

21
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Statement of John Gosling on behalf of the Old Town Civic Association
to
City Council
September 25th, 2010
Request To Hold a Public Hearing on the Make-up of the Torpedo Factory Art Center Board
(TFACB)

Thank you Mayor Euille and members of the City Council, my name is John Gosling and I am the President of the Old Town Civic Association and I am here today to share our views regarding the make-up of the Torpedo Factory Art Center Board.

Late last year the City hired a consultant to study and make recommendations to change the operations of the Torpedo Factory. The consultant's report was published in January. Two of the key recommendations were to extend its hours of operations through events and other functions, and to take responsibility for management of the Center away from the **Torpedo Factory Artists Association**.

The irony in all of this is that at the time of the study, the Artist Association had already recognized the need to implement strategies for change. And, in fact, had achieved some measure of success being a key factor in raising the City of Alexandria's ranking from 11th to third in *AmericanStyle* magazine's annual list of the top 25 arts destinations in the nation.

The Council, based in some part on the recommendations of that study, passed the resolution to create the Board in July, but in a way that has left many of our citizens concerned about lack of due process or meaningful public input.

- The City Council held work sessions on the report in February and May. A "work session," is not cablecast and there is no opportunity for public comment.
- The Commission on the Arts did have a public hearing meeting in May—but the Arts Commission's authority is advisory only.
- The City Council, which has the decision making authority, has yet to hold a public hearing. The Council meeting in July that passed the resolution to create the TFACB was a legislative meeting, not a public hearing.
- That there was legitimate confusion about the term "ex officio" resulting in the proposed make-up of the Board leaving the Artist Association with very minor representation.

We all recognize that the Art Center is responsible for a major contribution, both directly and indirectly, to the public and private economy of the City. It is an example of a sustainable "workplace" and school, successfully managed and operated by professional practitioners for more than 30 years. To dilute their voice on the Board seems short sighted. Their experience of the art market and day-to-day operations of the Torpedo Factory can provide an invaluable contribution. For these reasons, I make this request to the Council to defer action on the final composition of the Board until Old Town Civic Association and all other interested parties have had an opportunity to be fully informed on the Boards function, goals and objectives, and to present their considered recommendations before the Council at a public hearing.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Gosling President, OTCA Board of Directors