



## Jermaine Reed

### Councilman, 3rd District

Chair: Transportation & Infrastructure

22nd Floor, City Hall  
414 East 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

(816) 513-6513  
Fax: (816) 513-1612  
email: jermaine.reed@kcmo.org

Date: April 9, 2018

To: Troy Schulte, City Manager

From: Jermaine Reed – 3<sup>rd</sup> District City Councilmember

CC: Sly James, Mayor  
Quinton Lucas, 3<sup>rd</sup> District At-Large City Councilmember  
Cheptoo Kositany-Buckner, American Jazz Museum Executive Director  
Mark McHenry, Parks & Recreation Director  
Earnest Rouse, General Services Director  
Brian Rabineau, Law Department  
The American Jazz Museum Board of Directors  
18<sup>th</sup> & Vine District Development Policy Committee  
Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

Subject: American Jazz Museum Organizational Assessment and Associated Recommendations

I have reviewed the American Jazz Museum (AJM) Organizational Assessment completed by the nationally recognized professional museum consultancy, Museum Management Consultants (MMC), an effort that was implemented under the direction of the General Services Department (GSD) in response to the passage of Committee Substitute for Ordinance 170856 on October 26, 2017. In consideration of the full AJM Organizational Assessment and the City Manager's April 9, 2018 memo of Priority Recommendations regarding the roadmap ahead, I am sharing for review the following suggestions and proposed timeline as the City moves forward to make decisions about how best to align AJM with museum industry standards, create greater accountability and oversight, and enhance the Museum's long-term sustainability, and to set this plan into action before the City's Management Contract with AJM expires on April 30, 2018.

It is important to note and heartening to understand that the AJM Organizational Assessment is clear that stakeholders are very interested in sustaining the AJM organization. As we look to renewing the City and AJM management agreement for FY19, this Organizational Assessment provides a solid foundation and roadmap for future professional institutional planning (i.e. strategic planning, business planning, visitor experience planning) at AJM, which should begin in FY19.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following suggestions dovetail with the City Manager's memo of Priority Recommendations and include a proposed timeline associated with these highest priorities for AJM, to be addressed as soon as possible. Beyond these initial suggestions, the remainder of MMC's 26 recommendations in the AJM Organizational Assessment should be discussed and prioritized as part of the planning process recommended by MMC.

1. **Maintain AJM oversight with the General Services Department (GSD).** I agree with the City Manager's counsel that for the sake of continuity, GSD should manage the stabilization of AJM, from decisions about leadership, to strengthening the financial model, visitor experience, and operational infrastructure.
2. **Refresh the staff and Board leadership of the museum.** The next steps for AJM should include Strategic Master Planning, Business Planning, and Visitor Experience Planning. Representatives from the City should meet with the existing AJM Board to create a new, pared-down AJM Transitional Board of Directors. This core group of 8-10 members should include passionate and impactful individuals, including civic leaders, museum professionals, and nonprofit leaders, who will fully commit to guiding AJM through an in-depth planning process.
3. **Form a Planning Committee of the City, Board, AJM Staff and community leadership to lead AJM through the planning process.** The new AJM Transitional Board of Directors will work closely with AJM Staff and a larger planning committee to conduct the upcoming strategic planning process to redefine the AJM mission and vision, outline the Museum's priorities, rebuild important connections with key constituents (with musicians in particular), integrate musicians' perspectives in the future AJM operations, determine proper staffing levels, attract more staff with first-hand knowledge of museum operations, conduct proper inventories of the collections, and perform in-depth analysis of financials.
4. **Develop an overall Visitor Experience Plan that rethinks the entire museum experience.** At the right future point in time, AJM should contract with professional exhibit designers to create an overall AJM Visitor Experience Plan. This visitor experience planning should be highly inclusive as well and rethink the entire AJM experience as well as provide a detailed plan for renovations and expansions to create a world-class jazz museum complete with the necessary form and functionality for first-rate exhibitions, programs, events, amenities, and administrative facilities.
5. **Consider closing the museum for a predetermined period of time while the planning and visitor experience is happening.** The AJM should operate in a more strategically limited way during the transition period without a full closure. Just as the process of the AJM Organizational Assessment did not interrupt the new momentum and forward motion of the larger 18th & Vine Improvements Plan that we have forged since May 2017, the upcoming AJM strategic master planning process will be a positive process, and I strongly recommend that we not close the AJM in its entirety during this important inflection point. Ensuring the museum remains an active partner in the 18<sup>th</sup> & Vine District even as it undergoes the hard work of re-tooling and strengthening itself as an agent of the City, ensures more inclusive community involvement and engagement with the strategic planning process. The shared atrium space must remain open for ongoing access to the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum and events; programming should continue in AJM's indoor and outdoor spaces that should remain open to the public. MMC's recommendation that "The Changing Gallery, as a standalone space, could be used for exhibitions about AJM in general or ideas from the planning specifically" and "that keep AJM in people's minds and make the public curious and excite about the future." Without a doubt, "programming is a visible and compelling way to engage the public and build excitement about the new AJM" while it undergoes its transition and re-emergence.
6. **Obtain AJM response to MMC's 26 recommendations and City Manager's Priority Recommendations utilizing the City Auditors Office (CAO) Audit Report Tracking System (ARTS) process.** The ARTS process is used for the management of an audited entity in order to help

the entity respond to the audit and submit a written response to the CAO regarding the audit recommendations. Referring to the ARTS process, I recommend the following:

- A. The ARTS process provides 15 working days for the AJM Staff and Board to respond to MMC's 26 recommendations from the Organizational Assessment and City Manager's Priority Recommendations.
- B. The response should be completed and scheduled to present to the Finance & Governance Committee by May 1, 2018.
- C. The AJM Staff and Board of Directors shall include within its written response a listing by number of the recommendations from the Organizational Assessment and City Manager's Priority Recommendations, with specific comments on whether the recommendation is one with which the AJM Board agrees, agrees in part, or disagrees, and with specific information as to why each response is given.

This information will inform the next steps as the City moves forward to make decisions related to the AJM.

Thank you for your leadership and responsiveness to this matter. The American Jazz Museum and its sustainability is of importance to the community and city. I look forward to additional discussion and feedback.