

Poloncarz Announces Members of New Erie County Arts and Cultural Advisory Board

By WKBW News



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(WKBW release) Friday, Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz announced members of the new Erie County Arts and Cultural Advisory Board (“Erie Arts Board”) that will administer the new, reinvigorated process for local cultural institutions to compete for County funding.

According to a news release:

“Today, I am proud to announce the new Erie County Arts and Cultural Advisory Board,” said Poloncarz. “This board will be responsible for administering a new, reinvigorated process for cultural institutions, both large and small, to compete for County funding to be included in the annual budget. These members will have the responsibility to scrutinize every application to ensure funding is allocated objectively and based on need and merit. While the significant role of arts and culture to not only our local economy but also our overall quality of life cannot be understated, this process will ensure the taxpayers get the highest return on their investment possible.”

The Erie Arts Board, led by Chairwoman Catherine Schweitzer (Executive Director of the Baird Foundation) and Vice Chair Ted Brinson (Board Chair of Elim Christian Fellowship Church), will be a thirteen (“13”) member board with a balanced mix of financial, legal and arts advocacy experience.

Chairwoman Schweitzer said, “I am humbled by the opportunity to lead the Erie Arts Board and I would like to thank County Executive Poloncarz for the tremendous amount of faith he has put in Ted and me to administer a ridged but fair County cultural funding process. The recreation of a funding process and the selection of these highly qualified and well respected board members signals a new attitude towards the culturals by the Poloncarz administration that is very welcomed. The balanced mix of financial, legal and arts advocacy experience will serve the board well as we evaluate organizations on their worthiness to receive public funding.”

Other members of the newly established board include: Cindy Abbott-Letro (media consultant, Francis M. Letro Attorneys at Law), Erin Bahn (Kavinoky Cook LLP), Anthony Chase (Assistant Dean of Arts and Humanities at Buffalo State College), Karla Gadley (First Niagara Bank), Thomas Hayes (M&T Bank), Tod Kniazek (Executive Director of Arts Services Initiative of WNY), Jennifer Persico (Mosey Persico LLP), Lisa Ludwig (actress and owner of Free Fall Productions), Jonathan Rivera (Key Bank), Sandy White (President, Mustard Seed Consulting Group), and Kevin Zanner (Hurwitz & Fine PC).

In May, Poloncarz announced the release of Erie County’s 2013 Cultural Funding Application. The streamlined and well-organized three-page application, developed with input from cultural organizations, will be due to the Department of Environment and Planning by 5:00pm on July 6, 2012.

The new application features clearly stated eligibility requirements, descriptions of various documentation necessary to be considered for funding, and a twelve-question series of essays. The essays focus on organizational mission, programs, and services; organizational planning and evaluation; organizational governance and staffing; and organizational reports on marketing and attendance.

The new application is available online at <http://www2.erie.gov/environment/index.php?q=2013-cultural-funding-application>

In 2010, the Collins administration chose to drastically reduce the level of operational support allocated to cultural organizations by the County—cutting all funding to the smaller organizations in favor of ten larger organizations that the former-county executive personally deemed regionally significant. In addition, Collins chose to dissolve the Erie County Cultural Resources Advisory Board (“ECCRAB”), which was designed to make objective decisions on cultural funding levels. As part of the 2012 Adopted Erie County Budget, County Executive-elect Poloncarz worked with the Erie County Legislature to restore more than \$930,000 in operational funding for 37 smaller culturals that were defunded since 2010.

Poloncarz added, “Rather than arbitrarily deciding who should get County funding like the prior administration did, we have developed a new application process to appropriation funding for our cultural institutions that has been greatly streamlined. I encourage any cultural groups located in Erie County, whether you have ever received County funding in the past or not, to submit an application before the July 6th deadline.”

As County Executive, Poloncarz pledged to create a new funding process that would be utilized for the 2013 Erie County Budget to ensure all cultural institutions throughout Erie County had the opportunity to compete for County support, with final decisions being made in a fair and equitable manner. Over the past several months, Department of Environment and Planning Commissioner Maria Whyte has worked closely with the cultural community to recreate such a process.

Commissioner Whyte said, “I want to join the County Executive in thanking the individuals who have agreed to serve on the Erie Arts Board. The Department of Environment and Planning is committed to providing them with all the support necessary to allocate cultural funding for the 2013 fiscal year.”

<http://www.wkbw.com/news/local/Poloncarz-Announces-Members-of-New-Erie-County-Arts-and-Cultural-Advisory-Board-160870645.html>