

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

DATE: Wednesday, February 09, 2011
TIME: Noon
LOCATION: Wheeler Chorus Dressing Room
PRESENT: Board Members: Ron Erickson, Chairperson
Brian O'Neil, Vice Chairperson
Richard Cohen
Matthew Loden, Ex-Officio
Bruce Fretz
Luke Seamans

Absent: Cathy Markle, Secretary

Guests: Sarah Broughton, Rowland & Broughton
Randy Ready, Assistant City Manager

Staff: Gram Slaton, Executive Director
Heather Larson, Sr. Manager - Operations
Rose Bennett, Sr. Manager - Finance
Lauren Pierce, Marketing Coordinator
Jillian Scott, Wheeler Box Office Manager

RECORDED BY: Lauren Pierce, Marketing Coordinator

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Erickson called the meeting to order at 12:06pm.

II. APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 8, 2010 MINUTES

Erickson called for the motion to approve the minutes of December 8, 2010. O'Neil made the motion to approve the minutes; Cohen seconded. O'Neil and Cohen voted to approve the minutes. There was no discussion.

III. FINANCIAL REPORT

Bennett mentioned that the Board has the preliminary year-end financial report and that the final report will be approved by City Council in April; however, all real estate sales should be in the preliminary report. Slaton predicted that the Wheeler should have an overage of \$1.4 million after the interest amount is logged. Erickson pointed out that 2010 financial report is one to be commended. Bennett reported the housing loan has been paid back in full, as has the streets improvement loan. As of January there has been no resolution on the contested RETT for the Hotel Jerome sale in 2010 and there is no date when the litigation of the sale will be finalized. It was questioned whether or not the Wheeler will receive monies from the sale of the Given Institute.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

- The Christmas season confirmed many of the sales directions that the 2008 and 2009 year had been indicating, and overall we had more hits than misses, scoring big with The Crystal Palace Revue and The Flying Karamazov Brothers, while not hitting expectations with A Fine Frenzy or Rita Moreno. The sudden appearance of “I Am” – booked on 12/20 to run on 12/25 – provided some very welcome financial support for our short-selling shows, as well as proved that the Wheeler team can respond successfully on very little notice for the right booking.
- Winterskol for 2011 was put together very efficiently, with the smallest investment for a relatively strong attendance bang. All three shows were free and open to the public and attracted overlapping but separate audiences.
- New on the schedule is Mountainfilm Mondays, which didn’t look like it was going to happen and then suddenly came together just ahead of the Christmas high season. While this is definitely a program that our MountainSummit audience asked us for, it has created some consternation and stress for Aspen Film. The purpose for creating it, aside from it being a program responding out of a voiced desire from our patrons, was to support our MountainSummit brand through the winter and keep the interest alive and driving towards our August event. Our first screening was this past Monday, with about 80 attendees, and I included a plug for Aspen Film’s ShortsFest in my opening welcome.
- Sales are definitely slow for many of the Wheeler’s shows on the books, including rentals. It’s unclear exactly how much visitor traffic we’ve had in town since the holidays, and information we’ve been hearing from some businesses indicates that guests are very selective to downright conservative with their non-ski expenditures.
- Our two festivals are underway – the first Aspen Laff Festival will be broadcast live by Sirius XM Radio, which is a huge coup, especially for an untried festival. The second 7908 Aspen Songwriters Festival almost didn’t make it, but did pull together and will have an eclectic mix of Roots and Americana artists, including several that have long been missing from the Wheeler stage. Second stages for both festivals will take place at the Wheeler and at the J-Bar at the Hotel Jerome.

V. ACTION ITEMS

Introduction of new Wheeler Board Members

Erickson introduced and welcomed Aspen High School sophomore Luke Seamans to the board as the student representative. Everyone introduced themselves and informed Luke of how long they have been on the board and their roles.

Nomination of Board Officers for 2011

City Council conducted interviews for the two open board positions on January 4, 2011. Tom Kurt, an Aspen local and a Wheeler volunteer, has been appointed to Cunningham’s seat. Secretary Markle’s position is still being decided. After some discussion about the officer nominations, along with individuals’ interest in serving in those roles, the board decided to nominate the current officers and to leave nominations open for the next meeting.

VI. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Introduction of John Faust

John Faust was introduced to the board by Slaton. Faust joins the Wheeler staff as the Front of House Manager from the Stanley Theatre in Utica, New York, where he served for thirty years as its general manager. With three decades years of experience, everyone is very excited to welcome Faust to the position.

Marketing and New Media Presentation

Pierce introduced herself as the new Marketing Coordinator for the Wheeler. Pierce conducted a presentation on the direction marketing will be heading in with the help of Jillian Scott from the box office, who will specialize in social networking and media initiatives. The Wheeler is stepping away from traditional media and leaping into an interactive experience the customers will enjoy. After Pierce screened a video highlighting the need and growing effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool, Scott demonstrated the four social networking sites the Wheeler is currently utilizing: Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare and Vimeo. Pierce then explained how she is taking traditional media such as print advertising and radio and by adding QR codes and cell phone texting technologies we can now give the patrons an immediate interactive experience. Pierce is going to be using this summer and the time during the basement and first-floor renovation to set a strategic marketing plan for the 2011-2012 season.

Update on 21CMP

Broughton displayed the new plans for the basement office space and walked the Board through the space. See attached 21CMP plan.

The Board then went into executive session with Slaton and Ready in order to discuss the RFP applications for the first-floor lease spaces.

VII. MEMBERS COMMENTS

None

VIII. CITIZEN COMMENTS

None

IX. OLD BUSINESS UPDATE

Erickson mentioned to the Board conversations he had had with Jon Busch of the Wheeler Film Society, and Pete Louris, chair of the Aspen Film board of directors, regarding complaints by them about the Wheeler. Busch expressed how he felt the Wheeler should be more supportive of his film exhibition, whereas Louris and the Aspen Film board felt that the Wheeler was intruding into film exhibition at the expense of Aspen Film. In both cases, Erickson stated that he was supportive of the Wheeler's direction and conduct.

X. NEW BUSINESS

None

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Erickson called for a motion to adjourn. Cohen made the motion to adjourn, and Fretz seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 1:04 pm.

THE NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2011, IN THE WHEELER SECOND FLOOR LOBBY.