



July 23, 2012

Mayor Phyllis Marcuccio
City Council Members
Rockville City Hall
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mayor Marcuccio and Members of the Council:

As you know, the City of Rockville generously allocated \$30,000 in its FY 2013 budget for the purpose of constructing a bathroom in VisArts' first floor Gibbs Street Gallery. Recent discussions and meetings with Lew Dronenberg were held to determine placement of the bathroom and discuss the overall implications for the gallery. While extremely grateful to the City for yet again demonstrating its support of VisArts, we have determined that a bathroom in the gallery is not suitable given the space constraints and would not significantly increase the gallery's marketability as an event venue. I would like to request a reallocation of the funds to help VisArts complete some long-delayed capital improvements that it is going to undertake with the help of a Bond Bill from the State of Maryland.

I would like to provide some background regarding the bathroom. When the idea first arose, VisArts had just made the decision to close its retail store due to a lack of customers and sales. We concluded that reprogramming the space for a gallery/event rental venue would be a better use of resources and could help generate traffic and revenue for the organization. VisArts staff believed that a bathroom could make the space more appealing to possible clients.

In September of last year, Susan Main, a local artist and instructor at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) was contracted to oversee our art exhibitions. Susan has made significant changes to our gallery program including developing the Gibbs Street Gallery (our first floor gallery) as a highly popular venue with a mission of encouraging experimentation and offering viewers unexpected interactions with art. We have utilized the space as a rental venue for a few corporate clients and still see it being used for some social events, however the lack of a bathroom has not proven to be a major obstacle.

Because the Gibbs Street Gallery was originally designed as a retail space with limited wall space and floor to ceiling windows in much of the room, we have had to be somewhat creative in utilizing it for art exhibitions. We constructed two movable walls to provide more flexibility in bringing in artists and exhibitions that help meet our mission of promoting the visual arts. The consensus is that construction of a bathroom in the gallery will impose further limitations and severely restrict the types of exhibitions and programs we can conduct there. Electrical wiring and drainage issues limit us on how, and where, a bathroom could be positioned in the gallery.

As you well know, VisArts has experienced a pretty remarkable rebirth over the past year and a half. Much of our success is due in large part to the guidance, support and assistance we have received from you and the staff of the City's Department of Recreation and Parks. We owe you a great deal of thanks and appreciation.

Now that we are gaining our footing, we are beginning to undertake some long-delayed capital improvements with the help of a \$25,000 Bond Bill from the State of Maryland. These include:

- Replacement of the carpeting in our Buchanan Event Room and our Executive Conference Room with flooring to make the rooms more versatile for arts programming and social events. Cost - \$18,006
- Installation of window shades on the 2nd floor (artist studios, Events Office and Kaplan Gallery) and 3rd floor classrooms and administrative offices (Rockville Science Center space) to help address our increasing heat and air conditioning costs. Cost - \$19,441;
- Enhancements to our four public bathrooms to make them truly handicapped accessible to all our patrons. This last project is particularly important to us as we have a long-time volunteer at VisArts, as well as students in our growing inclusion classes, who are unable to independently utilize our bathrooms because the doors are too heavy for them to open on their own. Cost - \$10,400

After VisArts expends the total amount, (\$47,847) we will be able to submit for reimbursement from the State of Maryland for \$23,923 (half of the expenditure). A reallocation of City funds originally slated for a VisArts bathroom would be extremely helpful to us as we continue to rebuild the organization. Funds from the City would be instrumental in helping offset what VisArts is scheduled to contribute for its portion of the Bond Bill. City funds would enable us to reallocate the matching funds from contributions and earned revenue that we had budgeted for the projects listed above to cover other important capital and infrastructure issues including repairing or replacing our struggling air conditioning units, replacing the server for our antiquated computer system, and purchasing more kilns for our growing education program. (City funds are acceptable by the State of Maryland to be utilized as a match by organizations receiving funding through a Bond Bill.)

I appreciate your consideration of our request and look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Sincerely,



Alice Nappy
Executive Director