

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

### **Your Personal Connection**

- **Question ...** 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?

**Answer ...** I can't say there has been any particular defining moment. What I can say is that I have seen a continuing talent surge by so many supporters of the arts. With the arts comes the believers that our humanities are their working partner. My wife having been an elementary school has further educated me in the world of art and the culture that surrounds it.

### **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.

- **Question ...** 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?

**Answer ...** I along with my colleague, Councillor Marks, realized some two years ago that the need for embracing the Arts Council with a line item budget inclusion was sorely needed. This past year we moved to doubled it \$30,000 with the additional support of Councillor Lungo-Koehn. My strategy to move the life of the arts forward would be to have a inclusion with a professional grant writer who has the responsibility to prepare a mix-use of business, residential an arts and historical proposal to move Medford forward.

- **Question ...**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?

**Answer ...** I do believe that a dedicated location can be achieved after a complete thought process that included the art community, the historical community our local legislators. By preparing for a location you need to have a business that offers a good return for its investment. Seeking out enterprising

companies or individuals that have the same love for the arts and history will present a community effort.

- **Question ...** How should the city's current administrative structure be modified to support the creative community?

**Answer ...** I can't speak for the current administration other than it had to be pushed by the council to take on a proactive role to again support the arts.

### **A Destination for Creators, Performers, and Audiences**

- **Question ...** 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?

**Answer ...** As I said earlier, I would engage a proven professional grant writer to incorporate the arts and history of our city into our new look for our downtown area. The offering would include a hand shake with Tufts University and a revitalization offering of land a that our city owns with tax incentives.

- **Question ...** 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?

**Answer ...** Attention needs to be directed for an economical air conditioning system. Having no air conditioning in the facility limits the ability to operate comfortably all year long, especially in the summertime.

The seating rehabilitation must be completed. A few years back the Chevalier underwent a seating renovation but it was not fully accomplished. The theater infrastructure must be brought up to current and acceptable levels in order to accommodate those expectations of all who will be performing and attending there.

The public entrance area have restroom upgrades that have been nicely attended to.

Convenient parking and handicap parking spots must be thoughtfully arranged for those who require them. I would meet with the owner of the property adjacent to the theater and negotiate for a mix-business use and parking garage to accommodate for evenings and weekends during performances...the theatre's use at a discount rate for parking at that spot.

Now, how does the city attract the big shows more frequently? How do we get the bright lights to shine on the Chevalier?

First, we all saw the attraction that took place when a Hollywood company recently set up a prop marquees at Chevalier for their show performance. Folks who saw it thought it was great and it sent a message that the theatre could come alive with shows, plays and art performances.

Second, the city can jump start this whole process. There is money out there for such projects and by searching and receiving these funds, we can start to realize some improvements to the infrastructure.

As such, I would offer to the Commission a financial grant opportunity wherein they would receive city money to advertise and seek out the better shows for the theatre with a condition they reimburse the city, show for show, as they continue to grow. Other cities have done so and have become successful in such endeavor.

This could be either through a privately held company or a position within the commission or a paid talent coordinator. This commission will have the task to draw the shows...the big shows that will return good revenue and bring an excitement back to the city.

We must start out by listening to those interested and by using all our talents to get this underway to a successful conclusion.

- **Question ...** 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?

**Answer ...** That is a good question but, without having a handle of just what are the needs of all who are to be encompassed in a building with an accommodating location would be pure guesswork on my part. I would not want to present something I would not be able to deliver on.

## 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.”

- **Question ...** 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?

**Answer ...** As I have stated on so many occasions, I would work with business owners to have a new business formula that incorporates them with the city, the Chamber of Commerce and a business development plan that offers employment, tax incentives and an array of new destination locations that will entice not only our Medford citizens our neighbors from all around us. Business growth should not be stifled by the at-present parking Kiosk program that is nothing more than a consumer and business unfriendly operation. We are Medford and we should be unique unto ourselves and everyone else who want to come to our city.

- **Question ...** 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?

**Answer ...** I am open to any new idea that promotes but am cognizant that what is being offered does not present a public safety or offends the public.

- **Question ...** 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?

**Answer ...** I absolutely agree and would make it a requirement for any development presentation.

