and politics? Note that Matt Davies, the political cartoonist, lives in Weston. Art and photographs are being appropriated for use in political campaigns and influencing perceptions of current world events.
3. **21<sup>st</sup> Century Funding Approaches for the Arts:** This topic was explored in earlier WAAC meetings and could be a TEA Talk of its own. Would it have a broad enough appeal or be entertaining?

## **Status of PTA Cultural Arts: Report from Trammi Nguyen**

In its glory days, PTA Cultural Arts received \$20,000 plus in annual funding from general PTA funds and \$60,000 from parent donations at the start of the school year. Parent donations are now \$20,000 in part due to the elimination of paper-based forms. The parents don't always read and respond to the start of year e-mails. The general PTA contribution was only \$10,500 for the 2015-16 school year. This breaks down to \$1700 each for 5 grade schools, \$1000 for each of 2 middle schools, and \$0 for Staples High.

Only the elementary schools have all-school assemblies. They used to be 3 times a year and are now twice a year. At the middle school level, the money goes towards enrichment experiences at the classroom/curriculum level. This year enrichment is being done through the 3 language courses (Spanish, French, Mandarin).

Many younger parents don't know or understand what PTA Cultural Arts does. And PTA Cultural Arts does not have a seat on the PTA Council.

The committee discussed how it might be helpful to PTA Cultural Arts. Committee members agreed that elementary school children are the most critical group to reach for school-wide assemblies with performing artists.

## **WSPAC**

The Minuteman statue restoration is up for a statewide restoration award. The application is being finalized.

Two documents are being created to govern this reconfigured committee, which will hopefully either become a 501C3 or a standalone entity that uses Cultural Alliance as a "fiscal sponsor." One document governs what the collection is and the other how it will be managed. Once the BOE approves the language in these documents, we will discuss and approve it in our committee on behalf of the Town.

Two potential donations to the art collection were discussed. Our Town Art Curator recommended that we not accept them. The committee voted and agreed not to accept the two artworks in question.

## **Town Hall Auditorium**

Upgrading the sound system (\$35K) and black out shades (\$20-\$25K) will be expensive. The co-chairs need to have an informal discussion with the Selectman to understand the likely acceptable budget for these upgrades.

The next meeting will be the second Tuesday of March at noon.

Respectfully submitted, Elise Russi