



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 4, 2011**

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## **The League and SEA Enter into a Transaction**

*Concord, NH* – The League of New Hampshire Craftsmen has accepted an offer from the NH SEA Building Corporation, an affiliate of the State Employees' Association of New Hampshire (SEA), to purchase the land and building at 205 North Main Street, Concord, New Hampshire. The property has functioned as the headquarters of the nonprofit, arts organization since 1946. The League has been actively seeking a new headquarters facility for the past two decades as it has not been able to adequately present craft education programs at this facility due to lack of appropriate space. The League is in the process of acquiring 8071 square feet of space on the ground and lower levels of the building under construction at 45A – 49 South Main Street in downtown Concord (the former Sanel Block), opposite the Capitol Center for the Arts, and recently named the "Smile! Building". The sale of the property represents the final step in establishing a new headquarters for the League. The League's new space at the Smile! Building will be known as the Education Center and Headquarters and will feature an exhibition gallery for changing exhibits, a Permanent Collection Museum which will display the League's fine craft collection of 299 lots of work from the early 1930's to the present. There will be two designated classrooms with an option to purchase additional classroom space in the lower level to accommodate wet and dry techniques. Proposed classes and workshops include but are not limited to fiber (dyeing, surface design, shibori, batik, quilting, rug hooking, rug braiding, knitting, crocheting and weaving); paper making, book binding, baskets, floor cloths, leather, polymer clay, printmaking, bead weaving, drawing and design, calligraphy, and a variety of warm glass and metal-smithing techniques. A multi-purpose room with a portable dividing wall will provide much needed space for large meetings and seminars, business and computer classes and social events. The Library will provide access to our archives as well as an inviting and nurturing space to research, read and study. Office space for the League staff of six full-time and two part-time employees will bring a welcome respite to the challenging work conditions of the existing building. A July move is anticipated. "We are extremely excited about our move and sale of our property to the SEA. The building has served us well for 65 years but we can no longer adequately fulfill our mission there. Our new facility will pave the way for the future of the League and provide an anchor in the State for our craft education programs," said Susie Lowe-Stockwell, executive director.

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The SEA's headquarters are currently located next door to the League at 207 North Main Street. The SEA began its non profit work in March, 1940 on Main Street in Concord, and has continued to have a strong presence in Concord since that time. The SEA, with a majority of its members being residents of or workers in Concord, is committed to the local community. The SEA's Main Street location houses its administrative offices, and serves as a meeting space for numerous committee and chapter meetings, educational programs for members and community allies, and serves as the year round home of the SEA's fifty-year long beloved charitable program, "Operation Santa." The opportunity to purchase the League's property next door provides the SEA with potential for future expansion of its mission and programs in its current downtown Concord location. Its purchase of the League's headquarters on North Main Street is made to better support the SEA member experience, as well as to assist the League by enabling the League to move to new space and maintain its longstanding presence in downtown Concord.

The SEA and the League have been in discussions regarding this purchase for 12 months, after previous potential buyers abandoned interest in the building due to the hardship posed by the condition of the building. During the SEA's investigation of the property, appropriate environmental assessments and existing conditions studies were performed. While the SEA looks forward to acquiring the additional land, these analyses and opinions revealed that the existing building cannot be utilized by the SEA to further its mission. The League explored renovating several times over the last 20 years and estimates received posed a financial hurdle they could not overcome. The SEA has hired Cobb Hill Construction, which has previous experience evaluating the cost of renovating the building, and has confirmed that the condition of the building makes renovating the building economically unfeasible.

SEA's consultants have recommended razing the building. If the building is left vacant in its current status, it would provide a hazard to the surrounding community. A vacant building is more subject to vandalism. Because the building would be unoccupied, the utilities would be shut off and without heat, the building would deteriorate quickly. There are no means to adequately secure the building or the land around it.

Recognizing the history of this building, the League and the SEA are currently accepting proposals to purchase the building for \$1 and relocate it. Any party interested should submit a proposal to Jonathan Halle, Warrenstreet Architects, Inc., 27 Warren Street, Concord, New Hampshire 03301. Questions or inquiries regarding the information necessary for a proposal should be directed to Jonathan Halle at (603) 225-0640 x-120, fax (603) 225-0261 or email [jh@warrenstreet.coop](mailto:jh@warrenstreet.coop). Proposals must be submitted prior to June 15, 2011.

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Prior to sale, the League intends to remove many architecturally and historically significant items from the building. Once it moves to its new location, the League will have an exhibit showing the building's history, including a display of significant items. The SEA is working with its architect and Cobb Hill to find appropriate companies that might remove the building from the site or salvage or reclaim any materials of value from the building. If not removed, the building will be demolished after the League's vacancy. The land at 205 North Main Street will be allowed to "green over", providing a new green space on North Main Street. "We are pleased that our members and their families can look forward to the property being greened over and reserved for future use. We were very concerned about the property remaining vacant and potentially becoming a hazard, as it virtually blocks the street side view of the back of the property, which is completely enclosed and could become an attraction for unsafe activity. Despite these concerns, we recognize and appreciate the age of the existing structure and are hopeful that an individual or business will come forward to move the building and preserve it elsewhere." said Diana Lacey, President of the SEA.

The League of New Hampshire Craftsmen is a non-profit, craft education organization. Its mission is to encourage, nurture and promote the creation, use and preservation of fine contemporary and traditional craft through the inspiration and education of artists and the broader community. The League represents the *signature of excellence* in fine craft, through the work of its juried members, and its rigorous standards for self expression, vision and quality craftsmanship. For more information about the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen, its eight affiliated retail galleries, education programs and events call 603-224-3375 or visit the League's web-site at [www.nhcrafts.org](http://www.nhcrafts.org).

The State Employees' Association of New Hampshire is a member-run union representing the interests of over 11,000 public and private sector workers in New Hampshire, thousands of retired workers, and their families. In concert with its representation work, the SEA has a seventy-year long history of advocating for quality public services, safe workplaces and standards, and individual rights and fiscal responsibility that benefit NH's working families.

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