

Cornelius hires arts center director

Written by Staff



CORNELIUS, N.C. — After a national search that included more than 80 candidates, the Cornelius Arts Center has named Justin Dionne as its first executive director. Dionne is the former managing artistic director of Lee Street Theatre in Salisbury. During his time there, he led a capital campaign to renovate a historic warehouse into a performing arts center and curated five seasons of programming.

His efforts helped establish the organization as a leading cultural destination in the state. Dionne brings a deep background in community development and non-profit arts management, including experience in downtown development, tourism, and arts council boards.

“We are very excited to have Justin on board and are extremely confident in his ability to lead this effort,” says Greg Wessling, chairman of the Cornelius Arts Center Board of Directors. “With his previous experience in building and managing a similar center, among other arts-oriented positions in his career, it was clear he was the perfect fit for us. We were gratified to have drawn such national attention for our program, and thrilled to be able to bring Justin to Cornelius and the Lake Norman region. In the coming weeks, we will be having a public event and press conference to introduce him to the community and the region.”

The Salisbury native received his BA in Theatre Arts from Catawba College and studied Theatre Management at the graduate level at Florida State University. “I am honored to lead a project that will make such a large cultural impact on the Cornelius and the entire Lake Norman community,” Dionne says. “I look forward to working with community members, leaders, and businesses to make this dream a reality.”

The Cornelius Arts Center, to be built in downtown Cornelius near Town Hall and the Cornelius Police Department headquarters, is planned as a diverse, not-for-profit arts facility for creativity, learning, entertainment and enjoyment.

In 2013, Cornelius residents approved a \$4 million bond for use on downtown redevelopment projects. A community arts center was identified to complement the already thriving arts district in Old Town Cornelius. The Town has purchased 1.85 acres near historic Oak Street Mill and the former cotton gin location, with plans to open the arts center in 2020. A capital campaign is planned to begin soon.

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