

Memorandum

To: Richard C. Rossi, City Manager, Lisa C. Peterson, Deputy City Manager

From: Jason Weeks, Executive Director

CC: Brian Murphy, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, Stuart Dash, Division Head,
Planning & Urban Design, Lisa Hemmerle, Division Head, Economic Development, Elaine Thorne,
Associate Planner, Planning & Urban Design

Date: 10/21/2014

Re: **City Council Order #2: Central Square Arts Action Team**

Pursuant to City Council Order #2, I am providing information on the original 'Management Narrative' from the grant submitted to the Massachusetts Cultural Council (attached) along with recommendations for appointees to a formal Arts Action Team as requested by the City Council.

Commensurate with the state requirements necessary to secure the Cultural District designation, it was necessary to address and predict a management plan for how activity would be initiated, supported and measured within the District. In response to this requirement, a District Advisory Committee was established and the six members met regularly during the first year of the designation to identify District goals and to initiate, support and oversee the activity in the district. To further the impact and ensure the success of this committee, I am recommending that the City Manager formalize this committee role by officially appointing members to an **Arts Action Team** as requested.

Recommendations for appointments to an Arts Action Team include the following individuals who represent the arts, cultural, municipal, and business interests in Central Square:

Jason Weeks, Executive Director
Cambridge Arts Council

Robin Lapidus, Executive Director
Central Square Business Association

Elaine Thorne, Associate Planner
Neighborhood Planning Division
Cambridge Community Development Department
Member, Central Square Advisory Committee

October 21, 2014

Catherine Carr-Kelly, Executive Director & CSBA Board Member
Central Square Theater

Peter DiMuro, Executive Director
The Dance Complex

Tom Spataro, Managing Director
Improv Boston

Mary Leen, Associate Director
MIT Museum

Lorraine Chapman, Director
Green Street Studios Center for Movement & Dance

Nabil Sater, Owner
Middle East Restaurant & Nightclub

Gus Rancatore, Owner
Toscanini's Ice Cream

With facilitation and scheduling provided by the Arts Council, the appointed Arts Action Team members would meet on a quarterly basis as well as more frequently as needed and establish committees as necessary to support and promote programming and community engagement in the District. Key areas of focus for the Team would include:

1. **Goals: Setting, Oversight & Evaluation**
2. **Programming**
3. **Marketing & Community Engagement**
4. **Liaison with the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the state arts agency**

Based on the work of the Arts Action Team in each of the focus areas identified, the Arts Council will submit an annual report to the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the City Manager's office outlining the work that occurs in the District and the plan for the subsequent years of the designation. In this way, we can be assured that the designation will stay intact for the full 5-year parameter of the agreement and that the District activity is in synch with the needs and wishes of the Cambridge population. The work of the Arts Action Team will also ensure that the *Central Square Cultural District* is well-poised to apply for and secure an additional 5-year designation at the end of the current term.

CENTRAL SQUARE CULTURAL DISTRICT MANAGEMENT NARRATIVE – A Public/Private Partnership

After a period of re-structuring, the Central Square Business Association (CSBA) recently hired a new Executive Director, who previously spent a decade in Harvard Square as the Director of Marketing and Events for the 100-year old Harvard Square Business Association. During that time, Robin Lapidus demonstrated success in developing programming that fit the needs and desires of Harvard Square artists, organizations, businesses and residents. She also successfully identified funding to support those programs in initiatives and implemented creative 'Cultural Marketing' to focus the community being served and engage new audiences to visit and experience the dynamic nature of the square. Her experience in non-profit management enables her to be a highly respected creative producer and partner in CSBA and with the city of Cambridge. In this new capacity and position, Robin will support, staff and provide professional and technical guidance to the Central Square Cultural District.

As an additional support to Robin and CSBA, the city and its departments have set exceptional precedent in managing and executing business and cultural district partnerships and are fully committed to supporting and nurturing the work of the Cultural District. In particular, the Cambridge Arts Council, the Economic Development Division of Community Development and the Cambridge Office for Tourism are all recognized leaders in their respective service areas and will directly participate in supporting the work and activity of the district. Further, all arts, culture and business-related events and activities produced in Cambridge are governed by the DPW Special Events Committee convened by the Commissioner of the Department of Public Works and comprised of city department leaders that attend a monthly roundtable to collaboratively oversee, permit and provide services, guidance and support to those seeking to carry out such events in the city. This tradition of collaboration and support for arts, culture and business is ingrained in the historic structure of Cambridge city governance and mirrored by the exceptional associations representing various business districts throughout the city.

Currently in its 80th year, and guided by the leadership of President George Metzger, a prominent and highly respected architect and urban planner, Robin Lapidus, Executive Director and Board members representing key cultural destinations based in Central Square, CSBA is focused on developing new objectives and opportunities to position Central Square as the most unique and rich cultural district in Cambridge. CSBA will hold the center of the Cultural District and regularly manage meetings of the Cultural District Advisory Committee, provide development support and fiscal agent opportunities where appropriate, and facilitate the advisory structure of the Cultural District partnership as part of its on-going responsibilities.

Finally, CSBA has assumed a primary leadership role in partnership with the Honorable Mayor David P. Maher's *Red Ribbon Commission on the Delights & Concerns of Central Square* (2009 – 2011) to implement a vision for Central Square as a unique cultural and entertainment district. The findings and direction being recommended by the Commission are anchored by more than 20 arts and cultural organizations and venues based within a 15-block radius from the heart of Central Square at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Prospect Street. Building on a proven history of success among these organizations and more recent collaborations and initiatives between CSBA and these organizations such as the MCC-supported *Central Square Arts Outdoors*, *Central Swings*, Cambridge Poetry Festival, the National Poetry Slam and Cambridge Open Studios, the Central Square Cultural District is poised and prepared to showcase leadership statewide and regionally for how to successfully support and sustain a vibrant cultural district.