

City of Pawtucket
Armory Arts District Study Group
5-5-10 Meeting Minutes 1 p.m.

In attendance: Joseph Knight (Vice Chair, Pawtucket School Committee), Tony Estrella (Artistic Director of The Gamm Theatre), Rick Goldstein (Pawtucket City Clerk), Thomas Mann (Executive Director of the Pawtucket Foundation), Don Keel (Development Consultant), Leon Boghossian III (Armory Arts & Gamm Board Member), Michael Cassidy (Director of Pawtucket Planning & Redevelopment), Ed Tetzner (Director of Government Affairs, City of Pawtucket), John Haidemenos (Principal of JMW Arts High School), Yvonne Seggerman (Executive Director of Armory Arts and The Gamm) and Derek Collamati (Director of Development-Armory Arts)

Other members, not in attendance

Samuel F. Babbitt, President, Pawtucket Armory Association

James Chellel, Chairman, Pawtucket School Committee

Henry Kinch, President, Pawtucket City Council

Phyllis Nathanson, Nathanson Design

1. Introductions

2. Purpose of the Study Group

- The goal of the Armory Arts District Study Group (members appointed/requested by Mayor Doyle) is to determine what the “Armory Arts District” looks like holistically in 2020 and a part of the Mayor’s 2020 Commission; and a long-range plan with area non profit organizations and local businesses, including The Gamm, JMW Arts High School, Pawtucket Armory Center for the Arts, Rick Roth, Nathanson Design, Chris Ladd (the new architectural firm) etc. working together to define the area and prevent gentrification. Alignment between the strategies of the JMW Arts High School, the Gamm Theatre and Pawtucket Armory Center for the Arts are top priority. Transparency is key.
What is the best concept for the neighborhood and how will it be attained via public/private partnership? The geographic size of the district will be determined by the interest of the community.
- Seggerman made it clear that this is not the place where two parties negotiate a lease or conduct any particular business transactions.
- In the year 2000 a study was conducted by consultants Harral-Michelson, commissioned by the Pawtucket Department of Planning and Redevelopment and this neighborhood was determined to become a central location for Arts and Arts Education. Shortly thereafter, the City sold the Armory for that purpose to The Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre. Thomas Mann presented a map of Pawtucket’s Arts District, but the group needs to determine what specifically constitutes the “Armory Arts District.” We will come to agreement of the boundaries at the next meeting.
- The pursuit of the Armory Arts District, continued collaboration between partners, and the fact that there has already been a significant investment in the development of this area (including over \$5.1 million invested into Phase I and Phase II of the Armory restoration

effort). These investments came from the Federal Government, the State and the City, as well as individuals, corporations and foundations. How do we as a partnership honor these investments and build upon them? Further, these investments, plus the positive impact upon students at the JMW and Gamm's critical and financial success, position us for significant fundraising opportunities: **The Ford Foundation Space for Change Planning and Pre-Development Grants!**, The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)-"Our Town", specifically determined to fund the design of "arts districts" and in the Armory District has the support of Senator Whitehouse, i3 funding (investing in innovation) and The Nellie Mae Education Foundation (to name a few). Given school district condition, **Haidemenos noted that i3 funding could be very difficult right now.**

- The goal is to complete the Armory Drill Hall build-out by 2015. The armory building alone will be unable to handle the Gamm's growth and the JMW's doubling in enrollment size. Need to look into other opportunities to accommodate JMW's growth while keeping the school in this area, thereby retaining the "teaching hospital" aspects: internships, peer mentoring, attendance at performances, first professional jobs for students, the proximity to working professional artists and the usage of the two professional theaters/staffing that will become available for student use in 2015.
- Given the work of this committee, an outline of a possible proposal to the Ford Foundation (letter of intent due May 28th) was discussed. Components include: interviews/inventorying of neighboring properties to determine space availability and vision for area's strategic growth. Itemize the tax benefits of artist live/work spaces in Pawtucket's arts district. Resurrecting the 1998 study (which was done prior to Arts districting) and update, while making new zoning suggestions. Essentially, doing the preliminary work to devise a strategic plan for the area's growth, which has already begun, shown success and been supported by the public and private sectors. Yvonne, Derek and Don working on LOI.

3. Officers

- Yvonne Seggerman voted as chair of committee, Tony Estrella as vice-chair and Derek Collamati as secretary.
- While the state of the JMW lease was not discussed during the meeting, Knight noted that the school committee needed to be approached and the JMW School situation settled to move forward effectively. All were in agreement.

4. Other business

- Thomas Mann made a motion: This committee votes to approve the concept to grow the JMW High School at this location (the Armory Arts District) . The vote carried in favor 7-0 with one abstention and one non vote.
- Next meeting, June 2nd at 1pm in the Armory office. Bring a lunch and drinks will be provided.

Meeting adjourned at 2:02.

Respectfully submitted by Derek Collamati