Create the Vote Coalition Meets With Boston Mayoral Candidate and District 8 City Councilor Mike Ross

Candidate would dedicate one percent of linkage funds from private development to support arts and culture; outlines vision for how arts advocacy should work with other policy initiatives

BOSTON, September 3, 2013—The Create the Vote Coalition announced today that Boston mayoral candidate and District 8 City Councilor Mike Ross met with the Coalition Aug. 22.

The Coalition—a collaboration of Boston’s arts, cultural, and creative institutions convened by MASSCreative—met with Ross at the Lyric Stage Company of Boston. Representatives from the Celebrity Series, Huntington Theatre, Stage Source, the Lyric Stage Company, and BostonAPP/Lab: Art in Public Places questioned Ross about his vision for the arts in Boston.

Ross said that he would dedicate one percent of linkage funds raised through development for arts and cultural activities.

Ross emphasized the need to include planning for arts and cultural initiatives within a broader vision for the city. This strategic plan would detail how arts and cultural activities would work within housing, transportation, and economic development initiatives.

“We have to have a plan first and then build second and we need to include art and transportation and other elements, otherwise you lose opportunities,” Ross said.

As an example, Ross cited the need for affordable housing for city residents, including artists. “If we make affordability a value for the city, then we would not let affordability be one of the first things we negotiate away with developers,” he said.

Ross added that high demand for housing in the city could be leveraged for the arts and cultural community, as well as other populations key to the growth of the city. “We think it’s great that all these people want to move here. But ultimately it will gentrify the city,” he said. “On-site affordability means housing for artists with deep discounts for people who verify that you are an artist. It means affordability for recent college graduates. There are hundreds of thousands of people who want to make Boston their home.”
Ross talked about using art as a community-building tool that can enliven neighborhoods and bring people out into their communities during the evening. He noted that public schools should be utilized as rehearsal and performance space after school hours and on weekends. He also spoke about the significant need for reform in the city’s permitting process, which often significantly delays or even prevents performances, events, and installations from going forward.

Julie Hennrikus, Executive Director of StageSource, who participated in the meeting with Ross, said: “Art brings so much to the city of Boston, but it can do so much more by building on what we have. A strategic vision that integrates our initiatives with other priorities around housing, transportation, economic development will help the arts sector bring even more value to the city.”

“Creativity is powerful,” added Matt Wilson, executive director of MASSCreative, who facilitated the meeting with Ross. “It increases economic activity, boosts educational opportunities for young people, and helps build strong communities. We look forward to collaborating with the next mayor of Boston to support the arts and cultural community in working to its fullest capacity.”

Ross was the fourth candidate to meet with the Coalition, which previously interviewed former Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative Executive Director John Barros; state Rep. Marty Walsh; and Codman Square Health Center founder Bill Walczak.

On September 9, Create the Vote will host the Boston Mayoral Candidate Forum on Arts, Culture, and Creativity. The forum will be moderated by Joyce Kulhawik, President of the Boston Theater Critics Association and JoycesChoices.com, and it will foster discussion of mayoral candidates’ vision for the arts in Boston. The forum will take place at the Paramount Theatre on Washington Street. 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 Mass-Creative.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.