

Matthew Stensrud
Chair, Alexandria Commission for the Arts
November 17, 2018

Mayor Silberberg, Vice Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council:

Good morning. My name is Matthew Stensrud and I am Chair of the City's Commission for the Arts. The Commission thanks you for your continued support of arts and culture in Alexandria, from maintaining and strengthening the City's Arts and Culture Plan to continuing to invest in the City's arts grants program. Alexandria's creative culture advances the City's economic goals and makes Alexandria a dynamic and attractive place to live, work and visit.

First of all, thank you for maintaining the position that the Torpedo Factory is an Art Center where artists can engage with the community, where creativity can shine, where art can be shared and where arts-focused programming and celebrations can showcase the gem that is the Factory as well as the City's waterfront as a whole.

We also appreciate the City Manager coming to us directly to share the update regarding the governance of the Factory, the anticipated capital investment and the proposed Vibrancy and Sustainability Plan, answering our questions, and asking that we play an essential role moving forward.

We fully support the City Manager's recommendation that the Commission play an important role in the development of a Vibrancy and Sustainability Plan for the Art Center. We ask that the Commission work with the Office of the Arts, other City departments, and all stakeholders—from artists to community members—to lead this planning initiative and to ensure an active, thorough, transparent and inclusive process.

We recognize the challenge that lies ahead. Some artists fear their voices will be lost. Others are frustrated with the roadblocks artists within the Factory have built to necessary change. We believe we can be an effective and trusted leader throughout this process, for we must come together as one City, move forward with accountability and transparency, and create a path for the Art Center so it can remain a viable and sustainable arts space for decades to come.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the arts and your solidarity in keeping the Torpedo Factory Art Center an arts-focused community-centered space. We look forward to playing an active leadership role and always appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective with you—both today and in the future.