

**WHEELER OPERA HOUSE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

DATE: Wednesday, March 10, 2010

TIME: Noon

LOCATION: Wheeler Lobby

PRESENT: Board Members: Ron Erickson, Chairperson
Brian O'Neil, Vice Chairperson
Cathy Markle, Secretary
Bruce Fretz
Pamela Cunningham
Richard Cohen
Nickolas Erickson, Student Rep.

Absent: Matthew Loden, Ex-Officio

Guests: Steve Bossart, Capital Asset Project Manager

Staff: Gram Slaton, Executive Director
Rose Bennett, Sr. Manager - Finance

RECORDED BY: Jeanne Kayne, Administrative Assistant

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairperson O'Neil called the meeting to order at 12:07 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 10, 2010 MINUTES

Vice Chairperson O'Neil called for the motion to approve the minutes of February 10, 2010. Cohen, Markle and Cunningham all abstained from the vote. Cohen stated he did not receive the minutes, Cunningham had questions regarding the minutes and the three members felt they did not want to vote, as they were not in attendance at the last meeting or they did not have a chance to review the minutes. O'Neil tabled the approval of the minutes until the end of the meeting and suggested they be approved under Old Business.

III. FINANCIALS

Slaton stated that the Real Estate Transfer Tax collections were very low for the month of February. Last year during the same time period there were numerous closings on timeshares, which boosted the RETT collections. Cunningham mentioned that the Little Nell Residences sold four shares in the previous week. She added that she had a conversation with someone from a title company who said there were seven contracts which title work was being done on. Erickson also mentioned that the sale of the Limelight should close sometime in April.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ticket sales continue to be extremely last minute, with most tickets being purchased the day of the show. The Wheeler will be going into the final weeks of the season with it being anybody's guess if there will be an audience for upcoming shows.

Senior Finance Manager Bennett and Slaton attended the Pollstar Live conference in Los Angeles for two days in February, where it was driven home to them how far behind the Wheeler is with social networking. Slaton explained while the Wheeler has components such as a Facebook page and a Twitter account to tap into a younger/electronic market, what was learned is that these are just the starting point for where new media is going. This will be one of several goals the Wheeler will focus on during the spring and summer time, to get the Wheeler back in the game.

To help with social networking, the Wheeler is in the latter phase of a search for a new website provider, which will result in a newly-designed and articulated web presence that can also take advantage of all the linking and streaming that has become the standard for live performance websites. Slaton went on to say that from the 21 website provider applicants, a small handful were chosen for final consideration. Slaton is working with members from the City I.T. department, Sally Spalding of Public Relations for the City of Aspen, and Wheeler Front of House Manager Lauren Pierce to ensure that the best selection is made.

City Council on Monday night approved the contract with Webb Management of New York City for the RFP on the Needs Assessment. There were twelve applicants and the committee was able to make a recommendation after just one meeting. Webb was one of only two or three applicants that understood the amount of work that has already been done into assessments for the Wheeler, and the deciding factor was their timeframe (12 to 14 weeks) and price (about \$50,000).

Slaton extended thanks to Richie Cohen of the Wheeler Board for helping to vet the selections prior to Council's approval. Slaton introduced Steve Bossart from the Capital Asset Department as the project manager and the representative for City Hall and City Council. When Webb comes for their information gathering, Bossart explained, they will be provided with all the past information that was produced. They expect to meet with the Wheeler Board at least three times to find out exactly what the Board is looking for. Webb comes highly recommended and Bossart expressed they are pleased with Webb's selection. Bossart explained that Webb's background is a financial and banking background, and they are the firm which was also recommended by Pfocus.

Markle voiced concern that the very few items which are in the scope of the RFP, were not specifically what was addressed by City Council. She went on to say that there is quite a bit in that proposal that doesn't seem to have been part of the requested scope of work in terms of audience and user determination of need. Markle stressed that it's important for Council to direct Webb to do a pro forma analysis on developing other spaces and programs versus a needs assessment of our local community and visitor users. Slaton expressed that he understood City Council to be requesting a very thorough outside analysis of existing sites or venues in town that could serve as alternatives to construction on the adjacent parcel to the Wheeler. O'Neil questioned that even though there are other venues, are they readily available and cost effective to be a real consideration? Bossart added that rather than developing a new site the City was also looking into possibly purchasing an additional venue.

Cohen added that because Webb would be meeting with the Board first, that any adjustments that would need to be made could be done at that time. Fretz stressed that the Board needs to back what Council has requested from the RFP. Bossart stated Webb would meet with the Board in 2-3 weeks. Erickson suggested the Board should meet individually with this group. Cunningham countered and stated that she thought the Board should meet as a group with Webb Management.

At Fretz's request, Slaton related that Aspen Community Theatre believes that they will alternate their annual productions between the District Theatre and the Wheeler, which was a direction they said they would be going in formerly after "She Loves Me" in November 2007 but then did

the next two years' productions at the District Theatre. Slaton expressed that the Wheeler would welcome the chance to have them here in alternate years.

The surprise hit of the season has been the Met Opera Series, and the Wheeler is already looking at dates for next season with the Aspen Music Festival and School.

City Council granted its conceptual approval for the Wheeler to proceed with producing a singer-songwriter festival with John Oates. September 16th through September 19th are the dates saved for the festival and Slaton stated he would be meeting with John Oates again tomorrow to further flesh out the structure and lineup for this event.

Heather Larson has returned to work in a very limited capacity while she continues to recover from back surgery. For the time being she is very limited in her physical abilities and will be functioning mostly on administrative work for the coming weeks.

V. ACTION ITEMS None.

VI. INFORMATION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS None.

VII. MEMBERS COMMENT

Markle asked about the continuation of the advertising brand using the 25th anniversary logo and the photo of Linda Eder. Slaton responded that the last batch of ads is running now. He went on to say that May will mark the 26th year anniversary of the Wheeler and at that time the 25th anniversary logo will be discontinued.

R. Erickson asked for a package to be put together for the replacement of the student representative. Nickolas Erickson leaves the end of June and R. Erickson would like to see a student replacement ready to go in July. He also asked N. Erickson if he would be available to give reference to the appointment responsibilities if contacted. N. Erickson agreed he could give such reference. R. Erickson also brought up that he spoke to Pete Louras, the new president of Aspen Film. Louras verbalized an interest in the contract for screening films if it goes out to RFP.

Cunningham made mention of a conversation with Jean-Philippe Malaty, Executive Director of Aspen Santa Fe Ballet who expressed to Cunningham that he was very pleased with the Wheeler's new ticketing system. Cunningham also raised the question regarding people's ability to print their tickets at home with the new system and it was affirmed that they could. Her last remark was a compliment to Box Office in working closely with the Aspen Writers' Foundation with regard to their ticketing. She urged the Wheeler Box Office staff to stay proactive with regard to this group.

Fretz asked about banners across Main Street and asked if the Wheeler has utilized this when presenting a show. Slaton responded that banners were used for the last two festivals, but he doesn't find that avenue of advertising productive for single-event marketing.

VIII. CITIZEN COMMENTS None.

IX. OLD BUSINESS UPDATE

There was a motion to approve the minutes at the beginning of the meeting, which O'Neil tabled followed by a suggestion they be approved under Old Business at the end of the meeting due to the number of abstentions. The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous with the exception of 3 abstentions coming from, Cunningham, Markle, and R. Erickson, who voiced they were not in attendance at the last meeting and felt they could not vote.

X. NEW BUSINESS None.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Erickson called for a motion to adjourn. Markle made the motion to adjourn and Cunningham seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 pm.

THE NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 2010, IN THE WHEELER SECOND FLOOR LOBBY WITH WEBB MANAGEMENT AT 5:30 PM.