



MEDFORD ARTS COUNCIL

September 2015
Medford, Massachusetts

Questions to our candidates for Mayor and City Council, concerning arts, culture, and the creative economy.

Your Personal Connection

We've all had defining moments in our lives. What personal experiences with the arts, the humanities, or creativity have had an impact on your life and your view of the role of the arts and culture in our shared civic life?

Growing up I always remember music being played in my home. My dad, a technical illustrator, and mom, an avid crafter, would gather me, my brother and sister around the kitchen table to sketch or paint while the Beatles, Frank Sinatra, or Ella Fitzgerald played in the background. Those memories mean so much to me that as a dad I always encouraged my three boys to express their creativity. When they were smaller they colored and painted, stamped and glued, imagined and created. Today they play musical instruments, sketch, write short stories, and perform in productions for a local youth theater company.

As a member of the Medford School Committee, and as a parent of children in the Medford Public Schools, I am privileged to witness the profound talent our students have. I have attended countless plays, performances, musical productions, band competitions, poetry readings, and art shows. I have met students who received the Boston Globe's Scholastic Art Award for sculpture, drawing, photography and painting and third graders across the district who proudly showed me their paintings at the Meadow Glen Mall art gallery. Every time a child gets to create something- a piece of art, a story, or a performance- the benefit is multifold.

I understand the importance of the arts and have supported and voted for increased funding to the arts in our schools. As your city councilor, I will advocate for a full time Recreation and Education Program. I envision affordable and inclusive art and music offerings for all members of the community.

The New Administration's Role in the Creative Community

The City of Medford's recent decision to allocate \$30,000 to the 2016 budget for the Medford Arts Council is an important step toward restoring a level of cultural funding that we have not seen in Medford since 2002. Even with this investment, there will

likely remain a significant shortfall in our ability to fulfill grant requests and to sponsor new public art initiatives that are much in demand. Beyond the Medford Arts Council, there are numerous unrealized opportunities and unmet needs in the areas of revitalization, education, cultural planning, community development, and support for our creative community.

- Do you support the inclusion of a yearly line item for the Medford Arts Council in the city budget? What strategies would you use to grow the arts and culture budget for Medford?

Yes, I support the inclusion of a yearly line item for the Medford Arts Council (MAC). As your city councilor I would advocate for funding to MAC by highlighting its accomplishments that have improved our city and sense of community. For example, MAC helped fund the hugely successful Circle the Square events which brought visitors and customers to Medford Square.

- Members of the City Council have publicly called for a “home for the arts” in Medford—do you agree that a dedicated space is needed, and if so, what kinds of resources would you marshal to make this space available?

Yes, I agree that our city should have a home for the arts in Medford. Part of my vision includes advocating for the City of Medford to adopt a Master Plan. Part of that Master Plan would be to refurbish or replace the Medford Public Library. This new facility would include a significant amount of space that would be the new home for the arts.

- How should the city’s current administrative structure be modified to support the creative community?

A strong arts program can have long reaching impact from the sense of community it can create to improvement and beautification of business districts. A program this vital needs to have a liaison in the city administration to work with such organizations. Once elected I will advocate for a liaison that will work with the creative community to provide support.

A Destination for Creators, Performers, and Audiences

- The robust example of Somerville next door often leads to questions such as “Why can’t we do more of that here in Medford?” (Consider that, for FY16, they are allocating nearly \$400,000 to their dedicated cultural affairs office.) What kinds of initiatives, incentives, or investments would you support to make Medford a more desirable destination for artists, audiences, and small businesses in the creative sector?

One of my goals as a city councilor will be to advocate for and help create a Master Plan for the City of Medford. Part of the Master Plan would be to redevelop Medford Square. Focal points of the redevelopment include the addition of walking paths along the Mystic River and appropriate funding and management of the Chevalier Theatre. The Chevalier Theatre is a true hidden gem in our community. It is time for the City of Medford to embrace this gem and allocate funding to the theatre. In addition the city

needs to add public art throughout Medford to increase visitors and stimulate our local economy.

- Some members of the creative community view the Chevalier Theatre as a special asset that is underutilized and in dire need of essential upgrades and investment that will build on recent efforts to improve its situation. How should the new administration lead in supporting this institution, and what specific resources should be provided to help realize its amazing potential?

I believe the new administration should lead by example and hold the inauguration at the Chevalier Theatre. The Chevalier Theatre is a true hidden gem and should be the centerpiece of the revitalization and redevelopment of Medford Square. Funding for the Chevalier Theatre should be part of the yearly budget and a professional manager should be hired to operate and schedule the theatre.

- With the closing of Springstep in 2012 and the Mystic Art Gallery in 2014, two important venues were eliminated from our city's small inventory of exhibition and performance spaces. What specific sites, buildings, infrastructure, or other places can you envision as being made available to the creative community to provide much-needed space for new work to be created and shared with the Medford public?

I would like to see public art throughout our community both inside and outside public buildings. Specifically I would like to see the creative community utilize the following locations for public art: Medford City Hall, Medford Public Library, Chevalier Theatre, Medford Public Schools, Lawrence Memorial Hospital, various parks, green space, and business districts.

Creative Placemaking

Throughout Massachusetts, cities are experimenting successfully with revitalization, development, and social resiliency efforts that incorporate the creative use of public space—this is sometimes described as “creative placemaking.” A 2010 white paper for The Mayors’ Institute for City Design describes this strategy as one in which: “[Partners] from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.”

- What kinds of creative placemaking initiatives can you envision as being introduced or expanded to promote Medford’s livability, economic development, and distinctive cultural character?

Boston has a Pop-Up Art Program that highlights temporary art in various neighborhoods for a specific time period. Such a program could be used to highlight Medford’s rich history and diverse community. It would also be a way to bring attention to our squares and their unique offerings.

- The City's 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan calls for the "Inclusion of public art in the city's parks and open spaces"—and many residents support this recommendation. Would you support efforts to introduce new temporary or permanent public art into our parks, playgrounds, and open spaces?

Absolutely. I also believe this would be a prime opportunity to collaborate with the Medford Family Network and our schools as another way to encourage participation with arts.

- What is your view of the role of the city administration in partnering with real estate developers to ensure that new construction incorporates appropriate elements for creative placemaking?

If elected in November I would support the city administration in partnering with real estate developers to ensure that new construction incorporates appropriate elements for creative placemaking. These types of public/private partnerships help a community to grow and prosper while building character and providing opportunities for residents to be involved in arts and cultural activities.