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Hey, All -

Here's a recap of the meeting with Doreen yesterday:

The meeting duration was two hours, called and facilitated by Melinda Moulton (copied).

While Doreen and I have experienced repeated interpersonal frictions in our history, we agreed that the conversation would orient toward moving forward usefully.

We discussed the current dynamics of BCA administration. We discussed the specific challenges of the path toward establishing a new commission. We worked resolutely to find a compromise that would accomplish goals within a framework that we and the wider community could take pride in.

We ended up in agreement that transparent democratic participation in BCA was a next step. We acknowledged that the most difficult, unlikely, and contentious path to accomplish this would be a new commission resulting from a city charter change.

Doreen explained that the current BCA board is self-generating, replacing members internally with an internal nominating committee. BCA Board members perform various roles in BCA governance, from defining mission to fundraising. Many are wealthy, but all consider themselves to be community members supporting the arts. This board operates within BCA and the mayor's office. 21 seats are authorized to exist. 17 are occupied. One is due to be filled or otherwise in transition.

Our compromise proposal was:

With a process IDENTICAL to that of electing commissioners to a traditional city commission, the city would advertise and elect via the city council, five members to the existing BCA board. The process would be transparent, democratic, and create the opportunity for community members to take a seat along side the seats filled in the non-public manner, bringing new leadership, values, and voices to an otherwise gated governing community.

The only push-back in this proposal was relative to the number of seats to be occupied via this election process. Three seats are currently open, making 'three' a convenient number for BCA to agree to. Five seats are typical for a commission, the model we're subscribing to. We considered as well the disruption that five, or three, immediate new arrivals to the board might cause, and I suggested that the new board member elections be paced one seat at a time, each four months, until three seats are filled, then the remaining two elected seats to be filled as other board members' terms expire.

BCA and our cause would cooperatively support and announce this compromise proposal, and make the purposeful statement that BCA/the City and the community, working together, would be advancing the cause of the arts in Burlington. While we benefit from democratic access to arts governance, BCA and the city benefit from recognition for leadership that is open-minded about change and accepting of values put forward by the community itself. We'd all be leaders in this narrative, while accomplishing our goals and a greater good.

Next steps: I have spoken with Councilors Brennan, Paul, and Blais (all copied) encouraging them to recognize the merit of this proposal. Doreen is seeking support from the BCA board and the mayor. We hope to reconvene within days. I'll report the outcome.

I'm looking forward to comment and critique; let's keep the conversation rolling. While I'm confident in the compromise that we're pursuing, I'm only one of many of us, and although I'm making a best effort at progress, I understand that opinions about the best way forward may be diverse.

Thanks for your patience while I pulled this note together; I wish it could have been sent last night! BHW crew night went late, then a second conversation with Doreen took me past bedtime. :)

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