

MINUTES
OPERA HOUSE COMMITTEE MEETING
July 17, 2018
3:00 PM
Municipal Building – Council Room

Present:

Jon Kimbell
Gene Rouse
Cara Mason
Mary Haley
Jim Preble
Jeff Hewett
Fred Liebfried

Absent:

Brad Adams

Others Present:

Dena Rich, Recording Secretary

1. Call Opera House Committee Meeting to order.

Jon Kimbell called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m., quorum was met.

Gail Pelotte swore in Members present at the meeting to the Opera House Committee.

2. Chair's Report

No report from the Chair at this meeting.

3. Items by the Committee

Mary Haley said she had reached out to some other Opera Houses that have been renovated in the past. She said she hasn't been able to talk with any of them; due to a lot of the committee members were gone who had done the restoration or fundraising. When she does get in contact with one of the individuals she was wondering if there were any particular questions that she should be asking. Mary Haley said she was going to ask things such as general fundraising strategies and things that worked or didn't work during their renovation process. Mary Haley said that if no one had any questions at this time but thought of ones later on after our meeting to send them her way and she would be happy to ask them.

Jon Kimbell asked Mary Haley who she was approaching?

Mary Haley said she had contacted Camden; the gentlemen she talked with said he didn't have anyone on the committee still who had been there during the fundraising. She was thinking of contacting the Town Office in Camden since they are a Town owned Opera House as well.

Mary Haley said she was doing some research on Stonington Opera House because they went through a really big renovation. She knows that all the people that fundraised and restored it are off the committee she is working on finding out how to contact one of them.

4. Approve and sign Minutes for the following:

• Opera House Meeting June 19, 2018

Motion by Jeff Hewett, seconded by Gene Rouse to approve the June 19, 2018 meeting minutes with corrections on page 2 of Mary Haley's name, add the word currently in front of dressing rooms and on page 3 change think to thinking. Vote 7-0, motion carried.

5. Discussion of Opera House Business Plan and addendums:

a. Draft Business Plan

Jon Kimbell said that the Committee was given the most recent copy of the Business Plan with all the changes we have worked on over the past few months.

Jon Kimbell asked the committee what the best way would be to go over this Plan and make a final approval as a committee; by going through page by page or taking it home to read it over.

The Committee felt comfortable taking home the Plan to read it over.

Jon Kimbell said then we would discuss at the next meeting any changes or things that the committee felt should still be added.

Jeff Hewett said that is the question when you would like to hold the next meeting. Do we want to try and have a meeting in a week or two weeks so that this could get into the Selectmen's schedule?

Cara Mason said the next Selectmen Meeting would be August 14th.

The Committee decided to meet July 31st at 3:00 p.m. at the Municipal Building to go over and finalize the Plan before presenting it to the Selectmen at the workshop.

Jon Kimbell asked Dena about the addendum that has Resumés and Bios of key people; He didn't know if the committee members wanted to be included but the resumes and bios of Wentworth & Associates and partners from in their proposal should be in the Plan and asked if Dena or Cara could add that information to the addendum. He had all the other documents for the rest of the addendums.

Gene Rouse asked Jon Kimbell if he felt it was beneficial to have the committees' bios in the Plan.

Jon Kimbell said at this time the Plan is thirty pages long and the addendums are close to fifty pages.

Mary Haley said that our bios could be posted on a web page. She said she was planning on bringing this up to have a web page for the Opera House committee; she said WesArts would be happy to host that on their new website that is being designed.

Cara Mason said there is a page on the Town of Skowhegan website for the Opera House.

Jeff Hewett said that we could link both web pages and have the committee members on the web page.

The Committee decided to take out the addendum about resumés and bios of key persons and only have those of Wentworth & Associates and their partners from their proposal.

The Committee had a brief discussion about printing the Plan once it is finalized at the July 31st meeting for the Selectmen and once they approve it to print it in color for grants, foundations and businesses.

It was decided that Jeff, Dena and Gene would sit down and work on the Plan to make everything look better and flow in the document.

Jon Kimbell asked the committee if there was anything they wanted to bring up or found confusing in the Plan, since the next time we meet it will be finalized.

Fred Liebfried said maybe to give the Selectmen like bullet points or an executive summary might be best for the Plan.

Jon Kimbell asked Fred Liebfried if he would like to do that.

Fred Liebfried said he would work on that and take the organization plan and bullet point it and will try to do that within the next two weeks.

Cara Mason asked if someone was working on the welcome?

Jon Kimbell said the welcome should roughly say what is outlined in the business plan. In terms of who writes the welcome depends on who we want to be the signator.

Mary Haley said she would be happy to write the letter if we find someone who would sign it and doesn't want to write it themselves.

Jon Kimbell asked the committee who would you like to be the spokesperson for it. The person needs to be someone who is respected in Town, who actually likes the idea of doing something with Opera House and agrees with the Plan and who will stand by the Plan.

Jeff Hewett said so really, we need to give them the Plan before they can actually decide if they want to be the spokesperson.

Jeff Hewett suggested Amber Lambke, Christine Almand, Pat Dickey or Warren Shay. He felt of those four they would vibrate with most of the businesses. He suggested maybe even co-chairs signing the letter.

Jon Kimbell said co-chairs was an interesting idea.

Jeff Hewett said it would be having someone from the Town side and either Pat, Warren or Amber for the business side.

The Committee decided to give Christine Almand and Amber Lambke the draft business plan and see if they would be in agreement to co-chair the welcome.

Jon Kimbell said he would talk with Amber Lambke and asked Cara Mason to talk with Christine Almand.

Jon Kimbell asked Fred Liebfried to talk about what he had learned about Waterville Opera House.

Fred Liebfried said maybe fifteen years ago or a little more the Waterville Opera House was in rough shape; the City had decided to close the Opera House space. There was a group formed called the Waterville Opera House Association, that started a Board of Directs and starting raising funds just to keep it going. They did rudimentary renovations and continued to have programming in the space. As the years went by the dealings they had with the City were on good terms. The City wanted nothing to do with the Opera House space. The City gave the space to the Association and said whatever goes on in the space you pay for and keep programming going for the communities' benefit. As this went along they hired a gentleman named Tom; He started bringing in roadshows, concerts and other venues. They started producing locally produced theater, Diane Brian took over the reins and the whole thing just expanded from there. They were very successful with the locally produced shows that they were able to get help from the Alfonds and other foundations to get a \$5 million renovation started. Fred Liebfried said he doesn't know the nuts and bolts of how the renovation plans came about. But he did know how they do their season now; the Booker (which he said is called something different) finds appropriate shows for them to do that fit in their space

and he books those around their season of locally produce theater which is now up to four musicals a year. They raise funds, they produce them, they hire designers from New York and Deborah Soucy basically directs all of them. The City rents them the space for a \$1 a year. Fred Liebfried said he didn't get to talk with Diane Brian for very long because he was rehearsing at the time but she has offered to come up and talk with us on how the Waterville Opera House evolved.

Jon Kimbell asked if there are any Town people who work with them in these productions.

Fred Liebfried said that they have a Board of Directors; there function is mainly for fundraising and give some input in terms of types of shows they would like in the community.

Jon Kimbell asked Fred Liebfried who do you think Diane Brian should talk to and when?

Fred Liebfried said he thought once the Business Plan is decided and approved would be a good idea.

Jeff Hewett said he thinks it would be a good idea to have her come and talk with us. So that it gets us really up to speed and down the road have her come back to talk to other groups to get us to next levels.

Fred Liebfried said having Diane come talk to the Selectmen to explain how that entity works with the City in Waterville. The City pays for any maintenance or repair on the building but the Opera House pays for anything that happens in space.

Jon Kimbell asked who pays the heat and electricity?

Fred Liebfried said in the space of the Opera House they pay everything, he doesn't know how they separate out for the usages, but Diane said they pay for the utilities for the space.

Jon Kimbell asked if the Town uses the space a lot?

Fred Liebfried said that City owns the Sterns Building for offices, as for the old building that houses the Opera House he wasn't sure if there were office spaces used. But if something breaks in the downstairs bathroom not in the space the City pays for it to be repaired not the Opera House.

Jon Kimbell said those are the kind of details that the committee is not clear on.

The Committee thought it would be beneficial to have Diane Brian come to the workshop with the Selectmen on August 14th before the Selectmen Meeting. Fred Liebfried said he would contact her and see if she could attend. Cara Mason was going to put on the July 24th Selectmen Meeting to schedule the workshop for August 14th.

b. WesArts Opera House Producer Job Description

This document was not discussed during the meeting.

6. Discussion of List of Names for “Friends of the Opera House”

The Committee did not discuss adding anymore names to the list for “Friends of the Opera House” at this meeting.

7. Other Business

No Other Business at this meeting.

8. Upcoming topics for discussion at future meetings:

- **Discussion of a fundraising plan.**
- **Discussion of a business plan for the operation of the Opera House.**
- **Discussion of adopting the Somerset County Rural Cultural Plan as a guide for future use of cultural assets.**

These topics were touched on during meeting and will be discussed in more detail at future meetings.

Adjourn Skowhegan Opera House Committee’s Meeting.

Motion by Gene Rouse, seconded by Jeff Hewett to adjourn.