

Staff: Holli Bushnell, Office Assistant  
Lakeview Cemetery  
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## **Minutes**

### **Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting**

Thursday, January 22, 2026, 4:30pm

**MEETING CONDUCTED IN PERSON AT 645 PINE ST, FRONT CONFERENCE ROOM, AND VIA ZOOM**

#### **Attendance:**

Committee Members: Chair Carter Neubieser, Councilor Joe Kane, Councilor Allie Schachter

City Staff: Sophie Sauve – BPRW, Doreen Kraft - BCA

Meeting called to order at 4:33 pm by Chair Carter Neubieser

#### **Approval of Agenda**

Allie Schachter moved to approve the agenda, Joe Kane seconded, and all were in favor.

#### **Approval of Draft Minutes from 10/23/2025**

Schachter moved to approve the minutes, Kane seconded, all were in favor

#### **Public Forum**

Public forum was opened at 4:34pm. As no one was present or wished to speak public forum was also closed at 4:34pm

#### **PlanBTV 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update –**

Sophie Sauve explained that PlanBTV 2050 is going to be ramping up soon. It encompasses 4 plans – the municipal plan, transportation, BPRW, and an economic development plan for the city. They combining forces for a number of reasons including transparency between departments and a concern for public fatigue concerning the projects. Currently, they are in the process of engaging a consultant. Once a consultant has been selected they will go before the project advisory committee (PAC) as well as begin the public comment process. They are open to different strategies of engaging community members who typically are hard to reach using regular tactics. There are lots of strategies on the board, but nothing has been solidified yet. The plan needs to be adopted by March 2027.

Schachter shared that she's happy to hear they're working with trusted community voices. Wanted to share that the school district has a good amount of translation services and is a good way of getting messages out to the community. There is a newsletter that goes out from Schachter's school that might be a good place to share information. Sauve was very enthusiastic about this possibility.

Neubieser suggested an "NPA roadshow" taking presentations to each NPA to share what's coming in the new plan. Sauve also saw the value of this idea.

#### **BCA Downtown Festivals and Events Update –**

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Doreen Kraft shared that what BCA has started to do is look at their whole organization, especially the events division due to its large amount of growth in the last few years. They've taken over the management of Contois, opened a new space on Pine St, and has been providing programming for City Hall Park without the promised funding from the state. They've undertaken the funding for CHP events, but it's getting increasingly difficult due to the ongoing issues within the park.

Last year they initially planned to cancel Festival of Fools, but with community fundraising they were able to put on a one-day block party. They intend to do the same thing this year, moving it to a two day festival. There will be more buskers and performance spaces, small local partners, and hoping to bring folks back from two years ago. This model is what they're planning to do with all their events. We can still have quality, but we can't afford the breadth of the way we used to do things. The city's contribution is shrinking in terms of the contribution to these spaces. At the same time they're going to non-profits and community organizations and asking if they are able to step up and be involved in existing events. They're listening to ideas from these groups as well.

The thing to remember with this particular circumstance is that the city is not able to provide funds for events. They can help with logistics, permitting, and other aspects, but there are no funds available for these potential projects. The goal is to create magic, making these smaller events seem just as large and significant with less city financial contribution. Some things they city is haven't to put the pause button on, but they will be coming back (albeit somewhat different).

Kraft shared that she would be willing to share budget plans for the future. She is happy to note that they have made significant budgetary cuts while maintaining the integrity of the events they produce.

Neubieser expressed appreciation for the information Kraft provided. He asked if BCA could provide quarterly updates regarding their events and financials. Kraft was in favor of this. He was also curious about how BCA is triaging/prioritizing events going forward. He also had concerns about international tourism in terms of the current posturing our federal government is doing, particularly with Canada.

Kraft shared that she feels we need to think differently about international tourism. We're seeing a much higher percentage of tri-state and in-state tourism in the last few years (although there are no official demographics). Sometimes there is real, raw data, other times it's looking more at traffic information, etc... The cuts that they made are based on the data they've observed (example – CHP is very quiet in August, day time events aren't well attended when it's extremely hot, etc...). Kraft tries to be at these events to observe and make decisions. She does not feel that Canadians will be returning any time soon. They made up 23-28% of our economy, and while we can't give up on that market share, we do need to pivot to the in-state/tri-state model. We have a lot of things that draw people here. We need to focus on those things, stop talking about what's not working and start talking about what is. We have to change our own messaging of our own people, change our own self-marketing.

We are not alone in our issues as well. We need to learn from other cities. Reach out to other communities to see how they've succeeded. The hard part is making time to do that work.

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Schachter shared that seeing events downtown completely changes her experience of being downtown. The work that BCA does really makes a difference in the feel of the city. Is happy to hear the work that Kraft has been doing to make more happen with less. She appreciates their creative pivots. She shared that she's sometimes unsure on how to promote these events. How do we get the word out and own the narrative about what's going on here. Appreciates the concerns about Canadian tourism and knows that we've taken a huge hit. Appreciates the transition to a more regional focus, and encouraged an even tighter focus on the area we market to, specifically in Chittenden County. Would love to discuss further and get an idea on how councilors can help. Kraft liked the idea of coming together at a PACC meeting with ideas. She also feels that it's important to feature activities that aren't events. She's also conscious of the downtown focus, but knows there are other centers in the community that could be featured. We have so many cool amenities and secrete things that you only know about if you're a local. How can we translate that to transient visitors?

Kraft then shared a presentation from Highlight. They sold 4,500 tickets, which was their goal, and they were able to keep costs to participants relatively low, with only a small increase. There were events throughout the city, both inside and outside, fireworks, s'mores, acrobatics, dance parties, and much more. One of the things that was gifted to Highlight was the Fluffy Bus. It has been a big hit in the past and they graciously decided to do the event as a gift to the city. Everything was extremely well attended.

Neubieser thanked Kraft for her presentation and work

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting to be held on 02/26/2026 at 4:30pm at 645 Pine St and via Zoom.