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ARTS & INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE

The Arts & Institutions Committee of Community Board #2, Manhattan held a meeting on Monday, April 25 at 6:30 P.M. via Zoom.

Arts & Institutions Committee:

Board Members Present: Robin Rothstein, Chair; Coral Dawson; Chris Dignes; Ivy Kwan-Arce; Dan Miller; Rocio Sanz; Georgia Silvera Seamans

Board Members Absent with notification: Susan Gammie

Public Members Present: Stacey Goergen; Jonathan Slaff

Public Members Absent with Notification: Kristin Marting

Other Board Members Present: Jeannine Kiely (CB2 Chair); Michael Levine

Elected Representatives Present: Nicole Barth (Councilmember Erik Bottcher)

There were two items on the agenda.

Meeting Commenced: 6:35pm

1. Presentation by the West Side Cultural Network (WSCN) describing the WSCN's mission and goals.

Jane Carey, Senior Officer of Community and Government Affairs for the Whitney Museum

introduced the committee to a relatively new consortium of large and small arts institutions that is in the process of forming called the West Side Cultural Network (WSCN). Carey was joined by West Side cultural colleagues Mauricio Garcia, Chief Program & Engagement Officer at Friends of the Highline, and Laurel Toyofuku, Head of Marketing and Community at Chelsea Factory.

In 2019, a small group came together in an informal way to form the WSCN, and are now deepening their collaboration. The group started gathering in September of 2019, a few months before the pandemic, and then throughout the pandemic when they met to support one another through the challenges and to share best practices and information. The group explored establishing a regular dialogue and in recognition that our neighborhood is one of New York's great cultural hubs.

Earlier this year, the group adopted a brief that details its ways of working, including some questions regarding eligibility, and the group has clarified and agreed collectively to adopt these ways of working. WSCN Members currently traverse CB2 and CB4 and include West Village Rehearsal Co-Op, Atlantic

Theatre Company, Chelsea Factory, Friends of the Highline, Hudson River Park Trust, Little Island, LGBT Center, Rubin Museum, The Shed, White Columns, and the Whitney Museum. They are happy to continue welcoming new members as they expand.

Mauricio Garcia, Chief Program & Engagement Officer at Friends of the Highline, spoke next about the group's statement of purpose, which is to foster a supportive community and create opportunities for professional growth among the many arts and culture colleagues on the West Side. They are here to strategically identify and activate areas of intersection, resource sharing, and knowledge sharing, and to recognize the diversity of organizations and the constituents they serve. Things WSCN is also looking at include how the members of the network can support one another given the different sizes of the institutions in the group and the access and resources that they have at their disposal. The group is also looking at how it can work collectively, along with government partners and community-based partners to ignite interest in, and participation with, the public's rich cultural capital. WSCN seeks to ensure cultural access across socio-economic groups, other parts of Manhattan, and the other boroughs: How can the network get these people out to experience the culture along the West Side, as well as people who live on the west side who may not see these institutions as "for them?"

WSCN has three sub-committees to address all the tasks at hand: a Public Affairs Committee, a Communications Committee, and an Events Committee. The group uses these committees to share information with each other and with the public and to communicate with local BIDs, community groups, and small businesses.

WSCN was open to ideas from the committee for what else the group needs to think about and for ways to connect with the community. The committee made a few suggestions, including creating a shared calendar of their institutions' events, putting together an arts and culture crawl, and collaborating on a themed event.

As WSCN continues its conversations, considers its geographical boundaries, and extends its membership, the group welcomes anybody to join this conversation that is interested in participating in the West Side's cultural community.

2. New York City Fire Museum Executive Director Jennifer Brown presented on the museum's current and upcoming programming.

New York City Fire Museum Executive Director Jennifer Brown stepped into this role earlier this year. She comes from a business improvement district background and previously ran the Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership, and worked closely with local community boards in her role.

The primary mission of the NYC Fire Museum is to preserve and celebrate the history of the FDNY. The museum is also the keeper of the collection of all the artifacts and history of the FDNY. In addition, the museum provides important fire safety education for school groups. The museum also promotes and showcases what the members of the FDNY do on a daily basis.

Like many other cultural organizations, the NYC Fire Museum has taken a tremendous hit due to COVID-19. Most of the revenue was originally coming through admissions, gift shop sales, and their third-floor event rental space. The museum received a PPP loan at the beginning of the pandemic and they are still seeking grants outside of government funding.

This year they are focused on recovery and bringing people – locals, as well as domestic and international tourists – back to the museum.

The museum opened an exhibition on April 15, which is one of three special exhibitions they are planning this calendar year. The current exhibition is called "Unmasking Our Heroes" and focuses on EMS and what it's like to be on the front lines of an ongoing medical emergency. "Unmasking Our Heroes" is on display through August.

Later this year, in September, the museum will open a display commemorating the 9/11 anniversary. This is an addition to the year-round "343 Room" that honors the 343 members of the FDNY who were killed that day.

The final exhibition of the calendar year will be announced in the coming months.

Otherwise, the museum is holding a golf fundraiser on June 23 and they are looking to partner with local businesses for raffle items. The museum is also looking to restore some of the traditional events they had in the past. These decisions will be subject to what the museum feels they can do safely from a health standpoint. Brown and her team are also hoping to connect with retired firefighters who can provide tours of the museum on a volunteer basis, as they did in the past. The museum is actively seeking retired firefighters to volunteer for tours and for fire education for school group field trips.

For more information on the NYC Fire Museum's latest programs, workshops, and events, please visit <https://www.nycfiremuseum.org/>


Executive

Our next meeting is scheduled for May 23, as the last Monday of the month, which is the committee's normal meeting day, is Memorial Day. We expect to hear from representatives of the Jackie Robinson Museum at the May meeting.

No new business.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:32pm

Respectfully submitted,



Robin Rothstein
Chair, Arts & Institutions Committee
Community Board 2, Manhattan