



Cultural Planning Town Hall Meeting Minutes

ST. HELENA

October 2, 2007 • Napa Valley College, Upper Valley Campus

Presented by Arts Council Napa Valley

Morrie Warshawski, Cultural Planning Consultant & Meeting Facilitator

Michelle Williams, Executive Director

Kristina Young, Program Manager

Kate Demarest, Office Manager

Irina Rozo, Spanish Translator and Arts Ambassador at Large

Live Musical Performance by Michael Howard, guitar

Transcription Notes

- Blue text indicates questions and comments by facilitator, Morrie Warshawski
 - Text in parentheses has been added by ACNV Staff to clarify meaning
 - Quotes were attributed and transcribed as accurately as possible. If you were misquoted, or if a quote was attributed incorrectly, please contact the office via email: cp@artscouncilnapavalley.org
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Morrie Warshawski: Let's find out who is in the room.

Catherine Conway Honig, ACNV board member

Sue Wollack, ACNV board member, Commissioner

Tona Ralto Hill, Napan

David Mendelsohn, ACNV Board

Irina Rozo, artist, translator

Kristina Young, artist, art teacher, ACNV staff

Rebecca Dant, artist

Diane Flyr, artist, former ACNV board member, ceramics, oil

Sanda Manuila, artist

Tom Olivo

Christine Olivo, retired art teacher

Noelle Peterson

Carole Williams, appreciator of the arts

Richard Williams, ACNV Board, meadowood cultural affairs director

Ron Nunn, architect,

Don Fraser, Napa Valley Heritage Fund

Carolynne Gamble, artist, painter

Jennifer Garden, curator at NV Museum, house manager of white barn

Fred Morse, artist, art teacher

Stephen Eyer, teaches at PUC film & television, filmmaker, been working with Cameo Cinema

David Garden, board of Napa Film Institute, works at Nimbus, white barn

Jamie Graff, director of Nimbus Arts

Shelia Mannix, here as an appreciator

Sharon Dellamonica, I. Wolk Gallery, calligrapher

Nancy Garden, White Barn

Judith Caldwell, board of White Barn, arts advocate, new commissioner

Janet Todd, up and coming artist, printmaker mixed

Erica Sklar, appreciator

Lisa Myrick, theater arts appreciator

Ira Wolk, ACNV Board
Mary Fullerton, theater educator in St Helena schools
Beth Myers, St. Helena high school
Ada Press, appreciator
Barbara Ryan,
Bill Ryan, both had art gallery for years
Peggy Darnell, Napa Valley Photographic Society
Pricilla Upton, Napa Valley Photographic Society
Cyd Greer, in real estate, used to have NPO in the arts.
Jeff Holmes, Napa Valley Art Supplies & Cartons and Crates

Morrie Warshawski: I'm going to start the night by asking you about your community. **What makes St Helena special for you? What makes you want to be here? What is unique and keeps you here?**

Shelia Mannix: I've been here 28 years and I love being in a small town. The people know and love and appreciate each other. (I have) been involved in the public schools. It is a really caring, well-knit community.

Ada Press: (We've found) in this community a sense of sophistication, but still a community that comes from the earth.

Richard Williams: This sounds weird, but I like the vegetable aisle at Sunshine (Foods). I think we all do. We see our friends there. It is representative of a small town. It's the ongoing cocktail party and there is something really special about saying hello.

Nancy Garden: And the farmer's market and the Miner Park concerts are so much fun.

Janet Todd: Recently the community came out again to support each other, this community. The skateboard park needed money and everyone went to Taylor's to make it happen. You wouldn't believe the variety of people who came. It really just shows that St. Helenans are there for each other, caring. And financially there to support people.

Erica Sklar: I find St Helena to have an appreciation for things that are beautiful, like the small towns in Italy. People really appreciate the wonderful things. It's not elitist. I think that people are drawn to this community because it is so beautiful. Everyone makes an effort.

Don Fraser: The legacy that Craig Bond has created, the arts he is responsible for, seeing all those kids singing generation after generation. The tribute that was given to him last summer, when everyone began singing (a song) that they had all learned throughout the years, (that) feeling of community was greater there than anything I've experienced.

Mary Fullerton: I've been an arts educator in all of the Napa Valley for the last 20 years and St Helena has always been the place where children's arts are important, because of people like Nancy (Garden) and Cyd (Greer). The arts are cherished here.

Richard Williams: There is an ability here to be an arts entrepreneur. You can have a dream and create it here. It is accepted, and it is supported and you don't find that very often.

Shelia Mannix: I think that one of the reasons that people seem to break through is that we are small enough. We do meet each other easily, and we talk to each other. There is a lot of caring involved and support for kernels of ideas, and follow-through. It's precious. It's easier in a small community.

Carolynne Gamble: I just attended Open Studios the past two weekends and (I was impressed by) the number of artists, the quality and love put forth by all the artists, the quality of the presentation. To live in a valley with that many quality artists is such a gift.

Don Fraser: Another thought: the spiritual community. A good example is the Lenten services, four different congregations share a pulpit on a Wednesday night. That feeling of ecumenical support really bonds a community.

Ron Nunn: The biggest ticket in town is the pet parade, so remember that!

Jamie Graff: Which was founded by an artist who used to live here.

Morrie Warshawski: Why did you come tonight? What made you want to come to this meeting?

Jamie Graff: I'm always finding as I've lived here that, as a parent especially, it's been infinitely challenging to find out where interesting events are happening. There's no central spot to look for things, and I've always been confounded why there isn't a more centralized force to help guide and direct people, those who really want to know what is going on. I find it's hard to find information and I'm excited that someone is now trying to do that. Even our project (Nimbus Arts) has been around 3 years and my neighbors still don't know about us.

Rebecca Dant: I didn't want to be left behind.

Judith Caldwell: I read about it in the paper first. Then Nancy Garden told us about it. And then Nancy Willis invited her art class to go, and I thought if you are invited 3 times or more, you have to go.

Lisa Myrick: I came because I also have a difficult time finding all the events in the valley. So I walked downtown last night, and there were (cultural planning meeting announcement) posters in every window. It is difficult to find centrally located events. So I was really excited about a centrally located organization.

Carolynne Gamble: I for one, working in marketing, am always looking for what is needed, and taking things by that approach. I'm very impressed that you are taking an open approach and asking for feedback.

Morrie Warshawski: I got a call today from a reporter in a different city. He asked what I thought about a new multi-million dollar cultural center. I asked, well, how do you know you need it? He said, well, a couple of us think it's important. I said, what about surveys or meetings to ask what the public really wants? So, thank you.

Unattributed Quote: Both my children are involved in the arts. I went to Ashland last summer, and in applying to that program, my daughter had to fill out a application on ethnicity and population and such to find out what was going on in the community and I was amazed how much we didn't know. I'm also concerned about the lack of adequate space for students to rehearse and perform.

Stephen Eyer: I'm interested in finding out about other filmmakers. I stumbled across a (cultural planning meeting announcement) poster in a restaurant and I decided it was time to reach out and discover others interested in the arts. I produced a student film festival at the Cameo (Cinema) and would love to get more people involved in that. We have more filmmakers (in the valley), and I want to see more of their work.

Erica Sklar: I was thinking about why I came, and I decided that I would come because I am often thinking about how our community is narrowly focused on the wine industry and is becoming more focused on the tourism industry. I worry that we're not making enough opportunities for other things that enrich our lives and we have to go to San Fran or elsewhere to find that enrichment. So I decided to come here (to the meeting tonight). I'd heard about what Michelle said about some of the losses in this community (referring to the arts organizations that have closed in the recent past) and it's really worrying to me. I feel like that is losing part of what has made us special for so long.

Mary Fullerton: Some years ago, 7 years ago, there were a group of people. St Helena was trying to build a performing arts center and all the organizations got together. At that time I was with the Napa Shakespeare Festival, and they asked us what we needed, which was novel at the time- to be asked. We had two large facilities (in the valley) but they weren't what we needed. The St. Helena Performing Arts Theater Foundation actually asked us. They did a survey. I thought wow, this is a good start. They are asking the organizations what they need. That effort has been revived, and that's why I'm here. I want to see that happen. The Shakespeare Festival and the Napa Rep went down around the same time. The young people won't stay here if there is no bridge for the arts in Napa. I'd like to see some of those young artists come back.

Morrie Warshawski: What do you have here now, and what role do the arts play in the community? Does your community value the arts? What are the real issues for arts in St. Helena?

Ron Nunn: Our shining light is the White Barn. (applause)

Nancy Garden: But the White Barn has the same problems, with all the other competing larger facilities.

Judith Caldwell: I was thinking the exact same thing as Nancy. It's often difficult to get people to come to what the Barn provides. People love it, but why is it infrequently attended by the people who love it?

Jamie Graff: I see this over and over again, whether it is a retail business or an arts organization. Maybe it's just a population base issue. If (the White Barn) were in Palo Alto, you'd be bursting at the seams. I think it's one factor. I get asked to put things on all the time. People say we need, need, need (this kind of art class at Nimbus Arts)! So we wrangle and pull people together and only five people show up. If we want fabulous art programs, we have to show up. There is an attendance issue, and that issue is going to drive all these great things not to happen for performance, art classes, the college. It really is attendance.

Bill Ryan: Some part of that is exposure. Some part is about money – the need for funding for advertising. (There is) a need for the newspaper to have a representative here tonight. (The need) to have an arts center, an art section, some activity going on between the groups.

Morrie Warshawski: Communication and marketing is an issue?

Bill Ryan: The lack of audience is dreadful. 20 years ago, I was part of an excellent theater group that had been here for 100 years and there were 2 people in the audience. This goes back to kids- we need internships for Dreamweavers, the White Barn. We need to get them involved when they are 15 so they come back when they are 40.

Morrie Warshawski: What's the population here?

All: 6,000

Lisa Myrick: This is a really important issue. 25 years ago I had a theater company here. We put on one show at Mondavi and had a sold-out house. Then when we tried to move it we had a problem with the venue. And then we didn't have people show up. Then we put on another play, at the old Arts Council building on Behrens Street, and no one came, and then we got shut down. The problem is marketing, and population base. It's never been solved. I worked at Napa Rep and it went under too. I don't hear anything about the White Barn in Napa, so what are you doing to get down-valley folks to go? I don't read *The Register*, so I can't get my information that way.

Kate Demarest: Here's my every night plug: On the Arts Council website there is an arts & culture calendar that lists everything that is going on – music, theater, children's events, at the Lincoln Theater, the Opera House. If you have events and you want to know what is going on, go to nvarts.org. If you are an organization, it's really simple to post. That is one problem that is semi-solved.

Sheila Mannix: I think that I have my own art background experience and that was with the farmer's market here in St Helena. When an artist who works so hard to put something together, and works really hard to make it happen, promotion is difficult. It's expensive. It's hard. It takes a lot of people too. The last two weekends Open Studios (happened). It's a huge effort to market a program like that, and I'm hoping it was extremely successful.

Beth Myers: I'm just thinking about, in general, the events that people do turn out for: bocce ball, the pet parade. The thing to do to get people involved is (involving) the whole family. Those are the events that people hang out at and love.

Erica Sklar: Are you familiar with the go-city program on the computer? You can go to different cities and sign up for e-newsletters. Every Thursday I get an email for San Francisco that highlights what is going on that weekend. Maybe we are too small a valley, but if an organization like yours could do something like that, I wonder if that would be helpful.

Morrie Warshawski: How do you get your info about events? Email, snail mail, posters, word of mouth? (Posters and word of mouth got the most hands)

Bill Ryan: From the *St. Helena Star*.

Lisa Myrick: The Arts Council was saying how we are always using the same donor base, maybe we need to diversify and broaden our audience as well.

Jamie Graff: Maybe we create a world-pass of communication. If someone asks us about art opportunities, we could start to share and spread the word to other organizations who also have classes. (We could become) more of a community of people who provide these experiences, so we can give out each other's information. (It could be) more of a global thing.

Richard Williams: In listening, I think we are talking mostly about performing arts, and I think we need to recognize that the Opera House, the Lincoln Theater and Copia have taken a lot of the audience we had here at one time. Even my programs at Meadowood – we have changed the programs drastically. We brought the Vienna Choir Boys, fabulous string quartets and I don't do it anymore. It's primarily a lecture series and the opera and a few other events, and not the kind of events that I would have brought ten years ago. So, the reality is that you may have to do some changing, readjust our programming philosophy. The three major venues have had a major effect on our performing arts programming.

Shelia Mannix: Maybe there is so much here now, and in all realms, that we are barraged by all the choices. Although they help promote appreciation, there is a lot to go see and go do, and we do have to make choices.

Richard Williams: What I see are very large audiences for the events that are personal to us. Craig Bond, Mr. Music, gets a huge crowd, and well-deserved. But it's community again, it's not someone from the outside coming in to do a great performance. Getting back to your first question: there is that love of community.

Jamie Graff: When we think about things like Music in the Park, we've been trying to get some collaborations together, and the city paperwork, insurance forms, insurance requirements, are boggling. We're trying to do a portable mural project. I've been working for months to make this happen and it hasn't happened yet. If we are a community that is interested in bringing culture to the public, we need to look at that so we can make it more art-friendly so people can see what is happening. Right now it is not allowed or easy to do. We need to talk to our council members to address that.

Noelle Peterson: I don't think we have a home base. A room, or a designation that people could feel connected to. Everything is separate.

Janet Todd: In regards to the amount of paperwork, the (Open Studios) artists in St Helena had to pay a permit fee. None of the other artists (in the other cities) had to pay anything. It was really disheartening.

Lisa Myrick: The artist I saw in Napa said she had to get a permit to sell something. She had to go downtown to sell legally. By the time she does that, pays for all that, transports everything, it's disheartening. Artists don't like to deal with that stuff.

Janet Todd: it would be nice to spend that money in marketing and have professional exhibits so local artists are treated like artists in the galleries.

Mary Fullerton: I know a little bit about the history of this very room. This was supposed to be a performing arts room. Although you can't have more than 50 people at one time, this was supposed to be an arts home base. You look at the listings that the college has for this campus, I don't know how this has been used.

Jennifer Garden: For the visual arts, it's pretty well utilized.

Nancy Willis: We have a designated room for arts classes, both credited and no-credited.

Janet Todd: (One of) the gems or the assets of St Helena is having access to the Upper Valley classes. It's affordable and great.

Mary Fullerton: Do you see the potential, though, of what could be here?

Morrie Warshawski: Think forward in the future. **I'd like you to imagine what could happen 3-5 years from now, if people put their minds and pocketbooks together to change the arts scene: What would that look like? How would the city be different? How would the arts be different?**

Nancy Willis: I've been an artist here for 25 years, I would ask for available studio space. I am holding on by a thread. And I can't tell you how many artists ask me for available space. So available, affordable studio space. More importantly, is exhibiting space, places to show. And in designated spaces to show

art. Not just at businesses and wineries, but where can installation work be shown, (where) video work (can be shown). Also, where is the hotel tax? We need public money for the arts.

Noelle Peterson: What used to be the cement works is now the Napa Valley outlets, anyone with really deep pockets. It's got Nimbus now, you've room to do anything.

Morrie Warshawski: [So your vision is to see more arts there.](#)

Sanda Manuilla: It would be really great to have an artist co-op.

Bill Ryan: I want to talk about Dreamweavers. They are a wonderful company. We've been to many shows, for \$18. It's a very high-class theater. The fire is already lit, how do we broaden it? We need a theater for them. I'd (like to) see them on the road. If they came up here, they would double the house in Napa. We go regularly, but don't see St Helenans down there. (I would also like to see them offer) externships, where kids could shadow the lighting guy. We need a place for them to play up here.

Stephen Eyer: A small theater like the Cameo, hopefully it continues to exist. I'd love to see more local filmmakers being able to show their work to the community.

Carolynne Gamble: I want to see Open Studios draw as many people as the Mustard Festival, and have the same marketing budget.

Mary Fullerton: We have a theater space up here but it has rodents! We have a facility with no air in the summer. No heat in the winter. Craig Bond has been working for 30 years, and he deserves a classroom that is not in the back of this facility that is not dilapidated. He needs it, the kids need it. He is a saint, a wonderful man, and should he have to deal with that? Respect those kids. And we need a world-class performing arts center. Or, even, just a functioning performing arts center!

Richard Williams: I think that in the next 3-5 years that will happen. The auditorium is not going to be rebuilt like it once was. In terms of funding, there is a plan in effect for exactly that, because everyone appreciates what Craig has done. There will be a smaller facility, with a small black box.

Mary Fullerton: There is going to be a classroom that will be a performing arts classroom, so it's been scaled back, but it's still a 500 seat house.

Nancy Garden: But that is strictly for schools, right?

Shelia Mannix: No, it's for the community.

Nancy Garden: Then where is the high school going to perform?

Shelia Mannix: They will have priority.

David Garden: A 500 seat theater, do we have the population base for that? We can't fill a much smaller theater right now. I envision an arts center that incorporates all the arts. Film, video, performing, visual, to play off each other.

Jennifer Garden: Does that have to happen in St Helena?

Morrie Warshawski: [Where do you see it?](#)

Lisa Myrick: I can't imagine us being able to afford that.

Jamie Graff: We're trying to create a community arts center here. We've been working really hard to secure support to establish a small but all-encompassing arts center. Nimbus Art's goal is to create that center, to give artists the opportunity to support themselves and to provide programming that speaks to our whole community. We find it very challenging. We need more support.

Lisa Myrick: In Fairfield they have a performing arts center that is very large. It's all underwritten by Anheuser Busch. In the wine business, we don't have Mr. Winery. We have thousands and it makes it more difficult to bring all that money into one spot.

Jamie Graff: That's where the arts community could help them make that good decision.

Morrie Warshawski: What about practical actions that could happen short term? I'm going to break you into small groups, and I want you each to come back to me with five ideas.

Group #1 (Bill Ryan speaks for group): It wasn't easy, everyone had an opinion!

- Ask the *St. Helena Star* to focus on arts;
- It's time to break the wine industry out of just health care. They are marvelous through the (wine) auction, a most incredibly operation, but we need to broaden (their focus to include) the arts;
- City Council: Get three people at each meeting, so (the council members can) take that as the public's word. If you put these fifty people into the City Council, at least we could goose them along as an important force in the valley. (We need) arts advocates at City Council;
- This could be something for the Arts Council: There needs to be a more focused marketing PR thrust, and we need an entity to be that. Maybe we all need to chip in and help them do that.
- Create a kiosk/ticket window in St Helena;
- Having people subscribe to email announcements on art events, more proactively. Try to set up some type of subscription process.

David Mendelsohn: There are 2 things for ACNV to do in regards to the calendar: break it down by community; and to be proactive, let people subscribe for \$12 and every week they'll get an email as to what's going on in the valley so they can do some planning. ACNV could manage that.

Sue Wollack: There is Renaissance St. Helena, we need to connect with them.

Group #2 (Jamie Graff speaks for group):

- Create a kiosk that is interactive, (that represents everything) going on; **Jennifer:** I think I have someone to underwrite it. We want to make sure we have them happening in every town.
- Ambassador program: we send people from our art programs to schmooze local hotels, B&Bs;
- Quarterly meetings of all big arts organizations in the valley to share activities;
- I'd like to see the NV Upper Classes full instead of four people/

Group #3 (Richard Williams speaks for group):

- Marketing: We thought that it would be nice if the Opera House, Lincoln Theater and Copia had one artistic vision and used their spaces appropriately, so the Lincoln Theater had larger events, while the Opera House had more intimate events;
- Brand the arts. Right now we've all talked about there are 5 million people coming to this valley. The fact is they all want to go to the French Laundry and Taylor's. We have to brand the arts so they want to come here for the arts first, and then they eat at French Laundry. Arts as destination;
- Having the artists open their studios for students to come in and be apprentices. Have mentors for visual artists, too;

- As part of the branding: have a major arts festival here. Festival del Sole has come in, they have great artists performing here, there's no reason we can't have a major festival. (**Jennifer Garden:** We (Napa Valley Museum) are working with them, we could build with them. **Richard Williams:** We need to talk to Barrett, and hook on to something like Festival del Sole.)

Morrie Warshawski: So Richard talks to Barrett?

David Mendelsohn: Paul Franson suggested that the Mustard Festival change into a wine and art festival, that mustard is not part of Napa Valley. We don't harvest it or taste it. It's a private deal, and they give very little back to the community. It should be a wine and art festival.

Bill Ryan: But the good news is it is very successful.

David Mendelsohn: Make that into a wine and arts festival.

Group #4 (Ira Wolk speaks for group):

- We brainstormed one idea: an effort to increase awareness of the cultural calendar. It was brought up that perhaps, is the calendar printable? Is it possible to do something like a month-by-month calendar? Our group feels like something in print would be a good idea. I was amazed to learn how many people here don't know about the calendar. It really is our central communication if you want to know what is going on, or you want to promote something.

Shelia Mannix: It's the best bang for the buck.

Michelle Williams: Well, it's free.

Jennifer Garden: Couldn't you do a simple inexpensive postcard, "Saying Come and Visit our Site?" We could do that in six months.

Sue Wollack: It needs to be distributed to the concierges.

Jeff Holmes: People come in to Napa Valley Art Supplies to purchase things but are curious about what is going on in the Valley. If there was a way that you could print out a page of the calendar, to where each one of our organizations, stores, wineries, could hand them out, that's a way that we can extend what the Council's calendar has to put it into people's hands. A visitor looking for entertainment tonight can't use the calendar.

Kate Demarest: The advantage is that the (online) calendar is always up to date.

Jamie Graff: But if I'm out of town (on vacation), I'm not going to look at a computer.

Kate Demarest: I'm just saying, if you can take as much advantage as possible online, you'll have the most up to date information.

Morrie Warshawski: We are all on the same page: more arts, more ways, more accessibility, more availability.

Unattributed Quote: We need to have quarterly meetings of arts people, not in competition, to share ideas and let everyone else know what is going on.

Jamie Graff: We need an arts appellation!

Mary Fullerton: It's really important to think about quarterly meetings, but what about more informal meetings so this can happen again? And could every person think about bringing someone under 30. There's no one here to represent all of those young people.

Irina Roza: Each one of us is part of that fire, and that is more (powerful) than advertising or marketing. If we live our inspiration, (and tell) the people we talk to why it's important, then we live the art we talk about.