



Proposed county budget makes cuts to the arts

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SYRACUSE -- The proposed Onondaga County budget makes significant cuts to the arts in Central New York, and groups are speaking out to save their funding.

The Syracuse Opera could soon lose all of its funding from the county. That amounts to \$61,500 or about what it costs to have the symphony play at two operas. The news was a shock to the organization.

"What were they thinking?" says General and Artistic Director Cathy Wolff. "We don't understand the reasoning behind the decision, and that's a piece we're slowly trying to unravel."

Other groups, like Onondaga Historical Association, are losing part of their funding. OHA could lose \$11,000 or a tenth of its funding, and the organization says it can't cut back.

"This is an important service that we provide," says Executive Director Gregg Tripoli. "History doesn't stop or slow down or decrease just because the county is reducing funds."

A facebook page has been launched to encourage people to attend a legislature meeting Thursday night.

The page says funding has been eliminated for the Redhouse, Syracuse Stage, CNY Jazz, the Syracuse Film Festival, and the Syracuse Opera. It says the Syracuse Symphony will have its funding cut in half, and the MOST Museum, YMCA, Erie Canal Museum, and the Onondaga Historical Association will have funding cut by 10%.

Casey Jordan is the chair of the Ways and Means Committee for the Onondaga County Legislature. He says \$387,000 has been cut from authorized agencies, but he says there are other ways for those agencies to receive help. He says the county is looking into new ways to fund the arts.

"The monies we give to them are monies we could use to promote travel and tourism," says Jordan. "Every dollar you give to somebody else is one dollar less than we can use in other areas."

Jordan says the county helped create the Onondaga County Trust for Cultural Resources and the Onondaga Civic Development Corporation. They are entities which can issue bonds on behalf of not-for-profit organizations. With the fees generated by those bonds, the entities can provide funding to help organizations, like those receiving cuts from the county.

Jordan says then, the money used to help those entities can be used elsewhere in the county. The two entities were created in 2009, but Jordan says they are already providing funding.

Some leaders of local arts organizations say they're skeptical that the entities will be able to provide the continued funding necessary to bridge the gap created by county cuts.

Supporters of the arts say they plan to address county officials at a public hearing on the budget. That's October 7 at 7pm at the OnCenter.

