

Foundry Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

Friday, October 28, 2022, 9:30 am

In person at the Foundry and via Zoom

FAC Members in Attendance: Jason Slavick, Michael Shia, Richard Thal (*Absent:* Lauren O'Neal, Sangeeta Prasad)

CRA Staff: Tom Evans, Kathryn Madden, Hema Kailasam; *Board member:* Barry Zevin

Foundry Consortium Staff: Diana Navarrete-Rackauckas, Logan Lopez, Olivia Fone; *Board Member:* Stephanie Couch

City of Cambridge: Claudia Zarazua

Agenda

- Introduction (Tom Evans)
- Role of the FAC (Kathryn Madden)
- Strategy for Usage Reporting/Usage to Date (Diana Navarrete-Rackauckas)
- Rental Rate Structure (Diana Navarrete-Rackauckas)
- Updates and Next Steps

Introduction / Role of the FAC

Tom Evans welcomed everyone, and Kathryn Madden gave an overview of the role of the FAC. The FAC advises the City and the CRA; reviews regular reporting produced by the Foundry Consortium on programs and usage; visits the Foundry occasionally to observe (or participate in) the usage; represents the community perspective; and understands the mission and operations, including challenges as the building opens and ramps up during its first year.

Strategy for Usage Reporting

The building just opened a few weeks ago, on October 8-10, 2022. The focus today will be *what types* of data are available from the reservation system and *how* can it be visualized in charts and graphs. Diana Navarrete-Rackauckas talked about how the FC will be reporting data and is interested to know what will be useful for the FAC to review. She shared a preliminary dashboard that showed usage by room, proportion of commercial use vs. community use, number of programs using the sliding scale for reduced rates, number of programming hours, and total revenue for each room. In these first few weeks, the Dance Studio has been the most heavily used space, followed by the Red multipurpose room and the Point multipurpose room on

the second floor. The FC will be tracking revenues by shop as compared to usage by shop to understand sources of revenue and demand for subsidy by room. Diana walked through the FC website to show where one can see all the events that are scheduled (cambridgefoundry.org/events). Eventually, it will be possible to filter by type of event and dates.

Questions/Discussion

Claudia Zarazua: Can the FC report on specific organizations that are using the space and who is using the sliding scale; are we seeing new organizations that are seizing the opportunity to access the space; how do specific organizations relate to the mission; are they Cambridge-based organizations?

This raises privacy issues, so it would be important to discuss this and reflect on the implications. The FC would feel uncomfortable sharing out the names of specific entities and/or individuals renting the space and their income levels, since there is an implicit level of trust that rental information is confidential. There could be ways of reporting according to the type or the profile of an organization without naming them specifically. The reservation system does have a question about zip code so it's possible to track whether they are Cambridge-based organizations. One could also review the publicized activities to get an idea of organizations that are using the space and sponsoring events

Michael Shia: How many people just walk in, such as local Cambridge residents that now realize that its open and come by versus organizations that have been closely following its development. Is there a sign-in sheet to get on a mailing list?

Anecdotally the FC notes that quite a few of neighbors who have followed the construction have dropped by, and a lot of people are using the yard. The FC is not seeing youth just dropping in, but the FC has been doing outreach through the schools to bring youth to the building. There is a welcome desk in front of the FC office on the first floor, which Logan staffs and where people can opt-in to mailing lists and other communications. The FC had a request for a weekly e-newsletter, which was launched this week in response.

Tom Evans: Is there the ability to project future reservations and see where the gaps are or where there will be heavy demand?

The reservation system is currently set up to look out 10 weeks. The theater users are the ones that are reserving space further out.

Hema Kailasam: Can you track how many people start an application but don't finish it; are we aware of barriers that prevent them from continuing (rates, hours, etc.)?

Not at this time, but anecdotally we have conversations with people about their plans and any issues with renting the space, including pointing them to the sliding scale. We are working on making the sliding scale information more transparent.

Claudia Zarazua: Are you doing targeted outreach? The City could help with this.

Nikoi Coley-Ribeiro is the FC community outreach staff and is doing targeted outreach in the community, but the City's networks will be helpful also.

Tom Evans: The dashboard is helpful, but will it be possible to get a PDF report ahead of time so that the FAC can review it and the CRA Board could see it.

Yes, that is the plan. Today is just the beta version to discuss the type of visualization available and to determine what is useful.

Rental Rate Structure

The FC has heard about the need to make the sliding scale pricing more accessible on the website; improving the website will be an iterative effort; the FC will be adding a callout on each page. On the sliding scale, the individual brackets are set up based on the Area Median Income, which the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) establishes, and the organization brackets are based on a few sources, including experience in the non-profit world; the intent is to create some support for mid-size organizations, which often don't qualify for other grants, as well supporting smaller mission-based organizations.

Questions/Discussion

Richard Thal: The rates need to cover the baseline operating costs (lights, heat, etc.); people need to understand that there are costs to providing space.

FC is tracking operational costs closely. The FC needs to be strategic about renting out parts of the building for special events, perhaps outside normal operating hours, which can help cover some of these costs for others. Sunday closing is related to staff capacity at the current time, but also would allow for these rentals.

Richard Thal: Do users need to get a license for their activities and what is their liability?

The Foundry Consortium applied for and just received an annual entertainment license from the City; this license allows activities until 11 pm. With the blanket entertainment license, the FC is working hard to make sure that individual users don't have to get a license for most activities. For alcohol, users can apply for a single day alcohol license; these events have to be closed door events (cannot bring alcohol to other parts of the building). Magic shows also require a specific license. User groups need to sign liability waivers when they rent the space. Maker space users need to report insurance coverage.

Jason Slavik: How do people know about the sliding scale and about memberships?

Nicoi leads the community outreach and is working on getting the word out along with Diana and Logan. It's important to reach different community groups. At present, 50 percent of the memberships for the artist studios and the maker spaces are set aside for sliding scale rates.

Jason Slavik: The sliding scale rates need to clarify that the rates are per hour in some cases and in other cases per week (but need to clarify per day or per week). The lowest rates for the theater are very affordable; are they high enough to cover costs; how is that financially feasible



for the FC? Overall, this approach and rates is a great addition to the community to make this kind of space accessible.

The FC has to be strategic about how many performances per year can be this deeply discounted; the rates for the larger organizations would be subsidizing the affordable rates. Some performances might have a percentage of the ticket sales go to the FC or if they event is subsidized, then some number of tickets need to be free or discounted rates.

Tom Evans: What services are included in the theater fees (lights, set up, clean up, box office, house manager, technical director for the venue to answer questions, etc.)?

The rates assume a bare minimum set up.

Jason Slavik: Does the FC have someone on staff who is the technical director that knows all the equipment (Jason can help with this)?

The FC hopes to train in-house A/V and light technicians as part of a workforce development effort; in the long run, they hope that people might want to pay for those services. Right now, Diana is the main staff person that knows about the theater equipment and the other staff also know the basics for common technical questions.

Claudia Zarazua: If you are managing a financial strategy that just allows for some percentage of the users to be at a discounted rate, how will you say no?

The FC is building relations with each person that inquires and with people that are using the space. By being transparent about the mission and the operations, it's important to build trust and understanding about the building.

Kathryn Madden: The Foundry just opened last week. This discussion highlights the kind of questions and input that the FAC can provide. From the outset, we imagined that the discounted use of space would be like a grant application, where applicants make a case for a demonstrated need. Like most grants, it does not assume a bottomless well.

Michael Shia: Scholarships that are funded by other sources could be as a way to match need and increase community access.

Claudia Zarazua: Scholarships and grants create barriers to use. It's a community space.

The FC is working hard to minimize barriers, but the sliding scale does come through as a request; it is not automatically granted; FC reviews and makes a decision based on use, mission, population served, financial and other criteria. The approach is that if we are transparent, people will be willing to work with FC and understand.

Richard Thal: The Foundry is a hybrid. The City and the CRA contributed capital funding to create a public space, but the City is not supporting the operations like it would for one of the other City community centers. This is a hybrid model that needs to be financially self-supporting.

Diana Navarrete-Rackauckas: This could be a topic for next time: how can we really clarify the operating model to the community so that everyone understands it and so that people see that

it's a long term, sustainable model for operating. There is also the concept of getting a discounted rate is that you would give back to the community in some way.

Tom Evans: The principles for this operating model exist in all the governing documents for the building.

Updates and Next Steps

The FC is currently working on a number of initiatives. They have been finalizing the agreement with the café operator, which will be Vestor. The artists-in-residence program will launch early in 2023. The construction on the theater is just now finishing – later than the rest of the building – so they are finalizing issues about its operation. They are very engaged in community outreach and creating social media to get the word out about all the activities happening already. FAC members and others are encouraged to check out the Foundry Instagram page, Facebook page, and website, in addition to visiting the building whenever they can.

Claudia Zarazua, City of Cambridge Arts and Culture Director, announced the process to identify new members for the FAC. There are four positions open because two members decided to step down and two members are in a holdover status because their terms have ended. The City will be working with the CRA team to recruit and onboard new members according to the City's new guidelines. Outreach is important. The City will send out a call using traditional outreach channels but also will be more targeted where warranted. After interviews, recommendations will be forward to the City Council to approve. The skill sets should be aligned with the mission of the building, with knowledge of science, technology, arts, and maker spaces (STEAM) and workforce development.

There was confirmation that the time of 9:30 to 11:00 am works well for everyone. The date of the next meeting was discussed – it has typically been quarterly on the second Friday of the month.

* UPDATE: since the time of the meeting, the CRA realizes that the next FAC meeting should be pushed back until February. The FAC meetings need to be offset to allow time to create and distribute the usage reports for periods that end in December, March, June, September). In addition, any new FAC members may not be appointed until early February.

Contact List and Links

[FAC webpage HERE](#): The CRA has a web page dedicated to the Foundry Advisory Committee, including the current list of **FAC members**. It also includes agendas, minutes, and meeting handouts for current and past meetings.

[CRA/Foundry webpage HERE](#): The CRA Foundry page has information on construction, leasing, operations, as well as a compendium of all documents related to the Foundry.

[Foundry Consortium webpage HERE](#): this site is evolving to include information about reservations, spaces and events. Consider following the Foundry on Instagram and/or Facebook. Be sure to check these sources regularly to follow the activities.

| Org. | Title | Name | Email |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|
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