

Foundry Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

January 28, 2022

9:00 – 10:30 am

In attendance from:

City of Cambridge construction team: Robert Garner

CambridgeSeven Architects: Justin Crane, Danielle McDonough

CRA staff: Erica Schwarz, Kathryn Madden, Tom Evans

Foundry Consortium staff and fellow: Diana Navarrete-Rackackus and Olivia Fone

FAC Members: Mark Tang, Richard Thal, Carole Sousa, Lauren O’Neal, Sangeeta Prasad, Jason Slavick

Absent: Katheleen Williams

Welcome New FAC Members

The meeting started with an introduction of FAC members. Four new members have been appointed since last fall: Katheleen Williams, Michael Shia, Sangeeta Prasad and Lauren O’Neal.

Construction Update

Bob Garner of the City of Cambridge gave a construction update. The renovations are approximately 75% complete as per expenses to date under the project’s \$37.9 million budget. That figure includes some change orders required after construction started. Bob shared several photos showing:

- Completed clerestory windows
- Metal panels installed on the exterior of the new addition
- Electrical equipment and switch gear; permanent power will be activated in about two weeks.
- 3rd floor offices, with the concrete floating slab that will help create a sound barrier with the multi-use performance space
- Atrium with wood framing on the upper floors that will eventually hold glass panels
- The Yard and its drainage system, which has now been backfilled
- The new road work and intersection that helps create a connection between the Foundry and Toomey Park, which is just across Third Street.

The completion date for construction has shifted back from May 31st into the first week of June.

Jukebox Update

Elisa Hamilton, the Jukebox project artist, noted that the Jukebox restoration is well underway. She has a second jukebox to pull parts from and has someone completing a full electrical upgrade. She has engaged a furniture maker to construct frames for the wall art to go into the Jukebox nook.

Elisa has been meeting with the Cambridge Arts Council conservator regarding the art that will be featured on the Jukebox itself (her Jukebox project is part of the City’s 10% for Arts program). The jukebox art will be stenciled with digital printers.

Elisa, her computer engineer, and Cambridge Arts Council staff conducted a walk of the Foundry building and the art nook space and feel confident that the space will work well.

The jukebox can hold up to 100 stories of local residents. Elisa recently recorded an additional 6 stories in partnership with the Cambridge Black History Project (CBHP), a volunteer led group that uplifts the

stories of Black Cantabrigians. The CBHP organization will archive these stories in the Cambridge Public Library and they will also be held in the Jukebox.

Installation of the Jukebox into the Foundry is scheduled for June, after substantial completion of the rest of the renovation project.

FAC members were pleased with the Jukebox update, including the plan to archive stories with the Cambridge Black History Project. FAC members and members of the public asked questions including:

What is the finish in the performance space? We will need a spec sheet to provide to potential users.

The walls are plywood with 20 ounce draper on walls to control acoustics.

Floors are semi-sprung with hardy board, painted black

Curtains are on a pulled track; you walk to pull them open and closed.

When will the building open?

There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony on June 22nd organized by City Hall, which is when the building will be substantially complete.

The grand opening – when the building will become fully open to the public – will be organized by the Foundry Consortium and occur in September 2022. The entire building will be open and ready to use at this time. Diana is now working out when the online reservation process will be open for the public to start reserving spaces. She acknowledged that many programs need to reserve space for programs months in advance.

Foundry Operations

Diana Navarrete-Rackauckas, the Foundry Consortium Executive Director reported that a Request for Proposals is out to identify a property management firm to support operations. There was a recent site visit and proposals are due February 11th. She expects to have a firm under contract by mid March.

While the Consortium will start with a third party property management firm to support staff activities, this function may be brought fully in house over time.

Diana shared a presentation. She provided an overview of a membership plan for individual and group usage of the specialized maker spaces: for woodworking, jewelry making/small metal arts, fabric arts, and digital arts.

These spaces could be reserved for one time uses, but can also be accessed via a monthly membership model. The model would have passes to cover a single workshop (such as only woodworking), or for multiple workshops, and provide different prices for individuals and organizations.

Membership would provide access to the space during the Foundry's expected 8 am – 8 pm hours, on site staff for troubleshooting and to ensure safety, a limited amount of free materials, and the ability to order materials through the Foundry to get bulk rates. The Foundry plans to provide discounted membership on an as needed basis as funds allow.

All members must take free safety training from Foundry staff in order to access their preferred space.

Diana also outlined a space reservation model for more formal classes or events (vs members who might drop in to work on a project). All foundry spaces (including meeting rooms) will be offered on a sliding scale with different prices for nonprofit and commercial entities. Rates are based on if the reservation is a one-time use, an ongoing weekly use (use once or more a week over a sustained period), or a week long use (concentrated blocks of time).

Comments included:

- The rates are high. Artisan's Asylum has lower prices to larger spaces with 24-7 hour access.
- The workshops are relatively small. How will you schedule them to ensure you don't have too many people showing up at once? Artisan's Asylum new space has 160 studios for individuals as well as a lot of classroom and workshop space that allow for individual work and classes to occur simultaneously.

Diana noted that there will be free/reduced offerings on an as needed basis via an application, but that the Foundry also needs to ensure it remains fiscally sound. She is also researching options for how to balance individuals with group usage of workshops.

- What will the staffing look like? Could someone volunteer in exchange for free/reduced membership?

There will be a maker space manager who will oversee the sites and run safety trainings. Paid interns/fellows will also support the safe usage of workshops. Industry volunteers may also be recruited. There will be an option to volunteer time to help manage maker spaces in exchange for free/reduced membership. It was noted that the Dance Complex has a similar program.

A major priority will be on training to ensure safety and security, in addition to supporting the Foundry's workforce development goal and help train people for careers in the field.

- Will there be space to store materials? Is it worth converting one maker space to storage to ensure there is enough?

There is a dedicated storage space outside of the woodshop, but there is not a storage area for each maker space. The Foundry was designed to balance a wide range of interests and expectations.

Diana noted that it's important that the everyone involve with the Foundry Consortium help to set clear expectations about what is possible. It won't serve every "maker", but, for example, it can help someone who wants to start their first jewelry making business and needs to create prototypes etc.

Year one is a bit of an experiment to find the Foundry's niche. If we discover after the first year that a space is underused, we can reconsider how the spaces are used. The Foundry Consortium aims to be flexible and responsive, including reaching out to those who might benefit most from this space who might not otherwise have access, to discover what they want and ensure they know the Foundry is here.

Justin from Cambridge Seven noted that the building is designed to evolve. Most of the build out for maker spaces is equipment that can be changed over time.

- Will there be a formal communications plan?

Diana said that there will be more formal communications roll out starting in March with more information on social media, improvements to the website, plus one on one conversations with local programs about the process they can use to reserve space at the Foundry. The Foundry has a new communications fellow, Olivia Fone, who is helping to support this work.

Diana will share the communications plan for feedback at the April meeting.

Erica Schwarz of the CRA gave an update on the office leasing process. Rental income from the four office suites on the Foundry's upper floors will provide a majority of income required to run the building. Leases are now under negotiation for three of the four suites with Break Through Cancer, Deep Genomics, and the nonprofit Breakthrough Greater Boston, who was the lottery winner for the below market suite. The final and largest suite, at over 7,000 square feet is still being marketed.

It was asked if the large suite could be split in two to meet what appears to be more demand for smaller spaces. The CRA and City/Cambridge Seven have explored that option but there is no way to make that change at this late point in a way that meets fire code. However, any tenant may sublease their space to another entity.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 am.