

Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee
Minutes
August 30, 2006

Item 1: Meeting Called to Order by Joe Stevens at 12:20 p.m.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: Ron Beach
Alan Friedman
Edward Lipton
Marianne North
Andre' van Schaften
Stephan Schweissing
Harold Stalf

Committee Members Absent:

Parks & Recreation Staff Present: Joe Stevens, Director
Tressa Fisher, Administrative Specialist
Tim Seeberg, TRCC/Avalon Theatre Manager
Angella Vallard, Sales and Event Coordinator
Cristina Duncan, Administrative Clerk

Guests: Dave Varley, Interim City Manager

Item 2: Introductions

Joe Stevens began by thanking all of the committee members for being at today's meeting and for volunteering their time as board members. Each member introduced themselves and stated how and/or why they became involved with the Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee.

Item 3: Overview

Joe Stevens stated the City has assigned him as the Director of Parks & Recreation, and/or his designee, oversight responsibility for the Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee. Tim Seeberg will be working with and is the direct contact for the Committee. Cristina Duncan will be the official record keeper. Mr. Stevens notified the Committee all meetings are open to the public and are also subject to Colorado open meeting laws. Questions and comments can be referred to Tim Seeberg and Cristina Duncan, who are located in the Two Rivers Convention Center office. Joe Stevens may be contacted at the Parks & Recreation administrative office in Lincoln Park.

Dave Varley, Interim City Manager, briefly described what the City foresees as the mission of the Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee. Mr. Varley discussed the evolution of the Committee, stating the past City Manager, Kelly Arnold, recommended the committee be formed for numerous reasons, such as, 1) being able to prepare for the 125th anniversary of the Avalon

Theatre celebration, 2) to assist in the completion of several capital improvements prior to the celebration, and, 3) to increase the Avalon's use. Dave Varley provided a brief background of the Avalon Theatre and discussed the various organizations directly involved with the theater, such as the Avalon Foundation Board, Cinema at the Avalon, and the Downtown Development Authority. Dave Varley said the committee is being charged with being a "central clearing house" in hopes of coordinating the efforts of all of the affiliated organizations, incorporating the recommendations of the Jerry Moorman study, to assist in raising capital funds, and to help establish the theatre's priorities (to make the Avalon the "best that it can be"). Mr. Varley discussed the importance of establishing a time frame/goal for these projects in order to prevent the Committee from having to remain in place for a longer duration than necessary. Dave Varley asked the Committee to report their recommendations and prioritizations back to City Council.

Joe Stevens stated there are several issues related to the Avalon Theatre that merit attention, including the current rental arrangement for the "green room". Mr. Stevens stated the rent was originally \$425/month, and has increased to \$700/month. In addition, there is not a guarantee of future use. Joe Stevens stated the increasing expense remains a concern and, if a contract cannot be secured, alternative options will have to be explored. Andre' van Schaften asked for an explanation as to what the "green room" is. Mr. Stevens responded the green room is an area where the performers can change clothes, eat dinner, rest, and get ready to perform. Mr. Stevens stated providing a green room has been an "expectation" of the majority of groups who book at the Avalon Theatre. Unfortunately, the green room is not owned by the City of Grand Junction, and the current owner is not interested in selling or providing a long term lease. The green room is located in the breezeway on the West side of the theater. Mr. van Schaften requested a tour of the Avalon Theatre, including the green room. Stephen Schweissing said he would make arrangements to have the Cinema at the Avalon's Theater Manager attend the tour, in order to walk the Committee members through the projection area of the facility. Alan Friedman asked whether or not it is an option to rent a mobile facility, perhaps a portable trailer, to be used as a green room. Joe Stevens responded there are several issues with regards to a mobile facility, including health, fire, adjacent neighbors, and safety issues, but that it is certainly one option.

Ed Lipton reported on the preliminary projects the Avalon Foundation, including 1) the renovation of the concession stand. Mr. Lipton discussed the inadequacies of the existing concessions stand. The projected cost is approximately \$50,000 - \$60,000. Mr. Lipton stated the Foundation Board feels the cost is unrealistically high. 2) The renovation of the last four rows in the balcony, as the existing seats do not leave enough leg room. Ed Lipton said there have been a couple of suggestions for relatively inexpensive remedies, including removing a row and extending the steps to create the additional leg room. Mr. Lipton reported the removal of one row would cause the theater to lose approximately 39 seats; a total of 140 seats would be affected by the change. 3) The replacement of all of the theater seats (approximate cost is \$200,000). Ed Lipton said the Avalon Foundation has applied for a grant from the Incubator to fund ½ of the promotional materials, as the Foundation hopes to offer a "Buy a Seat" program, similar to the "Buy a Brick" program. Ed Lipton stated theater seats are sold used or new and range anywhere from \$35 - \$185 each. Mr. Lipton said the Avalon Foundation hopes to have the project funded within the next two years. Ed Lipton discussed some of the obstacles involved in replacing the seats, including the difficulty of having to remove all of the bolts in order to re-drill and re-space every seat. Mr. Lipton said the Avalon Foundation is working diligently to quickly identify "all" of the obstacles so they can make an informed decision regarding the purchase. Ed Lipton discussed the Foundation's desire for all of the entities involved with Avalon Theatre to be willing to

substantially contribute to projects/renovations that will directly affect them. Alan Friedman asked if it was a possibility to get the Mesa Mall movie theater to donate seats. Ed Lipton responded that used theater seats are a “dime a dozen” and would not be the quality necessary for the theater.

Stephen Schweissing provided background information on the Cinema at the Avalon. Approximately 6 – 8 years ago some individuals began , although it was not on a consistent basis. About 5 years ago, another group of individuals decided to form a nonprofit corporation to show the films on a more regular basis, this was known as the “Saturday Cinema”. Mr. Schweissing said this group established a fairly good following over the years and decided to explore the option of showing movies on a “daily” basis. More frequent showings allowed them to better keep up with the current releases, due to the fact they were falling behind the current showings by only showing twelve movies per year. Stephen Schweissing stated the first year was a bit of a struggle; however, the organization is currently showing films 320 - 340 days a year. Mr. Schweissing said one of the Cinema at the Avalon’s policies is to work hand and hand with the other entities who also utilize the Avalon Theatre, including Ron Wilson with Sandstone Productions, as concerts receive first priority at the theater. In addition, the Avalon Foundation has a certain number of days reserved per year, and Angella Vallard with Two Rivers Convention Center also schedules events throughout the year. Stephen Schweissing stated the priorities of the bookings are based on what events will bring the most funds to the theater. Joe Stevens said the City’s goal is to keep the “lights on as much as they can” and to attract more people to the downtown area. Mr. Schweissing stated the Cinema at the Avalon is a profitable organization, given the sponsorships and fundraising remain profitable, stating a theater with only one screen cannot easily make a profit on it’s own. Ed Lipton asked how many tickets the Cinema at the Avalon sells each year. Stephen said he was not sure of the exact figure, as it varies from month to month. Harold Stalf said, based on the business plan, he speculates they sell approximately 75,000/year. Mr. Stalf stated, other than the Museum of Western Colorado, the Cinema at the Avalon is the most stable arts institution on the Western Slope.

Item 4: Election of Officers

Joe Stevens opened the floor for nominations. Alan Friedman requested the Committee discuss the meeting dates prior to electing officers, in order to determine whether or not the potential officers are able to attend the meetings. Harold Stalf moved to table the election of officers to the next meeting. Ed Lipton seconded.

Motion adopted by the Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee: Yes 6 No 0

Note: Stephen Schweissing was absent for the vote.

Item 5: Future Meeting Dates and Times

Joe Stevens suggested holding the next meeting at the Avalon Theatre. Discussion ensued regarding possible dates and times. The Committee agreed to meet the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 a.m. The next Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee meeting will be held on September 19, 2006 at 7:30 a.m.

Item 6: Items for Next Meeting

Tour of the Avalon Theatre including the “Green Room”
Election of Officers

Item 7: Other Business

No additional items were discussed.

Item 8: Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by acclamation.

Meeting adjourned at 1:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tressa Fisher
Administrative Specialist