

The Arts in Durham

I am writing this article on the rainy Sunday morning of our premier event in town, the Durham Fair. I am amazed how our volunteers stay so positive and focused, even under adverse conditions. This is more proof of how valuable events such as the Durham Fair are to a community.

Not only does the fair fund scholarships and other grants, provide fund-raising opportunities for local non-profits but also increases economic activity for certain businesses in town. The Durham Fair also demonstrates our commitment to our agriculture heritage, something that we institutionally did by passing an ordinance that created the Agriculture Commission. Wouldn't be nice if we could have similar events, scaled down of course, during the rest of the year?

Resident literary artist Amy Bloom visited me a few weeks ago inquiring about the possibility of forming a town-sponsored Arts Council or Commission. Although we have plenty of talented artists of different media, we do not have a local association for that population to collaborate, organize and promote the arts. I have done some research and have learned that towns and cities that have active arts commissions are not only successful in promoting the development of local talent, but offer opportunities for cultural and economic benefits. Maybe this can serve as a way to also bring our town together for communal benefit such as does the Durham Fair.

I concur with Amy that this idea deserves some attention. I would like to create a task force to research how viable an Arts Council or Commission would be for Durham. This is a similar model we used to determine whether or not the Agriculture Commission would be an asset. Together, Amy and I have drawn up a list of people who would possibly be interested. However, I know that there are more like-minded people who might also like to participate. If you are a practicing artist or simply one who wants to support and promote the arts, please contact me at 349-3625 or lfrancis@townofdurhamct.org and we will add you to the list. We will then meet to brainstorm together and determine how we should proceed. Thanks Amy for a great idea and to all those who strive to improve our community. I look forward to working on this project together.