

From: [Lynn Villency Cohen](#)
To: [Board of Representatives](#)
Subject: Please distribute this email to the members of the Board of Representatives, city of Stamford
Date: Friday, April 29, 2022 1:38:29 PM

Good morning to members of the Stamford Board of Representatives ~

I am writing with regard to the proposed cuts to the Stamford Museum & Nature Center's operating budget by the fiscal committee of the Board of Representatives.

As the longest serving board member (twenty-one years) who chairs the art collection committee which cares for the collection and ensures a robust line up of art, science and nature based exhibitions, I am strongly against this punitive action; one that I regard as arbitrary, not clearly thought out, and without sufficient knowledge about the extent of services that the Stamford Museum & Nature Center provides to so many in the Stamford community and beyond.

Any concern about fair pay and labor practices that was raised at the fiscal committee meeting can certainly be addressed without resorting to decreases in critically needed operational funding for the museum. We are proud of the historic partnership the Stamford Museum & Nature Center has with the city for over eighty years, and deeply appreciative for this funding which has greatly benefited the city of Stamford and its residents.

The discussion regarding our executive director's salary cannot be viewed solely through the prism of a city position, as we draw audiences from all over as a state cultural destination. Melissa Mulrooney's job and salary level reflects this distinction. Moreover her salary level adequately reflects the compensation for museum professionals of our level, as well as Melissa's long and distinguished professional experience of excellence in the field.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Stamford Museum would not be where it is today as a superb cultural draw had it not been for Melissa's leadership who has served SM&NC with excellence for the past seventeen years.

The Stamford Museum has grown and expanded throughout its pristine outdoor landscape under Melissa's leadership - a true game changer. The addition of the Knobloch Family Farmhouse, Maples Sugar House & Cidery, and Farmhouse plaza gathering space in 2018 has been transformative for the campus resulting in steady growth of new audiences and visitors, as well as an expansion of the Museum's commitment to enrichment programming, adult and children's offerings, and cultural events.

When the Stamford Museum & Nature Center reopened its doors during the pandemic, at such a challenging time when schools were closed, we served individuals and families as an outdoor refuge - at a time when many smaller parks and outdoor places were impossibly crowded.

We were there for all who needed to decompress and breathe fresh air; to enjoy the farm, the well cared for animals, the educational art exhibitions, and the beautiful nature

trails. We were a draw for city residents as well as individuals and families from neighboring communities, just as we have done over our 85 plus years of history in this city.

The Stamford Museum & Nature Center is an organization that is widely inclusive, serving the needs of children, families and adults of diverse communities and income levels well beyond its North Stamford location. Let us come together as a community and address any questions without resorting to cuts to our institutions that reflect so well upon the city as a whole!

I urge each of you to vote a resounding “no” to any decrease in funding to the Stamford Museum & Nature Center’s funding as it will impact this organization that is dearly needed and beloved by this city’s community and beyond.

Thank you for your needed support and please reach out to me for any further discussion.

Sincerely,

Lynn Villency Cohen
Curatorial Chair of the Exhibitions & Collections Committee
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