



The Trenton Museum Society  
PO Box 1034  
Trenton, NJ 08606

Contact: Robert Cunningham, 609-462-8721  
Carolyn Stetson, 609-915-6451

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **Fate of Ellarslie Uncertain**

The Trenton Museum Society announced today that the Mack administration had cancelled a third attempt at a meeting between Robert Cunningham, board president, and the city's business administrator Eric Berry.

According to Cunningham, "We have received no information from the city since we read about the layoff of the Trenton City Museum's director in the paper. We have attempted a number of times to meet with the business administrator to no avail.

"One of our trustees has applied twice to meet with the mayor," he continued, "but she has not received a reply. Without any communication, we have no way of knowing what the city plans to do with Ellarslie."

The board of trustees of the Trenton Museum Society met Tuesday night to determine what could be salvaged from the 2011 - 2012 season of art and history exhibits at Ellarslie.

Without a qualified director, the museum will be forced to cancel all the planned contemporary art exhibits, including the Trenton Public Schools exhibit, a popular biennial collaboration at the Trenton City Museum showcasing the work of the city's public and charter school students. Unfortunately, once the exhibit is canceled, there will be no way to move forward with the planned monetary prizes associated with this year's show.

Another popular exhibit and collaboration that cannot continue without a qualified director is the extremely popular Ellarslie Open, a juried show that draws the finest art from the tri-state area and beyond. The 2012 Ellarslie Open would have marked the thirtieth anniversary of the exhibit. Over the years, the show has grown so large that Artworks, the downtown visual arts center, collaborates with the museum by hosting part of the show that brings hundreds of artists and thousands of patrons to Trenton each spring.

"It's such a shame to cancel these exhibits. We have worked so hard to make the museum a vibrant cultural center with great success. Society members volunteer over 5000 hours a year to present the best image of the city to the public. All of the activity at the museum has made Cadwalader Park a safer and more pleasant place to visit and we have garnered a tremendous amount of positive press that benefits not only the museum and the park, but the entire city of Trenton as well," said long-time museum supporter Carolyn Stetson. "Even though Eric Berry has scheduled a meeting for September 7, it will be difficult to salvage our

schedule. Exhibits of the caliber shown at Ellarslie take months to plan and prepare and we are way behind because we have been waiting to hear what the city's plan is. Our first exhibit of the season was supposed to open on September 17."

The greatest disappointment is the cancellation of the Four Vases exhibit. This would have been an exhibit of national significance showcasing the highest achievement of the US ceramics industry by bringing together again for the first time in over one hundred years four monumental vases produced in Trenton. Three of the vases were to be loaned by the Brooklyn Museum, the Newark Museum and the New Jersey State Museum. The Museum Society recently purchased the fourth vase, the Woodland Vase, which had been lost for over one hundred years. The vases, called by some experts "the most important pieces of porcelain produced in the United States, " were manufactured by Trenton Potteries Co for the 1904 St. Louis World's Exposition.

The Trenton Museum Society is the 501c3 organization that owns the collection of historical objects, fine and decorative arts displayed at Ellarslie. They also provide workshops, classes and the musical programming at the museum. Until he received his layoff notice, in addition to his other responsibilities, the director Brian Hill provided the communications link with the city. City Hall has not informed Hill of their plans and have not made any arrangements for a transition.

"This year, the Trenton Museum Society was poised to do major fundraising through writing grants and appealing directly to individual supporters of the arts and of Trenton's illustrious history," Cunningham said. "We can't do any of that now, because until the city administration sits down with us, we don't know what the future holds."

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