

Thursday, July 8, 2017

Ville d'Angers
To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for reading our letter. We are Susan Parras and Samantha Phelps, Chair and Vice-Chair of Austin Angers Creative's Texas branch and producers of Austin Week and Angers Week festivals since 2015. We have been working in conjunction with representatives of the City of Angers and Austin Angers Creative since 2013. It is our deepest hope that we can continue to work with Ville d'Angers, Austin Angers Creative, and all individuals passionate about supporting and enriching the collaborative exchange relationship between our two cities.

Calling ourselves Austin Angers Creative might be confusing: in an attempt to create our own branch of the non-profit organization - strictly for US state and federal funding purposes, we didn't realize that we might be inadvertently co-opting the program. It was and is our intention to work together to facilitate this exchange in addition to our Austin Week and Angers Week festivals. We now understand that in taking the name of the non-profit established in France, we created confusion as to whom exactly was working on what project and what our roles and responsibilities are. We have now decided to rebrand our branch of the NPO as Austin Angers Creative Texas to clear up some of this confusion when it comes to promotions and organization of future events.

Our team, consisting of myself, Samantha and Chris Brecht, my board members, and our team of volunteers in all fields from the City of Austin to event production and public relations have been actively working since 2015 to facilitate these two festivals alongside Germain Kpakou and Austin Angers Creative's French partners. It is our intention to continue to work within these parameters and to introduce ourselves and our plans for the following fiscal year in an effort to create more transparency and better and more direct communication.

Austin Week 2017 is currently in advanced stages of pre-production. Working with Kpakou over several months, we have invited over 100 creative individuals from the city of Austin to collaborate and showcase their work in Angers this September. We have reached out to partner venues, fiscal sponsors and press to generate an international buzz for the festival and our Sister City exchanges. Ville d'Angers and the festival will be featured in American publications including KUTX, The Austin Chronicle, and our new partner Austin Monthly Magazine who will be writing joint features on both festivals and tourism in Angers.

We have heard some discussions about pausing the festival this year -- that due to a lack of communication or a perceived lack of organization, the City of Angers feels that it is best for Austin Angers Creative and our team to not produce the event in September. It is incredibly

important to our team to continue as planned. Several artists, City of Austin officials (including the Economic Development Department (Cultural Affairs)) and businesses interested in collaborating formally with Ville d'Angers have already committed to attending in September. To cancel this programming will do irreparable damage to the relationships and trust that we have managed to develop in the creative community both here and in Angers. It is our fear that lack of support for Austin Week will also mean that we will be unable to generate funding and support for Angers Week 2018 hosted here in Texas.

When we perceived that funding and support for the festival would not be given in April of this year, we decided to form a new non-profit organization in our hopes that our intentions and plans could be made clearer and a direct line of communication between our Texas-based production team and Ville d'Angers could be opened. In forming Austin Week France with Kpakou and the partners from Angers, my co-producer Samantha Phelps was not trying to create a line in the sand -- it was not a threat or a dismissal of the importance and history of Austin Angers Creative's founding members and the work that we have done to establish and promote this Sister City relationship to-date. It is now clear that our motivation was misconstrued and we would like to clarify that our Texas team, Austin Angers Creative Texas, and all our partners in the City of Austin and Texas press are adamant about continuing this collaborative process with ALL interested parties.

None of us on our board or team ever profit from this exchange. We help facilitate these festivals and organize collaborative events for the love of art, music, and for our love of French culture and the City of Angers. It is a special honor to be able to showcase your city's unique talents, history and innovation with the people of Texas, as it is an equal honor to help bring Austinites to you. It is important to us, as we know it is to all members of Austin Angers Creative in Angers and our partners on Austin Week / Angers Week including Germain Kpakou, Emmanuelle Gardan, Paul Liaigre and Aline Gregoire, that everyone shares in the joys, trials, tribulations and successes of this Sister City exchange, especially the City of Angers and the City of Austin.

If we can do anything as a team to help explain, clarify or collaborate with representative of the City of Angers to make Austin Week 2017 and Angers Week 2018 a success both diplomatically and publicly, we would love to do so. Our only intention is to support and grow this exchange in the most positive and open ways.

Thank you for your time. We look forward to working with and collaborating with all of you.

Susan Parras

Vice Chair