MASSCreative Meets With Boston Mayoral Candidate John Barros

Candidate cites need for comprehensive cultural policy plan to support the arts, and proposes three new revenue streams to support the sector

BOSTON, August 21, 2013—MASSCreative announces today that Boston mayoral candidate John Barros, executive director of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, met with the Create the Vote Coalition July 31 to talk about his vision for the arts in Boston.

The Create the Vote Coalition is a collaboration of Boston arts, cultural, and creative institutions convened by MASSCreative. Create the Vote is working to ensure that the candidates for Mayor develop strong platforms to support the sector. Ultimately, Create the Vote aims to bring public attention to the issues of the arts sector and its fundamental importance to the city and state’s overall quality of life.

Barros was the first candidate to meet with the coalition. Representatives from the Boston Children’s Chorus, Boston Dance Alliance, The Lyric Opera, and BostonAPP/Lab: Art in Public Places, questioned the candidate about his vision for the arts in Boston.

“John Barros is an artist himself. He is trained in djembe and drums in his church. As the executive director of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, he has utilized the power of art to address youth violence,” said MASSCreative Executive Director Matt Wilson. “He has identified the need for a strong arts vision for the city.”

During his meeting with the Coalition, Barros said, “We need to start thinking about the vision for what the city will look like. So far, we have the “eds” and the “meds,” but to start planning a more inclusive Boston, we need to add other essential pillars: the Green Economy and the Arts.”

Barros expressed the need for an overarching cultural policy for the city that would bring a strategic overlay to the city’s current transactional approach to the creative community.

In creating such a policy, Barros said, “What we need to do is put strong people in place, under clear vision and goals, empower them to do good work, and then get out of the way.”
“Barros understands the need for an arts champion to lead this effort politically,” said Wilson. “If City Hall leads, the rest of the community will follow.”

Barros detailed three revenue streams that he would use to actualize his vision:

- linkage money from developments
- additional private funding (with a mayor that would personally ask funders to support the integration of creative projects throughout the city)
- endowment of an Arts Foundation in Boston to support the arts long term.

On September 9, Create the Vote will host the Boston Mayoral Candidate Forum on Arts, Culture, and Creativity. Moderated by arts critic Joyce Kulhawik, the forum will foster discussion of mayoral candidates’ vision for the arts in Boston. The forum will take place at the Paramount Theatre on Washington Street from 6-7:30pm. All members of the public are invited to attend.

The Create the Vote Coalition will continue to meet with candidates and share with the public what they learn. The Coalition looks forward to learning more details from candidates, including those they have already met with, about how their ideas and initiatives for the arts will be implemented from a policy and funding perspective. For more information about the coalition and the Create the Vote campaign, visit MassCreative.org.

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Founded in 2012, MASSCreative works with creative leaders and entrepreneurs, working artists, arts educators, and arts and cultural supporters to empower creative organizations and the public with a powerful voice to advocate for the resources and support necessary to build vibrant and connected communities.