November 2, 2026

Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of Somerville City Council,

We are writing to share an update on Arts at the Armory's new chapter as a City tenant and to raise several issues that we believe warrant the City's attention and partnership.

First, we want to acknowledge and thank Mayor Wilson and the City Council for your continued support of Arts at the Armory and Somerville's arts and cultural community. We have particularly appreciated the advocacy, concern, and ongoing engagement of individual Councilors who have checked in with us to see how things are going. A special thank-you to Ward 5 Councilor Sait for her continued dialogue and willingness to make herself available to us. We know you want to hear how things are progressing, and we hope this letter serves as a useful update.

We are pleased to have a fully executed three-year lease, with the option to extend for an additional two years, covering the Performance Hall, Café, and new second-floor space for our offices and hourly community rentals. This expansion is a significant step forward for our organization. Our team of eight full-time and 25 part-time staff has operated for years out of a single 300-square-foot office. Having adequate space to work and collaborate, while creating additional opportunities for community use, is a welcome improvement.

We also appreciate Councilor Sait's confirmation that the Armory roof has been included in the City's capital budget for replacement next fiscal year. This is an important and much-needed investment.

At the same time, there are immediate concerns that need to be addressed. Our new office spaces were turned over to us with significant water damage, unpainted walls, and nails and other remnants of previous occupants. These conditions need to be remedied before the spaces can fully serve their intended purpose.

More broadly, establishing consistent communication and clear channels for addressing building and tenant concerns has been challenging. We are taking steps toward improving this. We will have our first meeting with Josh McCorkle, the City's new Tenant Relations Manager, this week, are in the process of scheduling a meeting with Mayor Wilson, and are awaiting further information about how tenants can engage with the Armory Advisory Board. We welcome these opportunities and hope they will help establish a more productive and transparent working relationship.

We also want to acknowledge Matt Bennett and his DPW team, who do their best to maintain the building despite being understaffed and stretched across competing demands. However, the Armory needs more consistent attention and a coordinated maintenance plan. In addition to the roof and our new offices, the building's exterior is deteriorating, the parking lot is in poor condition, and previously approved improvements—including common-area painting, new doors, and an intercom system—remain outstanding. Even the signage at the front entrance

has not been updated to reflect the building's current tenants. We posted an album with documentation on Facebook that you can view here.

These conditions are particularly concerning given that we pay nearly $10,000 per month in rent, in addition to a $1,500 monthly Common Area Maintenance fee. We recognize the complexity and expense of maintaining a historic municipal building, but tenants need transparency about how these resources are being used, a clear plan for routine maintenance, and regular communication about building improvements and timelines.

Beyond these immediate needs, we believe the Armory requires a broader vision and long-term stewardship strategy. After a five-year process to bring new tenants into the building, only three new tenants were added, leaving 11 of the Armory's 21 available spaces vacant. This represents a significant missed opportunity for a building with the potential to be a thriving center for Somerville's creative community.

To help realize that potential, Arts at the Armory has proposed the attached Civic and Cultural Services Agreement with the City. We envision a more active partnership in which our organization contributes to the day-to-day stewardship and activation of the building. This could include helping identify funding opportunities for capital improvements, activating the outdoor green space as a community asset, and curating exhibitions of local artists' work throughout the building, with opportunities for visitors to purchase artwork directly. We believe our experience operating in the Armory every day, combined with our deep relationships across Somerville's cultural community, positions us to be a valuable partner in making the building more welcoming, functional, and financially sustainable.

We are not simply raising concerns about the condition of a building. We are advocating for the future of an important public asset and the creative community it can serve. The Armory deserves a clear maintenance and capital improvement plan, responsive communication with its tenants, and a shared vision for its future.

We welcome the opportunity to continue these conversations with the Mayor, City Council, and relevant City staff, and to explore how we can work together to address these priorities. We believe there is tremendous potential for a productive partnership, and we are eager to help turn that potential into reality.

Thank you again for your interest, advocacy, and continued support of Arts at the Armory and Somerville's arts and cultural community.

Sincerely,

Stephanie and Jess
Co-Directors
The Center for Arts at the Armory