



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA
COMMISSION FOR THE ARTS
1100 NORTH GLEBE ROAD, SUITE 1500
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22201
(703) 228-0808 WWW.ARLINGTONVA.US



May 23, 2019

Dear Arlington Arts Stakeholders,

We on the Arlington County Commission for the Arts are grateful for the restoration of proposed cuts to the Cultural Affairs budget, with the grants program fully funded. We believe that the proposed cuts were restored only through the strong response from our arts organizations, artists, and community members from across the County (and beyond). Thank you for your tireless efforts. The County Board received more than 200 letters—with most protesting the proposed cuts and validating, through many personal stories, the value of the arts and culture for individuals of all ages and for our community as a whole. In many positive ways, this campaign united our arts community in new and powerful ways.

Throughout the process, the community and the Board affirmed the goals and vision as expressed in [Enriching Lives: Arlington Arts and Culture Strategy](#) (2017): that art has value in itself and is a necessity of a fully-lived life; that arts and culture are a strategic community resource, contributing to strengthening community bonds and promoting equity and inclusion; that arts and culture are essential to education and learning throughout the lifetime; and that the arts and culture underpin economic development and sustainability.

Now in view of the [County Manager's transition plan](#) and the [County Board budget guidance](#), the Commission, with County Board and staff, is focused on maintaining our momentum in order to make new strides in advancing a positive agenda for the arts in FY2021 and beyond. We are well aware—and deeply concerned--that the FY2020 budget provides only one-time funding for several key budget items.

To that end, in response to the Board's guidance and the County Manager's transition plan, the Commission will be involved in the following activities. Each of them will involve substantial community involvement, and all are designed to re-examine and update the role of Arlington County government in provision of community arts services.

The three activities are:



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1. A working group focusing on a “review of community arts programs, to be completed by arts stakeholders, County staff, and outside consultants,” which will catalogue arts-supporting services in Arlington and the region, specifically examine future operations and business models for the Costume Lab, Scenic Studio, and Mobile Lab; develop a new scheduling process for joint-use theatre space with Arlington Public Schools; and evaluate opportunities for public-private partnerships.
2. An evaluation and consideration of a reconfiguration of the current grants program.
3. An evaluation and updating the current Board-approved Arts Policy, adopted in 1990, to align with the Enriching Lives Arts and Culture Strategy.

Note that for each of these activities, the Commission—and the County staff and Board—is committed to significant and substantial community input. While Commission members will be involved in each of the activities, our specific role is still being defined. Each is on a fairly tight timeline, in advance of the FY2021 budget submission.

We on the Commission want to hear from those of you who want to participate in these activities. Please email me at Marsha.semmel@gmail.com . As these efforts proceed, we will post regular updates.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marsha Semmel".

Marsha Semmel, Chair
Arlington Commission for the Arts