

**Minutes**  
**Town of Skowhegan**  
**Opera House Committee Meeting**  
**1:00 P.M.**  
**Monday March 6, 2023**  
**Municipal Building – Council Room**

**Committee Members:**

Cara Mason, Chairman  
Lyn Govoni  
Jeff Hewett  
Fred Liebfried  
Todd Smith

**Recording Secretary:**

Lisa Gallant

Call Meeting to Order.

**1. Discussion and decision to approve the minutes from the January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023 meeting.**

A motion made by Todd Smith, seconded by Jeff Hewett to approve minutes from the January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023 meeting. Vote 5/0, motion carried

**2. Discussion and decision to make a recommendation to the Board of Selectman to expend \$7600.00 from the Opera House Reserve Account to remove the fire curtain.**

At the last meeting, \$6800.00 was approved to expend in the removal of the fire curtain. Jeff Hewett stated the curtain can only come to the floor; it has a counterweight; There was a preference to lower it completely to remove. There were a few companies that were looked into for the removal, one company did not want to touch it, another never got back to us. Jeff Hewett recommended to go with the original company, even though they increased their quote from \$6800 to \$7600.00 due to the difficulty with counterweight in getting it all the way down.

A motion by Todd Smith, seconded by Fred Liebfried to recommend going with the original company and their new quote. Vote 5/0, motion carried.

**3. Discussion and decision to discuss the FY 2024 Budget for the Reserve Account.**

A motion made by Jeff Hewett recommends that we ask for \$50,000 for the reserve account. Todd Smith seconds. Vote 5/0, motion carried.

Cara Mason stated if we wanted to ask about surplus, we should be talking about that now during this meeting due to scheduling and budgets. A motion by Cara Mason, seconded by Fred Liebfried to ask for \$100,000 out of surplus. Vote 4/1, Jeff Hewett opposed.

Jeff Hewett stated they just finished the sprinkler testing, everything seems to be good, however they have not yet received the test on the dry heads. They will also be working on the stairs this summer, funding permitted. It might have an impact on the summer schedule. Cara said she does not rent out the Opera House during July and August anyway. Support beams must be installed from the basement up. They are still unsure of pricing, however, there could be issues down the road if not repaired. He will speak with Steve Govoni and get back to the board. This work will come out of the Municipal Building budget.

**4. Updates from Friends of the Skowhegan Opera House.**

The Scott Cannon show was held upstairs on February 26<sup>th</sup>. They had advertised a ton, however, there were only 17 people in the audience. There was \$650 in sponsors. \$50 went towards a gift for Scott to do the show for us. Lyn is estimating about \$363 from the show will go to the Skowhegan Opera House.

Bob Marley show raised some money as well so totaling this show and the previous show, about \$461 will go to the Opera House.

Tom Chapin will be coming to town on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and is requesting a sound system and a technician. The Friends are hoping to advertise well for this so they can get more money to donate to the Opera House. Jeff asked if maybe we could reach out to other schools and possibly do a school day for a field trip.

April 15<sup>th</sup>, WXNZ will be doing another extravaganza. They had a great turnout last year.

**5. Discussion regarding updates to the business plan.**

Lyn reviewed the plan and thinks it might need to be updated. It should be a collaboration between the town, Wesserunset Arts and Main Street. Cara stated Main Street pulled out. It's a great plan, but needs to be updated. It does not have anything in it to maintain the space; nothing about bringing it up to code. Cara Mason stated it's fine to keep it the way it is, but if you change or update anything, at that time it must be brought up to code. Fred stated we are basing our work on this business plan, but we should be using it as a framework to do work. The numbers are all wrong though, not current or up to date. The

plan identifies a need for a producer and we should be thinking about that entity or person and we should look at how they will work with the Town.

Cara said she thought that should take place, after changes are made up there since it would require a separate entrance. Fred said he thinks there should be a lead person to step in and organize projects as renovations move forward.

Jeff asked what does WesArts want, are we going to work through them to get this done. Do they want to be the producer. Lyn Govoni said she doesn't think their intention is to be the producer. Lyn said she is perfectly comfortable fundraising. It is hard to get grants due to the fact that the Opera House is owned by a municipality. She thinks there would be a lot of sponsors with a lot of money to give if they could see the benefit. Cara said we need to speak with WesArts, since they were all for a producer until John left. This must be done before we re-write this business plan. Lyn stated they will be having a meeting on Wednesday and she will get the plan to them so they can have a discussion with moving forward with it.

## **6. Other Business.**

Bryant Cyr, from the public, stood up to speak. He moved to Skowhegan in 2021 from Manhattan. He is a production manager for the Waterville Opera House. He has been speaking with Lyn about plans for the Opera House. Without having production experience to guide the role of what the plan is for the Opera House, it's difficult. It depends on what type of event center you're looking towards and what you'll need to do for upgrades and gear. It's important to do a diagnosis of the types of events we want to bring in, as well as the clientele that it would bring in. He stated that there are things that might've been overlooked, ex. The fire curtain is being looked at for removal but the escape plan has not been looked at in how many years; you're putting the clientele at risk there. You need a producer to come in with experience in the direction you want to go for what type of event center you plan to have and get things organized for renovations.

Cara said we should leave Main Street name in the business plan. Fred said we need to know who's in this and what kind of group or groups will make things happen. Jeff Hewett will look at renovations before the next meeting. Lyn Govoni will speak with Bryant Cyr about a typical budget to look at.

## **Adjourn Meeting.**

Meeting adjourned at 2:08 pm.