

FROM THE NEW YORK CITY ARTS COALITION: NYSCA ISSUES AND UPCOMING HEARING

Friday, December 10, 2010

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This memo is both an effort to address the various emails floating around this field about NYSCA and request for help. Please read all of it, and if you have any questions or concerns, call me at 212-246-3788 or email me at npmunn@nycityartscoalition.org and I will do my best to provide further information. You can also check the [NYSCA web site](#) for more details.

Norma P. Munn, Chair, New York City Arts Coalition

Summary:

Over the last month many changes have taken place at NYSCA due to staff reductions from the state budget cuts. Much of that change has now reached those who are applicants to the agency, but I wanted to bring a short summary and some up to date information to everyone.

Briefly, the agency will at end of the year have 29 staff, down from 42 in 2008. The agency is not allowed move money from its appropriation for grants to its staffing/administrative costs. In any case, none of us want less grant money.

Discipline specific panels and processes are being maintained. But, FYI, the budget reductions totally eliminated all travel money for staff and others to do site visits. That is especially difficult for groups outside NYC, and is an issue we have to address in the upcoming budget.

NYSCA leadership has never discussed staff re-organization with the field, despite the claims of a number of emails floating around. Guideline changes, policy changes and overall direction and planning have been part of discussions between NYSCA and the field over the years and have continued under the present leadership.

The time line on which these changes were done is the direct result of the timing of the staff reductions forced on the agency by the governor's budget and layoff policies. It may appear fast to us, but the agency also has to be ready for January with the application processes. And as state agency, there are numerous processes that have to be cleared by the Albany folks that oversee the agency.

Bottom line:

This restructuring is done. We need to understand why, and prepare ourselves to work to avoid any further reductions in either staffing or funding for NYSCA in the upcoming budget. We are weakening NYSCA and our position with our elected officials by our lack of recognition of the fiscal realities facing the state. It will most certainly not go over well with a new governor facing an \$8-9 Billion shortfall in revenues for next year to become aware of the disunity in this field, which I fear has happened. Bluntly, it is the worst damage we could have done to ourselves at one of our most vulnerable moments, and I am deeply distressed at what has happened with the complaints to elected officials. I appreciate the feelings of those involved with the emails, but there is much that is inaccurate in the emails, and undermining support for NYSCA is simply not a wise way to handle anxiety about the re-structuring

Request:

There is an Assembly hearing next Monday, Dec. 13, in Albany held by the Tourism, Parks, Arts and Sport Development Committee and the Oversight, Analysis and Investigation Committee. This hearing was planned before the recent complaints in the field, and all three areas of concern to the Tourism committee (tourism, parks and arts) are on the agenda. It is NOT an investigation of any agency. These hearings take place every year or so with many of the committees. Testimony at the hearing is by invitation only. Written testimony can be sent to the Committee via email to Quinn Hubbell, Legislative Associate, at hubbellq@assembly.state.ny.us but suggest if you want to do this, that you do so quickly.

If you really want to make the trip for this hearing, you are certainly welcome, but a lot of it will be focused on Parks and Tourism, and support for NYSCA can be shown by sending an email, which will be a lot less expensive, and time consuming.

I would be grateful if you would show that support by sending a version of the following email to the Chair (Steve Englebright) of the Assembly committee dealing with NYSCA either today or tomorrow. The negative and angry emails floating around the field are undermining support for the agency, which will hurt us badly in a few weeks when a budget is being negotiated..

Please help. Thank you.

The following is sample language for a support email to Assemblyman Steve Englebright at EngleS@assembly.state.ny.us If you can take a moment to personalize this email, it will be more effective, but brevity is important.

Dear Assemblyman Englebright:

I am unable to attend the hearing on December 13, but wanted to let you know that my organization has benefited from funding from NYSCA over the years. I have received information from NYSCA about the loss of staff positions and the subsequent re-organization, and recognize that budget cuts have made the changes necessary.

The agency has pledged to continue to utilize discipline specific evaluations and discipline specific panels, which is the key to continued quality decisions. That is an essential commitment for me, and I appreciate that even in this very difficult situation, the leadership at NYSCA has recognized the necessity for maintaining that process.

I support the leadership at NYSCA and look forward to continuing to working with the staff and NYSCA leadership over the next months as all

of us adjust to the greatly reduced staff at the agency.

Thank you for your support for the agency and the cultural field, and I also look forward to continuing to work with you as you provide that leadership and support in the next few months, which I know will be very challenging.

(Sign with name, title and organization)

[< back](#)

[previous listing](#) • [next listing](#)