

## Saugerties Town Board creates art commission

The Center of Research, Regional Outreach and Education of SUNY New Paltz estimates that art tourists bring \$23.5 million a year and support 372 jobs in Ulster. With the Saugerties arts scene promulgating exponentially, the Saugerties Town Board took a measure to help out local artists last week, passing a motion at its Feb. 6 meeting to create a formal arts commission for the town.

Supervisor Fred Costello Jr. said that the members of the commission, who will be formally named “in a month or so,” will help organize all of that creative energy.

“[The ramping art presence in Saugerties is] the accumulation of a lot of things,” said Costello. “The artists’ studio tour has been a good platform for artists to show off what they do and get recognition. The recent influx of galleries also adds to that and individual artists have gotten some great recognition. I think it’s an accumulation of a lot of different things that created many successes. The chamber of commerce having a recurring public arts display is definitely a part of that.”

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Costello said the commission will give local artists more opportunities to get grants, as well as the ability to codify all of Saugerties’ artistic resources into one database.

Barbara Bravo has spearheaded Saugerties’ Artists’ Studio Tour for 15 years and led a three-month long exploratory committee to come up with the role of a potential commission. She used a Pablo Picasso quote at last week’s town board meeting: “Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.” She was quick to mention that the commission will not just cater to visual artists, but to musicians, media artists, writers and decorators — essentially, anything right-brained and observable.

“It was felt that it was time to kind of bring everything under one umbrella, so that we would know exactly what is going on, when its happening, who the players are — our cultural assets,” said Bravo. “It’s also about outreach, marketing, letting other communities know what we’re doing here. It’s a big part of bringing in people from outside to enjoy the things that we have.”

Other members of the exploratory committee, who modeled much of the body of the commission’s

bylaws off those of Poughkeepsie, also included Anna Landewe, Opus 40 owner and creator Tad Richards, Shout Out Saugerties champion Suzanne Bennett and Robert Langdon of the Emerge Gallery on Main Street.

“I just feel like art in Saugerties is under recognized and hopefully this commission will give it the priority and recognition it deserves. It will be a platform to enhance the arts and economic activity,” said Langdon. “I think that Saugerties is a really developing art community. I think that there is a lot of creative talent in Saugerties itself, and having a commission would be a wonderful opportunity to welcome the arts into town and collectively really try to make art accessible to the people. “

The bylaws set by the town board give the soon-to-be-assembled body the power to, among other things: expand community awareness of local talent; increase local participation in art; connect artists to each other, resources and venues; encourage employment in creative fields locally; and advise the town board on all art-related matters. How exactly this will work in practice no one is sure, but the town board is currently seeking local artists to help.

Those interested in joining the committee can submit resumes to the town board; once meetings commence, they will be open to the public.

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The advertisement features a stack of three issues of the Saugerties Times. The top issue shows a bald eagle with the headline 'What are you looking at?'. The middle issue shows a sunflower with the headline 'Flower power'. The bottom issue shows a person with the headline 'ALMANAC WEEKLY'.



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