

Key excerpts from the Armory Master Plan Draft released November 26, 2024

Excerpts from p.15

“The first recommendation is to establish a Somerville Armory Advisory Board. As envisioned today, this body will meet to oversee selection of tenants, spending of Armory revenues for building services and capital investments, while also facilitating relationships with and among tenants, neighbors, and other community members.

Massachusetts law places the authority to lease municipal property and allocate municipal revenues with the Mayor and City Council and therefore the Advisory Board is not the final decision maker but a key partner in the crucial first step of filling vacancies in the building and the ongoing investments in the property. The Advisory Board will be a part of the executive branch, under the Mayor, but because the authority for the decisions this body will oversee is held jointly by the Mayor and City Council, both the Mayor and City Council will have a role in Advisory Board member selection.

The Armory Advisory Board is envisioned as a five-member board consisting of two representatives of the Somerville arts community, two residents of Somerville, and one professional in facilities management or real estate with relevant background to support the Advisory Board’s work.”

Excerpts from p. 18. Please note that there is some technical editing needed on the next section of the Draft Plan to clarify meaning:

“Governance Transparency

Armory tenants, visitors, and Somerville residents have advocated for Armory governance to be as transparent and public as possible. With the goal of setting the Armory on a path to independent governance in mind, one of the first actions of the board will be to establish a set of norms that can be carried forward when governance shifts to a non-profit or cultural trust. This begins with creating a charter that outlines the policies by which the board will operate and will be formally adopted by the Board following public input and . The charter will at minimum cover the frequency of tenant and public neighborhood meetings. There will be dedicated City staff time for planning and organizing the Advisory Board’s meetings and preparing and distributing meeting materials.

Paths Towards Independence

Forming the Somerville Armory Advisory Board is the first step to transition the Armory administration away from City staff to an independent entity. This initial structure will provide a platform when there is readiness to transition governance to an independent third party entity, such as a non-profit corporation or a quasi-government agency like a cultural trust. Such independent entities have more direct decision-making power on administrative and fiscal matters and with less oversight by the City.

The City can seek to create a non-profit corporation to govern the Armory. Such a corporation would have an independent board and staff that can expand the scale of Armory programming and increase the facility's public exposure and brand, while also fundraising for major building renovations or improvements. Alternately, creating a special purpose, quasi-governmental agency requires special state legislation but combines the efficiencies of a non-profit corporation with heightened access to municipal resources. Passage of pending state legislation may allow the City to create an independent cultural trust to run the Armory and any future municipal cultural assets, leveraging all available efficiencies of scale and resources to maximize arts and cultural programming to the public."

Excerpts from p. 28

"City staff will be needed to assist the Advisory Board in planning and organizing all aspects of daily administration of the property as a public arts center, as well as advising the Advisory Board on management policy."

"The Advisory Board and their necessary support staff may also need to contract consultant services to assess how the Advisory Board can better integrate the Armory's needs into the Department of Public Works current systems."