



Message from Fairbanks Arts' Director Regarding the Closure of the Centennial Center for the Arts



Dear Friends,

I'm going to do my best here to transparently convey the information that I have at this time, share the impact of these circumstances, and let you know how *you* can be an amazing supporter as Fairbanks Arts navigates a tricky situation. Before doing so, a big thank you to folks who have reached out with words of support, ideas, and offers of help in one way or another. I adore our community of problem solvers.

PLEASE SUPPORT FAIRBANKS ARTS TODAY

The Situation:

On Friday, November 15th, I received a phone call that, effective immediately, FNSB was closing down the Centennial Center for the Arts. This abrupt closure of the facility that houses the Fairbanks Arts office, Bear Gallery and Gift Shop, and numerous community events was driven by an engineer's report that deemed five beams on the building to be structurally compromised due to wood rot. In the interest of public safety, our staff and volunteers were sent home and events scheduled in the building were cancelled.

You can [watch the full press conference](#) regarding the building closure to learn more.

It is fortunate that this was a willing closure of the space for the safety of the public and not as a result of an accident. I would like to thank the Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor's office and Parks and Recreation department for making what I know are difficult decisions.

What is the plan for the Centennial Center?:

While the long-term conversation about the Centennial Center is ongoing, the short-term plan as communicated by Mayor Ward is for the five beams to be repaired. The anticipated timeline for completion on the construction is late February, 2020. Upon beam repair, Fairbanks Arts can move back into the Centennial Center and re-open the Bear Gallery and Gift Shop. Because the intention is to re-open the building, it is not necessary at this time for Fairbanks Arts to vacate all of our possessions. We will offer further updates on the Centennial Center as they become available.

How the Centennial Center closure impacts Fairbanks Arts:

Here at Fairbanks Arts we are wildly stubborn about promoting the arts and artists, creating space for arts, and creating a healthier community through the arts. That said, our space for hosting various events and the office that five of our staff members work in are temporarily unavailable to us— so, as you can imagine, we have a few things to figure out.

Most immediately disappointing was the premature ending of our beautiful November exhibition featuring local artists LJ Evans and Brianna Reagan. It was a stunning show that only received half of its allotted time in the gallery. As many of you know, Bear Gallery exhibitions are scheduled a year in advance and artists spend countless hours making preparations for their solo exhibitions. It saddens me that folks who may have wished to attend did not have an opportunity, please accept our apologies for this inconvenience. I also would like to express my gratitude for the understanding of our November exhibitors.

Regarding staff: Some have asked if our staff still have jobs. Rest assured, every Fairbanks Arts team member is still employed and have especially important jobs at the moment. I feel certain that our current circumstances fall somewhere under 'other duties as assigned.' :)

Exhibitions, Gift Shop, and Events: I am in conversation with community partners to make the best of this situation and find ways to honor our commitments to artists and the public. Please know that if you are an artist, exhibitor, author, or community organizer who has work or an upcoming event in our space— we will be in contact with you very soon with more information and to make alternative arrangements.

Contacting us:

The Fairbanks Arts telephone will be disconnected ASAP. Please direct any general inquiries to info@fairbanksarts.org

If you are a park user group who works with Fairbanks Arts and are in need of alternative meeting space, there may still be meeting availability at the park. Please contact the Pioneer Park office at 459.1087 to inquire about alternative meeting solutions.

Our Next Steps:

- If you are a Fairbanks Arts volunteer, artist, affiliate organization, etc, you will hear from us directly very soon.
- We are working on finding office and exhibition space and will share information about upcoming events and opportunities with you all as soon as we are able.
- We will have some things to move from the Centennial Center elsewhere, if you would like to help, let us know!
- **We are seeking support as we dive into this adventure.**

Someone told me on Friday that I looked surprisingly calm when faced with the news of our facility's immediate closure. Honestly, 2019 has been an incredibly challenging year for our organization and many others. Amidst the major challenges of this year also came the greatest gift during my time at Fairbanks Arts: witnessing a tidal wave of support from the arts community— an outpouring SO strong that it *restored* our state arts council after it was shut down. That's *powerful*. So yes, I was indeed calm **thanks to all of you**. I trust in our community to make great things happen.

Volunteers, members, and donors have always been at the heart of Fairbanks Arts and have made it possible for our organization to serve interior Alaska for more than fifty years. **Fairbanks Arts is YOUR community arts organization and it needs your support TODAY!**

Here's how you can help

DONATE TO FAIRBANKS ARTS TODAY!

BECOME A NEW OR RENEWING MEMBER!

If your business is interested in becoming a corporate sponsor of Fairbanks Arts' 2020 programs, please contact info@fairbanksarts.org

Here are some other things that would be helpful

- Do you have a laptop in decent condition that you can spare? We are in need of a few!
- Do you have carpentry skills to lend and/or do you like to paint (walls) for a good cause? We don't know where we will land yet, but we may need your help!

A few final notes:

- Fairbanks Arts' annual meeting scheduled for November 20th is postponed until further notice.
 - The day before our facility shut down we mailed out 500 freshly printed postcards for our December exhibit, Rarefied Light (oops). Please stay tuned about the exhibition location of Rarefied Light from Alaska Photographic Center.
 - Please be patient with us as we experience this transition, we know you may have questions and will do our best to respond as quickly as possible.
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Signing off for now and with much gratitude,

Jess Peña
Executive Director

And on behalf of your newly mobile Fairbanks Arts team, thank you for your support!

Fairbanks Arts Staff

Megan Olsen-Saville, Associate Director
Angela Bingley, Operations Manager
Nike Jacob, Programs and Communication
Coordinator
Sommer Hahn, Exhibition Technician
Miranda Curley, Bookkeeper

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