

**New York State Council on the Arts
Council Meeting Minutes
June 25, 2020 10:05 AM- 11:30AM
Held via Video and Teleconference**

Present:

Katherine Nicholls (Chair), Laura Aswad, Scott Eberle, Joan Hornig, Janet Kagan, Hildy Kuryk, Eric Latzky, Laudelina Martinez, Elsie McCabe-Thompson, Richard Mittenthal, John Morning, Hal Payne

Quorum present: Yes

Others in attendance:

Mara Manus, Executive Director, NYSCA

Megan White, Deputy Director of Programs, NYSCA

Abigail Young, Deputy Director of Operations and General Counsel, NYSCA

Abby Adler, Executive Assistant, NYSCA

Due to public health concerns and as authorized by Executive Order of the Governor, this meeting was conducted by teleconference.

Roll call conducted by Abby Adler. Meeting called to order by Chair Katherine Nicholls at approximately 10:10 AM.

CHAIR'S WELCOME

KATHERINE NICHOLLS:

Thank you, Abby. Good afternoon and welcome to the convening of the Council of the New York State Council on the Arts on June 25, 2020. I am KATHERINE NICHOLLS, the Chair of NYSCA.

Thank you to our Council Members joining us today. Due to public health concerns and as authorized by Executive Order of the Governor, this meeting may be conducted by teleconference and video participation.

Some housekeeping before we begin, I ask that all attendees remain muted unless they need to speak, and anyone wishing to speak to please state your name before you begin. Additionally, if at any point you must leave this call, please inform us as we must maintain a quorum for today's session.

To remind all in attendance; this is a public meeting that is being recorded.

At today's meeting, we will review and vote on the NYSCA-NEA CARES grant ratings. A reminder that this opportunity was made possible by the NEA's allocation of CARES Act funding to NYSCA,

and it will provide \$490,000 in \$10,000 organizational grants across the state. Today, we will also review the upcoming FY2021 panel process and FY2021 grantmaking strategic framework.

When Council last met, virtually on May 8, we approved NYSCA's recommended regranting of \$45,000.00 of CARES funds to NYFA to administer \$1,000 grants to artists outside of New York City through the Keep NYS Creating Project Grant. At that time our state was still very much in the midst of the unimaginable public health crisis that is COVID 19. Today, we as New Yorkers have much to be proud of and grateful for. From the dedication and heroic efforts of New York's frontline medical workers, to our fellow citizens who kept us fed and our communities functioning during the worst days of the pandemic, we are now emerging on the right side of the curves we monitor related to COVID 19. Under Governor Cuomo's leadership, we have had the information, data, and direction we needed to fight this battle. As of today, all regions of the state are in Phase 3, with the exception of New York City which has moved into Phase 2.

On Friday, 5 Regions, - Finger Lakes, North Country, Southern Tier, Central NY, and the Mohawk Valley move to Phase 4. Phase 4 includes low risk indoor and outdoor arts and entertainment, media production and higher education. Outdoor venues can operate at 33% capacity and indoor venues at 25%. The arts are coming back in NY. This was almost unthinkable a few weeks ago. We remain vigilant, and optimistic, a fine line we must continue to walk carefully.

The staff and leadership at NYSCA have done incredible work over the past 15 weeks, and I would like to acknowledge and thank them on behalf of Council. Like so many businesses, organizations, and employees, NYSCA made the shift to remote working on March 16, and from there our team has focused on the business of the agency and supporting the highly impacted arts field.

As Council is aware, through NYSCA's annual and longer-term planning efforts, we identified areas of focus and opportunity that came out of our multiple listening sessions with the field, staff, council, and dozens of stakeholders from across the state. I am delighted to share that over the past several months this work has continued and NYSCA has prioritized its effort towards several of these stated priorities. I am delighted to turn the meeting over to our Executive Director, Mara Manus, who will provide us updates!

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WELCOME

MARA MANUS: Thank you, Katherine. It is such a pleasure to be here today with you virtually. First and foremost, I would like to commend our incredible staff, under the leadership of Megan and Abigail. We would not be here today without them. This has been a truly all-hands-on-deck experience, and their work to continue to serve our field has been exemplary.

Communications/Website

- We have made significant updates to the NYSCA website over the last 3 months- including two reorganizations. When we first went remote in March, our core focus was providing timely COVID-19 resources to the field. We have now created a new 2020 Urgent Resources menu for easy access to relief funds, reopening guidance, our

webinars, and more. We have also replaced our homepage video with a space for timely updates. We are now sharing a statement in support of the Black community and systemic change to address longstanding racial injustice.

- The visibility of NYSCA as an essential resource to our field has increased significantly. We have drawn 27,000 more unique visitors to our website than in the same three-month time period last year, a nearly 40% increase in traffic.
- I wanted to take this moment to thank Chair Katherine Nicholls and Council Member Eric Latzky, who have both generously given their time to provide invaluable guidance in reimagining and redirecting our communications strategy.

Webinars

- We launched the NYSCA PRESENTS webinar series in May to reimagine how NYSCA can be a resource to the field during COVID-19 and beyond. Each webinar is designed for organizations of all types and features leading industry professionals discussing best practices
- To-date we have held 4 webinars covering fundraising myths, digital communications, legal guidance for digital programming, and legal and governance issues for arts leaders and boards (which was presented in partnership with Jim Sheehan, Bureau Chief of the AG's Charities Bureau)
- We have received incredibly positive feedback from our field and I am thrilled to share that our webinars have been viewed by over 3,000 people. The webinars and presentations can be found on the NYSCA website under the "2020 Urgent Resources" tab

Budget

- The budget numbers that were released in April reflect a steady state budget, and no agency has an actionable budget at this point in time. We continue to wait for guidance and directive from the Department of the Budget regarding anticipated budget cuts. We have paid out the majority of our FY2020 grants and we are continuing to pay out our capital project grants.
- As has been shared with us by DOB, we are working with an understanding that there is likely to be a 10% cut to the operations budget and a possible 20-50% cut to our aid to localities budget, the latter of which is our grantmaking budget.
- Any grant allocations will be made after the summer at the earliest, and we will address a strategic framework and approach for our grantmaking in today's meeting.
- I want to emphasize that the state is likely to face ongoing financial challenges moving forward, and the impact is likely to continue for the next 2-3 fiscal years. However, the NYSCA staff is committed to continuing our work together and supporting our incredible field as we move forward in these unprecedented times.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NYSCA has determined that the Council has a basis to enter into executive session to review the recommendation put forth by NYSCA staff and Executive Leadership for the NYSCA-NEA CARES grant ratings and upcoming FY2021 grant review process. Section 105(1)(f) of the Open Meetings Law permits a public body to enter into an executive session to discuss: "...the ... financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation."

We will now go into executive session and return to an open meeting at approximately 11:45AM to vote on the recommendation.

[The meeting continues in Executive Session for Committee members and invited guests.]

KATHERINE NICHOLLS: Welcome back to the public portion of the Council meeting for the New York State Council on the Arts. I am Katherine Nicholls, Chair of the New York State Council on the Arts. Thank you all for joining us.

I would like to ask MEGAN WHITE, if there are any recusals to report. Those with a conflict will be deemed recused on their vote for the applicable application.

MEGAN WHITE: Thank you Katherine. The conflicts are as follows:

1. Arts Services Initiative of Western NY, Inc.: Hal D. Payne
2. Classical Theatre of Harlem: Elsie McCabe Thompson
3. International Print Center New York: John Morning
4. Rensselaer County Historical Society, Inc.: Laudelina Martinez

At the request of Chair Katherine Nicholls, a motion of the Council to approve the NYSCA-NEA CARES grant ratings is made and seconded. The motion carries unanimously with the Council members joining via teleconference.

KATHERINE NICHOLLS:

Thank you to our NYSCA staff, leadership, and Council, for your ongoing service and commitment to New York State. Today in doing our civic duty, we have worked to ensure that all state residents receive the benefits of the arts, including communities that need it the most during these unprecedented times.

The is the moment where our nation must face the injustice, inequality, and deeply rooted discrimination not only in our past, but that continues to this day. This injustice takes a heartbreaking toll on our Black community and communities of color.

The arts and artists through their craft, demand that we confront our past, and they ensure that we see and hear what is our present. They will inspire us and hold us accountable to create a better world for everyone.

I would like to take this opportunity to announce that our next Committee and Council Meeting will be held in October. At this meeting we will review and vote on the FY2021 applications.

A reminder that panel meetings will run from August 3- September 11. We strongly urge you to attend one or more of the virtual panel meetings. Council members who have attended in the past can confirm that these meetings present a valuable opportunity to observe NYSCA's review process and understand the level of diligence and discussion to arrive at a decision. As a reminder; only approved panelists may participate in the discussions.

As we continue to navigate the landscape of COVID-19 and our state's recovery, we will update Council members on any changes to the NYSCA Council Meeting schedule when we have them.

Meeting adjourns at approximately 11:30AM.

Note: Information on the NYSCA NEA CARES Grant opportunity is available at <https://arts.ny.gov/grants/NYSCA-NEA-Cares>