

From: **Georgia Court** <georgia@sarasotabooks.com>
Date: Wed, Jul 19, 2023 at 4:51 PM
Subject: Financial emergency at Chautauqua
To: Chautauqua Institution Trustees

Dear Board of Trustees,

The Chautauqua Institution is facing both a financial and a mission crisis that requires the emergency intervention of the Board, starting with the immediate replacement of Michael Hill. Many donors with whom I have spoken agree there must be a pause in donations until he is replaced.

The Institution's income (from gate passes and donations) depends on patrons who come here to engage with the programs of the four pillars: Arts, Education, Religion and Recreation. When we observe that one after another core arts programs are being cut, we must question whether the Institution's leadership understands its role as stewards of the Institution's historic mission, values and four pillar programs of excellence. A growing number of Chautauquans are saddened and alarmed by recent developments that reinforce these concerns.

The announced evisceration of the 94-year-old opera performance program is just the latest of a series of actions that demonstrate that Michael Hill lacks fidelity to the Arts programs and must be replaced before irreparable harm is done to them. Under his administration, the dance, theater and music education programs have also been cut. The visual Arts Quad is entirely closed this year and will reopen in 2024 in an uncertain capacity. Where will the cutting of Arts end under his administration? We must conclude that Michael Hill is driving our precious inherited train off the tracks.

The state of the Institution's financial health and prospects are no less concerning. Who should be surprised with last year's \$3.5 million shortfall when operating expenses have doubled and fundraising results remain basically stagnant? In these circumstances, when core programs are slashed before touching the notoriously unnecessary administrative convenience of a Washington office, generous donors, who fear for the future of the Chautauqua we love, must conclude that the leadership of Michael Hill has failed. It's the Board's fiduciary duty to assure that the Institution operates on a firm financial footing.

Donations to the Institution should be withheld until the leadership of Michael Hill is replaced and appropriate action is taken by the Board to demonstrate the priority of the budget and its administration to preserve and promote the Institution's defining Four Pillars Programs, including its renowned Arts programs.

Please support the effort to right this foundering ship with a no-confidence vote for Hill at the first possible opportunity.

If I have missed reaching some board members or others who should see this letter, please pass it on.

Respectfully,

Georgia Court, property owner and donor

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Georgia Court

Owner

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117 S. Pineapple Avenue

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