



August 15, 2019.

To our valued community members and stakeholders:

We, members of the Conservatory Board of Governors, write in response to concerns raised by various members of the Maritime Conservatory of Performing Arts community, including members of two organizations long associated with the Conservatory, the Maritime Conservatory of Performing Arts Association, formerly called the Alumni Association, and the Maritime Conservatory of Performing Arts Faculty Association.

We want you to know that we have heard, loud and clear, the concerns which have been expressed regarding governance and management, and the future of the Conservatory's cherished home at the Chebucto School. The Conservatory is not an enterprise that can withstand the present level of division and discord without existential threat to the Conservatory organization, the Conservatory building, and the Conservatory mission. None of us want to preside over a potentially catastrophic loss of that nature. Having parallel student registration processes, parallel faculty contracts, parallel Dean of Music and freezing donor contributions will lead to those outcomes. We all need to find a way to end the discord, and find an integrative path that will allow the Conservatory to emerge strong and viable. We are prepared to do our part.

First, on governance and management review. We have had plans for some time to carry out a review of governance (including our bylaws, statute and Board composition). However, it is obvious that there is great urgency to address this right away. Likewise, we had been about to embark on a review of our management structure. However, we are persuaded by the current atmosphere of dissatisfaction with the Board that neither review should be undertaken without expanding the Board during the review process to include greater representation from the faculty and from the potential donor community.

We propose to add three new members to the Board, all of whom will have full voting rights as Board members. One person nominated by the MCPA Association, one person elected by secret ballot of the faculty in the School of Music, and one person elected by secret ballot of the faculty of the School of Dance would be added to the Board. We suggest the faculty elections might conveniently occur by paper ballot on Faculty Orientation Day (September 5, 2019) under the direction of a mutually agreeable scrutineer.

The governance and management review process would be led by someone outside the organization, but familiar with performing arts organizations, ideally someone who will be and is seen to be independent and credible by the overwhelming majority of stakeholders. The expanded interim Board would select and work with this external facilitator with a view to completing the task and implementing the new governance and management as soon as possible and preferably by June 2020.

During this period, the expanded Board would strive only to deal with matters needed to respond to circumstances such as resignations, externally imposed demands or events, and other matters that would not interfere with the ability to change governance and management reflecting the outcome of the review. The agendas and minutes of the Board will be published on the Conservatory website (with the sole exception of matters which are legally required to be kept confidential, such as matters concerning individual personnel).

We would also like to address recent concerns about our building. The Conservatory has no plans to move from our current location. The current Board is not taking and will not take any steps towards making such a move. We cannot bind any future Board which may emerge from the review process, but can categorically state that for the current Board, this issue is not on the table. Moreover, we are supportive of the expanded Board carrying out fund-raising efforts for needed maintenance and repair of the building – ideally in concert with the MCPA Association.

In order to ensure that the expanded Board is able to complete the review process without distraction or interruption, the Conservatory is requesting in good faith that the MCPA Association and the Faculty Association commit to the following measures:

- The Faculty Association will take down its parallel website and structures including for student registration, faculty contracts, and Dean of Music; and will turn over student registration funds and faculty contracts to the Conservatory;
- The MCPA Association will not freeze donor funding to the Conservatory and the Faculty Association will not discourage such donor funding;
- All organizations (including the Board) will make a real effort towards not disparaging or being hostile towards other members of the Conservatory community and will make a concerted effort towards working together positively.

We are hopeful that the above steps will allow our wonderful community of parents, students, teachers, alumni and other stakeholders to move forward together for the sake of the Conservatory and to ensure its continued longevity and success in the future. We would be grateful to hear that we will enjoy the support of the organizations and individuals who have participated in voicing concerns about the status quo.

Please continue to let us know of your concerns. We look forward to hearing from you, and to completing this important transformation together. We also look forward to passing the torch on to a new Board at the conclusion of the review process. We think this unfortunate episode can be an opportunity for invigorating the Conservatory, and in particular can lead to a strong campaign for capital funding from the donor community.

Sincerely,

Will Webster, on behalf of
The Board of Governors of the Maritime Conservatory of Performing Arts
(Letter approved by the Board, August 15, 2019).