

# Editorial COMMENTARY

by Tom Starland, Editor and Publisher

## OMG - It's So Hot. How Hot Is It?

It's so hot that writing commentary in your underwear is cool. That's not funny, not true, and TMI.

But you would think that since we have had more than enough Summer already - August should be the beginning of Fall temps. Let's cross our fingers. We can hope can't we?

## SC Arts Commission Uses Another Life

The arts agency with nine lives has used another to dodge a half-hearted effort by SC's Governor - a superstar of the Tea Party - at shutting them down.

Next year they may not be so lucky as the Republican controlled SC Legislature has plans to recycle them into the SCPRT agency - that's SC Parks, Recreation & Tourism.

Much like our neighbor to the North, SC's arts agency will be under the direction of another agency with less focus on the arts and more on tourism building - a good thing. Which should make the folks at the SC Arts Commission happy as they always say they do things in conjunction with their neighboring states. It's just taking them a long time to figure out what their neighbors have been doing - that's so much more successful - with much less money *per capita*.

For those who don't understand what that means: The SC Legislature gives the SC Arts Commission more money per person of SC's population than the NC Legislature gives the NC Arts Council based on its population. North Carolina may spend more money, the total amount, but they also have more people to spend it on - many more.

Unfortunately we'll all have to listen once again to all the hollerin' and whinin'

by the folks who currently receive funding from the Arts Commission that without that money - the arts will shrivel up and die in South Carolina. Which is the biggest fairy tale of all.

Any artist, arts group, arts organization or arts project that will die without Arts Commission funding is not worth saving to begin with.

Many of these groups and people who receive funding from the Arts Commission are getting such a small part of their overall budgets from the Arts Commission that it couldn't mean life or death - if they didn't get that money tomorrow. The money they receive has to be matched by funds from other sources and they - with the help of the Arts Commission have convinced themselves and others that no one would give them money - unless they had the "stamp of approval" - i.e. funding from the Arts Commission.

So, they tell us that without the Arts Commission and their meager funding - there would be no arts in South Carolina. All production of art would stop.

And, when they are talking about the overall impact the arts has on SC's economy - they would like you to think that - without the Arts Commission and their funding - no movies would be produced in SC, all movie theaters would close; all commercial galleries would close as all artists could no longer produce art; people would stop listening to or making music, so all music stores would close and no one would download music or buy any more CDs; all the theatre shows in Myrtle Beach would shut down; writers would stop writing and people would stop reading so all bookstores would close and no one would be downloading books. Apple Corp. as we know it would go out of business - their gadgets would be useless. All because the SC Arts Commission was no

longer funded.

This is their doomsday theory - no funding for the Arts Commission - no more arts. And, on top of that - every creative person would move away and every decent corporation would pick up stakes and move to a more cultured place. And, forget about those who were thinking of moving here.

Remember, when they are talking about the economic impact of the arts - they are including all the commercial parts of the arts industry - not just the non-profits. If they only counted the non-profits - there would be very little economic impact - at least not much on the plus side.

Yet, most of the creative people I know would go on doing what they are doing now - since they don't receive any funding from the Arts Commission. Most groups who do receive funding will keep on going - they'll find other sources of funding. In fact, they many get a bump in funding as people might feel sorry for them. But there will be no stopping the arts.

Creative people have to create - it's in their blood. People who started creative businesses didn't start because they got a loan from the Arts Commission. And, the people who enjoy and support their efforts won't stop doing so - just because the Arts Commission no longer exist.

The arts are part of our lives - they always have been and always will be - public funding or not.

## What's Different This Year?

This year, the Arts Commission's budget was reduced again - like that of most state agencies. Times are rough. And, yes they did not get the "one time" funding that they received last year - "another cut in funding", according to them as they can't seem to ever figure out what "one time" means. But, something was new this year.

For some reason the SC Legislature felt it was necessary to write into law that the SC Arts Commission must put 70% of its budget - in grants to other art producers. Which can only mean that the Legislature

thought the Arts Commission was using too much of its budget on themselves - in overhead.

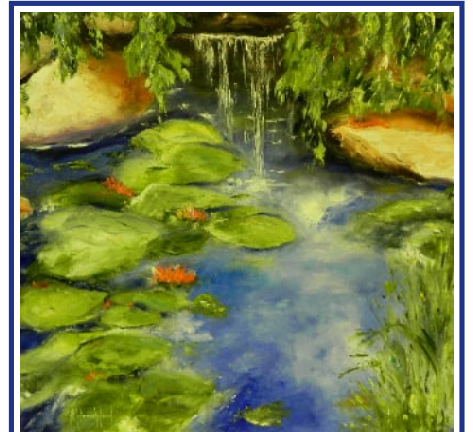
This is going to be something that we will need to watch very carefully, as some people can be very creative when it comes to interrupting the laws in this state.

## The Tea Party's Gov

So the overrides of the Governor's veto to cutting all funding to the SC Arts Commission must have really hurt. It must have been a real slap in the face and such a defeat for the Tea Party and the Governor who promised on day one to eliminate funding for such needless stuff. What will she do now? What can she do?

Will she replace all the Arts Commission's Commissioners - like she has with some commissions? Will she find other ways to whittle the agency's funding down to zero? Or will she just make more speeches at Tea Parties? Who knows what she will do?

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