

February 19, 2021

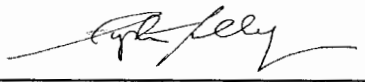
Stephen Lally  
8 East Howell Avenue  
Alexandria, VA 22301

Mayor and Members of the Council  
City of Alexandria  
Re: City Council Public Meeting (2/20/21), Torpedo Factory

Dear Mayor Wilson and Council Members,

I am a 30+-year resident of the City of Alexandria where I have raised and educated my children and been active in the local art community. I am also an exhibiting artist at the Scope Gallery located at the Torpedo Factory. It was in fact the presence of the Torpedo Factory that first brought me to Alexandria in 1989 and was instrumental in my decision to move from Rockville to the city. I would like to make several points in response to the Action Plan's Core Strategic directions.

1. I agree with the overall suggestion that there is a need to re-examine the Torpedo Factory to identify ways to improve its integration with the community and explore innovative approaches to maximize the space. I also agree with the exploration of providing a potential dining location (possibly on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor) and exploring opening up the Factory to evening traffic.
2. However, I think it is important not to lose some of what provides the unique draw of the factory (and it does draw a sizable audience to Alexandria). The public has a chance to both observe and meet makers of art, and the building provides a center that supports and helps develop an art community. My concern in the strategic plan broad definition of art (e.g., culinary arts) is that its current draw will be diluted. Worse is if it ends up hosting shops with little or no connection to the makers, and then becomes just another shopping plaza.
3. I also believe that as there is an examination of the Torpedo Factory and its mission, that the value and importance of the cooperative galleries is not overlooked. The Scope Gallery is one of the original tenants of the Factory, and its 35 exhibiting ceramic artists provide a rich array of local work that is consistent with the plan's goals. Especially beneficial is that since the gallery is hosted by the exhibiting artists, visitors have a chance to meet the artists and learn about both the work and process. It is nationally recognized as an important resource and gallery for ceramic arts (e.g., see annual listing of the nation's ceramic galleries in *Ceramic Monthly*). I think that has the strategic plan is formalized that it is important to recognize the cooperative galleries, such as the Scope Gallery, and to include them within the planning process. I know that I and other members of the gallery look forward to working with the city to preserve this important resource.



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Stephen Lally

My name is Min Enghauser. I am an artist, lease holder and member of the TFAA, I speak only for myself, though you will find many agree.

Our artists, along with a city government of long ago, knew that a partnership between local government, working artists and small businesses could create a vibrant art center and city. And it did. It was never, until recent years, a reality that a local city government would come in and take what they didn't create. They took our gift shop, they took our Target gallery, they tried to take our jury process and now they are taking our studios and livelihoods. Unfortunately, as the relationship between the TFAA and the city government's Office of the Arts has disintegrated, damaging morale, our artists are experiencing intolerance and rejection of our new artists, our ideas, and our desperate appeals for rent relief during the dreadful lockdowns went unheard.

Is this the legacy the city government of today wants? To repay the artists that gifted the city its jewel with a figurative death by a thousand cuts? If so then no longer can the city government claim it is a supporter of artists. Its reputation now, unbeknownst to them I'm sure, is as user and abuser. Look to vibrant cities to see how artists' are protected by their local governments and businesses who partnered with them to revitalize their cities. Thankfully, in these cities anyway, the practice of tossing artists aside after they do the hard work are over.

As managing boards rose and fell and directors came and went, the only unwavering constants since the inception of the art center has been the many hardworking passionate artists of the TFAA, our small businesses, our stellar artwork and open studios, our unprecedented jury system, our willingness to voluntarily manage the studio spaces and, until recently, our city government that supported their artists.

Ours is an art center truly, run by working artists, bringing millions into the local economy every year and yet costing our tax payers almost nothing. What is it costing now? How do you justify the astronomical new costs of this plan when people of your city are struggling just to put food on their tables?

The TFAA is still here, still thriving, growing and willing to be an integral partner in the art center. Unfortunately, the TFAA, and other organizations, was never solicited for our input on this grand plan of plans and on the future of our beloved art center. City council members, does that make sense to you given our dedication, stability, experience and vested interest in the success of the art center? Doesn't it seem like there should be more input from those with the most to lose?

If the waterfront's vibrancy hinges on our art center, a building filled with small businesses, then it is not unreasonable to ask the city council to request more insight from the actual stakeholders, business owners and taxpayers and for the time to digest what is being presented today. There isn't even a mission statement for the art center presented. This is a plan that benefits the wealthy, the well connected and those seeking infamy on the backs of others. It does not benefit the artists, the many small business throughout the city or our taxpayers.

I humbly thank you for your time

Min Enghauser, TFAA Member and Vice President, TFAC Lease Holder  
Studio 309 / min@minenghauser.com / 571.215.8889

Good afternoon

I am Ivy Whitlatch, the Chair of the Alexandria Archaeology Commission and I want to briefly add context to our letter of December 28, 2020 on why we feel it is important that a member of the Archaeology Commission play a role in the planning for the future of the Torpedo Factory.

We all know that the Archaeology Department and Museum are housed within the Torpedo Factory. It is also common knowledge and often highly praised the work that the archaeology department and the city archaeologists, staff and volunteers do to understand the history of our city, discover new and exciting finds, such as the ships and warehouses on the waterfront, and bring it all together to share with a variety of audiences from school children to residents to tourists to local businesses. The innovative, smart phone self directed African American Heritage Trail is just one recent example of this.

What is not as well known however, is the work that Archaeology and the Commission have done over the past few years to bring our vision for both the department and the museum to the next level. One example of this type of work is the Commission's Ships Committee. After the discoveries at the Robinson Terminal South site in 2018, the Commission almost immediately created this committee to explore, analyze and make recommendations to the Commission on the most practical and most exciting opportunities. The committee even partnered with Virginia Tech's Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center on Prince Street in a semester long project on what a structure would require for the Hotel Indigo Ship when it returns to Alexandria from conservation treatment at Texas A&M University, including what an environment could look like and what hurdles must be overcome.

This experience is just one example of how seriously the Commission takes planning for the future of the city's internationally renown archaeology work in Alexandria. We know we cannot do it alone; we know that we have many partners and constituencies, we know that we have many challenges and

opportunities. We also know and firmly believe that the planning and future of the Torpedo Factory, for at least the foreseeable future, will have considerable impact on Alexandria's archaeology program. Everything from space planning for staff to museum exhibition space that will inform and delight visitors to artifact preservation work done by volunteers. Said differently, we have experience and knowledge that we can contribute immediately to the planning for a vibrant archaeology department and museum within the Torpedo Factory and our shared goal of making the Torpedo Factory a must-visit destination for residents, visitors, and staff.

Thank you for hearing the Archaeology Commission's request to be an integral part of the next steps in the planning for the Torpedo Factory.