

## Foundry Advisory Committee

### Meeting Notes

Friday, August 11, 2023, 9:30 am

In person at the Foundry and via Zoom

*FAC Members in Attendance:* Connie Chin, Ruben Mancha, Lauren O'Neal, Sangeeta Prasad, Barbara Thomas, Jason Slavick, Jameson Johnson (*Absent:* Katheleen Williams)

*CRA Staff:* Tom Evans, Matthew Heller-Trulli      *CRA Board Member:* Barry Zevin

*Foundry Consortium Staff:* Diana Navarrete-Rackauckas

### Agenda

- New Member Introduction
- Capital improvement and commercial lease updates
- Programming progress report
- Review and discussion of community space data
- Discuss and assign responsibilities for November FAC presentation to the CRA Board
- Adjourn

### New Member Introduction

Matt Heller-Trulli gave an introduction to the Q3 FAC meeting citing the March 29, 2023 provision to the Open Meeting Law that allows for remote public meetings. He explained that all public comments would be accepted at the end of each agenda item.

Matt went on to introduce the newest FAC member, Jameson Johnson, who was remote for this meeting. Jameson Johnson is the Marketing & Development Manager for the MIT List Visual Arts Center, and the founder and editor-in-chief for the Boston Art Review, a regional publication on contemporary art. In her roles, she has engaged with plenty of artists, writers, and community organizers and understands that aside from housing and healthcare, access to affordable cultural space is paramount to the vibrancy of our communities and the artists who live and work in Cambridge.

Jameson Johnson then briefly said a few words to supplement the introduction and said she was excited to be a part of the committee. Each of the current FAC members then went around the room and introduced themselves to Jameson.

## Capital Improvement and Commercial Lease Updates

Matt Heller-Trulli gave an overview of the capital improvements that the CRA has undertaken at the Foundry and other improvements that are in planning or design phases since the last FAC meeting. These include the installation of shades in the remainder of the maker spaces and one of the office tenant suites, and the planning for the addition of a handicap wave buttons at the main entrance doors, and designing new acoustic panels to be added to the atrium and Shop 6 walls.

In addition to these, Matt informed the FAC that the CRA was working with Cambridge Seven on a subdivision plan to divide the existing vacant tenant suite into multiple suites and that this work is ongoing. Matt then went on to provide an update to the leasing of the tenant spaces on the upper floors, informing the FAC that the CRA was working through lease negotiations with an entity that would take the front half of the vacant office suite.

### FAC Member Discussion

- Sangeeta Prasad asked Matt if the probability was looking good for occupancy of the vacant suite.
  - *Matt: We have multiple entities looking at the various spaces and the CRA is confident we can lease those spaces soon.*
- Sangeeta Prasad asked how the numbers for tenant leases were looking compared to what was budgeted.
  - *Matt: The market has taken a bit of a hit since the existing tenants signed in the summer of 2022 but the CRA is working through the new leases to provide the Foundry Consortium with enough operating capital.*
  - *Sangeeta: I would like to see the numbers at future FAC meetings to see what the budget is and where we are in actual rents.*

Diana Navarrete-Rackauckas then explained how the Foundry Consortium has applied for the MA Development Grant and how that would be able to help with some other capital improvement needs. These improvements could include:

- Improved soundproofing between Shop 6 and the dance studio
- Improvements in the theatre, including:
  - Cameras for the sound booth to see performances
  - Riser railings and chair stops for the risers
  - Rolling storage for programming
  - Additional signage, accessibility features, upgrading meeting tech

### FAC Member Discussion

- Jason Slavick asked how the Foundry Consortium was doing on solving the sound issue in the theatre.



- *Diana: The company that installed the sound system have come out multiple times to look at the system and we have not had any issues recently except around Bluetooth connectivity.*
- *Jason: Bluetooth is not the strongest connection to use for most programming and there should be a simpler and better way to plug into the sound system for users in the space.*
- Sangeeta Prasad asked if this discussion would be captured in meeting minutes.
  - *Matt: Yes and all previous FAC meeting minutes and agenda's can be found on the CRA's website.*

## Programming Progress Report

Diana Navarrete-Rackauckas updated the FAC on some of the grants and programming that the Foundry Consortium has been working on. These include:

- Grants Submitted
  - ARPA Grant Submission
  - Festival and Grants from MCC (Awarded last year, applied for this year)
  - Mass Development Collaborative Workspace Grant
- Programmatic Assistance Awarded
  - MSYEP Teens
  - Forest Foundation Summer Intern

Diana invited all FAC members to observe the work of the MSYEP in the small conference rooms and on the large stage cushion after the meeting.

The Foundry Consortium is also working with Bunker Hill Community College to fund two work-study students to work as programming assistants at the Foundry each semester. Their work will consist of marketing and graphic design along with other projects that assist and promote programming in the Foundry.

There is now a new booking system in use by the Foundry Consortium, called Checkfront. The system will allow more flexible bookings, allow for requests longer than 4 hours, allow users to create profiles, hold all waivers and information in one place, and has a higher level of automation. The Foundry Consortium has worked for months to investigate over 130 software and programs to find the one that fits the Foundry best.

Diana walked the FAC through the process of booking through the Checkfront, the various options that now exist for immediate booking and booking out in advance along with what information the new program captures through the booking. Diana also showed the FAC how waivers and other documents are stored within a user's profile and how the sliding scale works with the new system. Checkfront is used more for

individual bookings while recurring bookings are being done on a seasonal schedule in three month blocks.

#### FAC Member Discussion

- Sangeeta Prasad asked if the booking system now allows for bookings over 4 hours.
  - *Diana: yes, users can now book for more than 4 hours within a single booking.*
- Jason Slavick asked if the program can automatically adjust the sliding scale during the booking.
  - *Diana: No, that has to be done on the backend by a Foundry Consortium staff but it is much easier than it was before and the information for that is on the booking page on the Foundry website.*
- Barbara Thomas asks how the Foundry Consortium determines if a person or entity qualifies for a sliding-scale discount.
  - *Diana: There is no documentation that a person or entity needs to provide.*
- Connie Chin asks if program requests are on a first-come-first-serve basis or if preference is given to certain groups that align more closely with the Foundry's mission.
  - *Diana: It really depends on the specific space. For example, we hope the small multi-purpose rooms can be maintained on an as-needed basis where the performance space needs to be booked well in advance as it is more complex.*
- Jameson Johnson asks if the Foundry Consortium plans for there to be a video primer or instructions on how to make a booking through the new system.
  - *Diana: The Foundry Consortium is hoping to create a video explaining the booking process in the next couple of weeks through the help of the Bunker Hill students. Also hoping to organize live Zoom webinars to assist in the transition to the new system.*
- Jason Slavick asks how the Foundry Consortium manages someone teaching a class at a certain time all year.
  - *Diana: They are not guaranteed a spot all year but in rolling applications for three month blocks.*
- Barbara Thomas asks if there is preferential treatment given to citizens and organizations of Cambridge.
  - *Diana: Yes, it is part of the programming rubric.*
- Connie Chin states that she is excited by the new booking system and asks about how the booking system works alongside accessibility standards.
  - *Diana: The system is multi-lingual and while it is not perfect, but it is helpful in getting through the form. All PDFs are screen readable for those with low vision with a minimum of 16-point font. Folks sometime call if they have difficulty booking through the online form and call the Foundry*

*Consortium staff for help and advice on which room they should rent for their event or activity.*

- Lauren O’Neal asks if the Foundry Consortium has seen that there are certain rooms that are in high demand and if have there been any thoughts about transforming any other rooms to help with the higher demand for certain uses.
  - *Diana: As we have seen since opening, the dance studio has seen the most amount of bookings to the point where Shop 6 and the performance space have been booked for dance classes and events when the dance studio has already been in use.*
  - *Lauren: Do you expect the Foundry to be open on Sundays and is not open currently because of staffing issues?*
  - *Diana: It is a goal to be open on Sundays and is fully a capacity issue at the moment.*
- Sangeeta Prasad asks what the Foundry Consortium needs to be open on Sundays since that is a day when most community members are off work.
  - *Diana: The main need is more staff members.*
  - *Sangeeta: How many do you need?*
  - *Diana: Probably 2-3 additional staff would be needed.*
  - *Sangeeta: How much would it cost to hire an additional 2-3 people in order to be open on Sundays?*
  - *Diana: We would have to look more closely.*
- Barbara Thomas notes that when the main branch of the Cambridge Library started to be open on Sundays, it was a huge success.
- Multiple FAC members note that the building should be open 7 days a week or at the least, Monday should be the day “off” but Diana says that due to tenants in the building during the week, there needs to be staff in the building anyways.
- Ruben Mancha asks about what data the new booking system will collect.
  - *Diana: It will collect the same data that we currently collect from users but just be simpler to track.*
- Sangeeta Prasad states that she likes to see percentages of the data and plotted in different ways.
- Diana states that full building rentals usually happen on Sundays in order not to restrict community access on other days.
- Tom states that the original scope to open during weekdays was to coordinate with school programs for education purposes.

### Public Comments

- Ilan Levy introduces himself as a member of the East Cambridge community and is concerned about the building's connection to the community that helped to get the building built. He expressed a strong desire for wanting the building to be open on Sunday. At the same time, he stated that he has participated in some of the programs at the Foundry and liked what was happening; he just wants more.

## Review and Discussion of Community Space Data

### FAC Member Discussion

- Barbara Thomas asked why entities are able to rent the space like a convention center and if there was an impact to the community use because of these events.
  - *Diana: We are trying to keep it to one full day a month to not exclude the community. Some of the full-day rental events are from Cambridge community organizations, such as Scratch Day, which are open to the public. Many of the private full-building rentals are for half-day events. The reason we do full-building rentals is for revenue which allows us to offer some of the spaces for a lower fee to the community.*
- Sangeeta Prasad asked if the sliding scale applies to private entities and if not, could there be a reverse sliding scale implemented to allow the Foundry Consortium to increase revenue from these large private rentals.
  - *Diana: It would be good to get an idea of how a reverse sliding scale could work for the space and any insight would be helpful.*
- Jason Slavick suggests that the CRA Board provides more funding to allow for the Foundry Consortium to hire more staff for the building.
- Tom Evans agrees that the building is technically complex and shouldn't just have volunteers running the space due to the training needed. It is not very common that there is only one Foundry Consortium staff running the building and when it has been, it is usually just the CRA holding a meeting or another single entity that already knows the building. The CRA will take a look at the overall budget and staffing numbers carefully. We don't think that the ramp-up in Foundry programming has been hindered by the number of staff but is a result of a new building opening and putting out the word that there is a new space for programming to happen.

Matt Heller-Trulli suggested the group move onto discussing the data that Diana and the Foundry Consortium has provided and discuss how it plays into the presentation to the CRA Board in November. The Q4 FAC meeting is scheduled to take place on November 3 with the CRA Board meeting occurring on November 15.

- Sangeeta Prasad said that she needs to see percentages for the data and a standard dashboard to review the data. She said that she would like to see financials and how those reflect within the data.
- Matt Heller-Trulli asked if anyone had any questions pertaining to the data.
- Ruben Mancha suggested having definitions for each of the data categories to explain what each measuring metric is accounting for. He also says that he has seen more art programming and not as much science and technology programming and would like to know how to help support those areas.
- Lauren O'Neal says that while it is nice to have the data, as a community space we have to be able to look beyond the data and talk to those that are in the building everyday to



see where help is needed. The FAC is meant to help advocate for the Foundry Consortium based on community feedback to help the space run and flourish.

- *Diana: I worry at this moment about tying everything back to the data because it is not indicative of what will happen in the coming months. There is a lot of change and growth as the building is opening. The biggest issue with science and technology programming is that the Foundry is not set up for certain types of STEAM programming, especially those that use gas as the building is all-electric. There are improvements in the building that could be made to allow for easier science and technology programming to take place.*
- Barbara Thomas asked if there will be more funding allocated for science and technology in the future or components like outlets added to allow for this to happen.
  - *Diana: The Foundry Consortium has applied for grants to hopefully allow for improvements to some of the spaces that would facilitate more STEAM programming.*
- Jason Slavick asked if someone could help explain what STEAM programming would consist of.
  - *Barbara: It could be classes, coding classes, dance & technology, video game programming design, etc. Storage, computers, outlets, and stronger WI-FI would all help to facilitate these.*

### Public Comments

- Ilan Levy said that he doesn't want to see the building rented by one unique renter that inhibits the use by the community. It is not that there can't be a large rental but they would have to understand that there would be other things going on. He also agreed that the reverse sliding scale could work for private entities or have them make a large donation to the Foundry to use the space.

## Discuss and Assign Responsibilities for the November FAC Presentation to the CRA Board

It was decided that the FAC will meet for an interim meeting between the Q3 and Q4 meetings to further discuss the CRA Board presentation.

## Adjourn

- The meeting ended at 11:00 AM.



## 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.

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