

## **2015 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ARLINGTON COMMISSION ON ARTS & CULTURE (ACAC)**

The mission of Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture (ACAC) is to advocate for arts and cultural opportunities throughout Arlington and advise the Town on matters of a cultural and artistic nature. Originally established under Article 21 of Town Meeting in 1993, but not populated at the time, the Commission was reestablished in January of 2013. The Commission meets monthly, on the first Thursday of the month in the Jefferson Cutter Gallery. All meetings are open to the public.

### **Cultural District Designation**

The Commission focused a great deal of effort on preparing the Town to apply for Cultural District status from the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC). Activities toward this goal include extensive research on cultural districts and meetings with MCC about their Cultural District Initiative. In collaboration with A-TED held a public meeting at the Old Schwamb Mill where, a representative of the Concord Chamber of Commerce and Concord Center Cultural District shared her experiences in developing their cultural district. As required by MCC, a Managing Partnership (MP) was established and is comprised of the Town Libraries, Arlington Chamber of Commerce, Arlington Center for the Arts (ACA), Cyrus Dallin Art Museum, St. John's Coffeehouse, Arlington Friends of the Drama, Arlington Center Merchants' Association, Capitol Square Business Association, and Arlington Historical Society. Preliminary approval by MCC of our proposed district map and asset inventory was received by the MCC and the Libraries are facilitating and communicating the next steps of the application process.

### **Public Art Inventory**

The Commission worked with a summer intern, Will Sullivan, to produce the Town's first inventory of public art. A small amount of work remains to complete the project. An online version can be viewed on ACAC's website at [arlingtoncac.com](http://arlingtoncac.com). More detailed information on each piece of art, including photos, installation date, expected duration, property owner, artist information, materials, budget, and funding sources where applicable, is stored on Google drive.

### **Town-wide Cultural Plan**

The Commission is charged with recommending a long term Cultural Plan for the Town. The Commission has taken several steps to prepare for this process. Commission members sought advice from MCC, the Cambridge Arts Council, and Maren Brown from Maren Brown Associates in addition to conducting research on how other local communities engage in cultural planning. Commission members met with the Town's Economic Development Planner and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) about the possibility of a District Local Technical Assistance Grant (DLTA) to conduct a cultural planning process with MAPC. ACAC members met with Arlington's Town Manager twice to inform him about our options.

### **Arts Advocacy**

In September, ACAC co-chair spoke in support of the Arlington Center for the Arts (ACA) about the future of the Gibbs School building at the school committee meeting. ACAC also attended a strategy meeting at the ACA. ACAC has been in close touch with Linda Shoemaker, ACA's executive director, on supporting her campaign. ACAC also wrote a letter of support for the ACA in support of pole banners for Open Studios. As a result of the impending needs of the Cultural District Managing Partnership, the cultural planning process, A-TED and Arlington Public Art, ACAC co-chairs met with Arlington's Town Manager to request staff time devoted to arts and culture within the Planning and Community Development Department.

### **Coordinating Public Art Projects**

Members of ACAC convened a meeting of Arlington Public Art, Town Planning staff, and Capitol Square representatives, to coordinate potentially overlapping art projects with the needs of the proposed Cultural District. Projects include Mass. Ave. public art, a youth banner project, Capitol Square banners, and an additional potential public art and wayfinding project, recommended by the MCC, to help link the area between the East and the Center to create a single continuous Cultural District.

### **Goals for 2016**

- Facilitate a successful application process to the MCC for the area spanning East Arlington to Arlington Center to be designated a Cultural District.
- Assist in the launch of an Arlington Cultural District, if so designated by the MCC.

- Apply for a District Local Technical Assistance Grant from the MAPC and begin work on phase one of a long-term cultural plan.
- Strengthen our capacity by adding two additional members and gaining access to professional development resources through an organizational membership to Americans for the Arts.
- Continue to advocate for arts and cultural activities and institutions within the Town as well as promote Arlington as an arts and culture destination.