

**New York State Council on the Arts  
Council Meeting Minutes**

**March 15, 2023, 1:50PM- 4:20PM**

**Held at the NYSCA Office: 411 Fifth Avenue, Suite 700, New York, NY 10016**

---

**Present:** Monica Angle, Lawrence Cook II, Carolee Fink, Aaron Flagg, Janet Kagan, Eric Latzky, Andrea Louie, David Alan Miller, Mahnaz Moinian, Katherine Nicholls, Catherine Schwoeffermann, Adriana Trigiani

**In-Person 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

Katie Steger, Director of Capital Project Fund, NYSCA

Abby Adler, Executive Assistant, NYSCA

---

*Before the meeting was formally called to order by the Chair, Abby Adler (NYSCA Executive Assistant) conducted a roll call of the nine present Council members. The meeting of the NYSCA Council was called to order at 1:50PM by Chair Katherine Nicholls.*

**Chair's Welcome**

Katherine Nicholls (Chair): Good afternoon and welcome to the New York State Council on the Arts' March 15, 2023 meeting. I am Katherine Nicholls, the Chair of the New York State Council on the Arts. As we have a quorum of present, I hereby call this meeting to order.

To remind all in attendance; this is a public meeting that is being recorded. A recording and transcript of the meeting will be made available on the NYSCA website.

Thank you to our Council Members for joining us today in-person - welcome all! Today marks the first in-person meeting in the beautiful new NYSCA offices at 411 Fifth Avenue in New York City. This move has been many years in the making, and I would like to acknowledge Deputy Director of Operations and General Counsel, Abigail Young, for her leadership throughout this entire process, Executive Director Mara Manus for her oversight, and the incredible work of the NYSCA move team Len Ditman, Brenda Brown, Jerry Pecchia, and Will McDermott. Council wishes everyone at NYSCA all the best as you settle in and make this new space your own!

Last week, NYSCA shared our comprehensive 2023 COVID Impact Survey report, which was sent to Council via email and can be accessed on the NYSCA website. We are grateful to the 1,300 NYSCA grantees that took the time to complete the survey and share their COVID impact and recovery stories with us. These responses provide tremendous insights into the state of New

York's non-profit arts and culture recovery and address the state priorities of jobs, tourism, and economic development. The results of this study are clear: While signs of improvement are indicated, the sector is still in active recovery mode and experiencing operational and programmatic paradigm shifts. The survey is a powerful tool that NYSCA will continue to utilize moving forward to collect data and be highly connected to the changing environment that impacts our sector.

At today's meeting, Council will review and vote on the FY2023 Capital Project grant Recommendations. Council will also review and vote on the FY2023 Appeals panel recommendations, and ratify the FY2023 panelist roster. The materials for today's meeting were sent to Council on March 10, 2023.

We are immensely grateful to Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature for their historic FY2023 Capital Appropriation of \$50 million, as well as Governor Hochul's \$100 million Capital sub-allocation. This unprecedented level of funding will support projects for organizations of all sizes across the state.

The Capital recommendations Council will review today, are vital investments in our state's economy. Capital projects create jobs. They bolster New York's tourism sector, with a compounded economic effect on Main Street stores, restaurants, and hotels across our state. Capital investments ensure the longevity of our vital cultural facilities, and the projects will have impact on organizations and communities for decades to come. These projects affirm the pivotal role arts and culture play in our state's economic prosperity.

The FY2023 Capital Project Fund application portal launched on September 30, 2022, and closed January 12, 2023, at 4PM. NYSCA conducted 6 Capital peer review panels in February and March, welcoming 33 panelists from 9 regions of the state. I would like to take this moment to thank Council Members who were able to attend one or more panel sessions and applaud the incredible cohort of FY2023 peer review panelists for their time, insights, and commitment to this most important part of our grant making process. Without them, we would not be here today. Thank you for your service to our state.

A reminder that in-person attendance is material to conduct the business of this Council and ensure the timely distribution of vital funding across our state. Our FY24 Council meeting schedule will be finalized over the coming weeks, and we anticipate holding two meetings between September and November. Please inform us as soon as possible of any significant conflicts you may have in that window so that we may plan accordingly.

I would also like to acknowledge and salute our field who continue to work through challenging times as we recover from the unprecedented disruption from the pandemic. You have had to overcome much, and yet your work that enriches our lives has continued, evolved, and adapted to the environment. At the same time, we are ever mindful that throughout many parts of the world, conflicts rage denying artists safe spaces to create and citizens the opportunity to

experience the Arts. When peace is achieved, the arts will be a powerful force in healing and restoring lives and nations.

I am pleased to turn this meeting over to Mara Manus, Executive Director of NYSCA, who will share some agency updates.

### **Executive Director Welcome**

Mara Manus (Executive Director): Thank you, so much, Katherine! I want to reiterate your message regarding the NYSCA move and once again acknowledge the leadership of Abigail Young in her stewardship of this immensely collaborative and time intensive process. It is so exciting to be in this space, we hope it creates a greater potential for collaboration while also affording greater privacy for staff, meeting the evolving needs in this post-pandemic environment.

As a reminder, with our unprecedented and historic level of funding for FY2023, NYSCA received a record number of applications. I am pleased to share an update on the status of our 3,600 contracts, excluding Capital, which had January start dates. As of today, 94% of our contracts and letter agreements have been signed, and 84% of our grants have been paid.

In a huge year for NYSCA and our field, I would like to acknowledge this phenomenal work of our staff, in particular our Operations team led by Abigail Young, for this extraordinary achievement.

Amplifying our grantmaking through increased communications efforts is one of our strategic priorities and critical to expanding access to NYSCA dollars. I am pleased to share that for our FY2023 grantmaking process, NYSCA reached 6,200 individuals (1,200 more than in FY2022) through 9 webinars and 32 virtual office hours. A huge round of applause to our staff who hosted, and to Abby Adler for producing and Lia Capotorto and Sana Colter for managing all of our virtual offerings. We look forward to continuing to expand our communications efforts in our upcoming grant round for 2024!

I'd like to welcome NYSCA Communications Director, Ann Marie Sekeres, to share an update on our agency socials.

### **Communications Update**

Ann Marie Sekeres (Communications Director): Thank you, Mara. Hello, everyone! It's so nice to speak before you all again. Last time we spoke, I introduced the new communications strategy for increased social media engagement. I'm happy to share that since October (compared to when I started in the late summer). The number of times our posts appeared on someone's screen increased 64% (129,000 impressions from 55,000). The number of people seeing our posts increased 44% (76,000 users from 53,000). The number of times our posts were shared increased 38.2% (173 vs 133)

We accomplished this by 1) highlighting different regions in our weekly social posts 2) reposting grantee announcements to our stories and 3) empowering our sponsored artists, for the very first time, by providing them with a social media graphic they could share on their own channels. By reposting and tagging them when they did, dozens of artists shared this graphic on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Our grantees have even gone so far to make their own posts and videos, thanking NYSCA. We thought you might like to see some examples:

Many grantees created their own graphics thanking NYSCA for their awards.

1. This one from “Tilted Axes” a mobile guitar concert, put NYSCA on the marquee.
2. This one used a quote from Katherine from our press release template, that we distribute to grantees, to create this social graphic.
3. Artists were delighted to receive the social graphic we created and reposted it, sometimes with compelling narratives about their projects. Including this one, which starts, “It must be real...my name was in the long press release...”
4. Patchogue Arts created this fun reel just last week:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cpgk-E4j4gF/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>

I hope you’ve enjoyed seeing these posts as much as we did! Thank you so much for letting me share these highlights with you all.

*A copy of the communications presentation can be found, [here](#).*

Mara Manus (Executive Director): Thank you, Ann Marie. At this time, I would like to turn the meeting over to Megan White, NYSCA’s Deputy Director of Programs, who will review the next two agenda items: Appeals Panel Recommendations and the FY23 Panelist Roster.

### **FY2023 Appeals Panel Recommendations**

Megan White (Deputy Director of Programs): Thank you Mara. As part of NYSCA’s five step approval process, an applicant may appeal the Council's funding decision. The procedure for appeals is set forth in Part 6401 of the New York Codes, Rules and Regulations.

Valid grounds for appeal are:

1. Nonpresentation of information: Information known to the Council staff prior to the Council's decision that was not presented and that might have altered the decision;
2. Misrepresentation of information: Information known to the Council staff prior to the Council's decision that was changed in its presentation and that, if presented differently, might have altered the decision;
3. Improper procedure: Contention by the applicant that: 1) the review of the funding request by the appropriate advisory panel was biased; 2) the decision by the Council was arbitrary and capricious.

One, two, or all three grounds may be alleged. Dissatisfaction with the level of funding alone is not an acceptable basis for appeal.

Last year, after awarding over 3,600 grants NYSCA received four appeals. The Appeals Panel held a public meeting at NYSCA's temporary offices on February 13th. After presentation of the grounds, review of the procedure and materials and extensive discussion, all four appeals were denied.

It is important to note that a denied appeal does not affect an organizations application for the following year – appellants are welcome to submit a request to NYSCA in the subsequent year without penalty. In the event that an appeal is upheld, it is not a guarantee of funding. Upheld appeals go back to panel to be reviewed again as if it were a new request.

The Council must concur with the panel's recommendations for the FY23 appeal process to be concluded. NYSCA will inform the organizations who appealed of the determination of the Appeals Panel after this meeting.

Each of you received a copy of a memo that shared the information from the appeals meeting outlining the appellants, their grounds for appeal, and the results.

### **FY2023 Panelist Roster Ratification**

Megan White (Deputy Director of Programs): For our next order of business, we will move to the FY2023 Capital Panelist Roster ratification. A reminder that each year, NYSCA solicits nominations from NYSCA staff, Council members, current panelists, current grantees, and the general public. Advisory panelists are selected from these nominees. As a reminder, all panel members serve single year terms, and may be reappointed for a term of up to three years.

Capital projects applications are complex collections of information about the technical feasibility, financial soundness, and direct community benefit of proposed capital improvements. They include advanced architectural and engineering drawings, detailed equipment lists and scopes of work, financing, fundraising, and cash flow plans, construction timelines, plans for operating new and improved facilities, and information on community involvement in the development of said projects and plans for their engagement in and access to the facilities once projects are complete.

In order to adequately evaluate these proposals, we rely heavily on the technical and field expertise of a diverse group of practitioners to review applications, share their expertise with one another through panel discussions, and provide guidance as we make funding recommendations. Each panel is composed of 5-7 individuals with expertise in architecture, engineering, nonprofit finance, nonprofit management (with experience leading a capital project), technical production and theatrical equipment, historic preservation, and construction management. Their collective, complimentary skillsets foster a rigorous and thoughtful review of every application we receive.

This year, we engaged 33 panelists (23 new, 10 returning) representing 9 regions of the state, in six separate review panels of 5-7 reviewers. Panelists reviewed and scored applications in advance, and each of the panels convened for a zoom meeting (five 2-day meetings and one 1-day meeting). During the meetings, applications were discussed in detail and panelists had the opportunity to adjust their scores based on the conversation. Panel scores and comments were used to inform the list of recommendations that Council is considering today.

Advisory panelists are required to act with impartiality with respect to the evaluation and rating of applications and to protect panel deliberations from any potential conflict of interest or the appearance of such a conflict. Prior to serving, panelists are required to acknowledge any affiliations with organizations making applications to the Council and must comply with New York State Ethics Laws.

A reminder that we will vote to ratify the panelist rosters following our review of the FY23 grant recommendations.

*A copy of the FY23 panelist roster recommendations can be viewed, [here](#).*

*At this time, Chair Katherine Nicholls called for a 10-minute break from 2:30PM to 2:40PM. Upon return from break, Executive Assistant Abby Adler confirmed the in-person attendance of Council Members Carolee Fink, Mahnaz Moinian, and Janet Kagan, and confirmed quorum. Abby Adler also confirmed the attendance of Council Members Scott Eberle and Joan Hornig, joining via telecommute in a non-voting capacity.*

*A motion is made and seconded to enter into Executive Session per Section 105(1)(f) of the Open Meetings Law to discuss: "...the ... financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation." The meeting continues in Executive Session for Council members and invited guests until 4:10PM.*

Katherine Nicholls (Chair): 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. To remind all in attendance; this is a public meeting that is being recorded.

*At the request of Chair Katherine Nicholls, a motion is made and seconded to ratify the FY2023 Panelist Rosters. The motion is unanimously approved by all present Council Members.*

*At the request of Chair Katherine Nicholls, a motion is made and seconded to bring the FY2023 NYSCA Capital Project Fund grant recommendations and FY2023 Appeals Panel recommendations to a vote. The following conflicts are noted for the record:*

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Council Member Conflicts</b>
Carnegie Hall Corporation	Mahnaz Moinian
Cornell University	Lisa Baker
Lake Placid Association of Music Drama and Art	James Lemons
People's Theatre Project, inc.	Carolee Fink
Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation	Lisa Baker
The Governors Island Corporation	Carolee Fink
WESTBETH CORP. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT	Elsie McCabe-Thompson

*Following the reading of the recusals, the motion to approve the FY2023 Capital Project Fund grant recommendations and FY2023 Appeals Panel recommendations is unanimously carried by all present Council Members.*

**ADJOURN**

Katherine Nicholls (Chair): Thank you NYSCA Panelists, staff, leadership and Council for your ongoing service and commitment to our state! We take pride in the process that brought us to today, and recognize the leadership of our NYSCA staff, and the professional expertise and experience of our panelists without whom these critical investments in our state and the arts and culture sector would not be possible. Thank you.

Today in doing our civic duty we have approved vital and historic funding for arts and culture organizations across our state, ensuring that all New Yorkers and visitors continue to experience and benefit from our phenomenal sector! And these investments will have impact and meaning for many years to come.

On behalf of Council, we are deeply grateful to the Artists and arts and culture organizations who continue to produce the work that inspires us. To the Capital grantees, we look forward to visiting your facilities and experiencing your work!

*At the request of Chair Katherine Nicholls, a motion for the Council to adjourn the meeting is made and seconded. The motion carries unanimously by the Council members.*

*Meeting adjourns at 4:20PM*

***End of Council Meeting Minutes.***

***All grants approved at this meeting are available on the NYSCA [website](#).***