

**Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee
Minutes
November 21, 2006**

Item 1: Meeting Called to Order by Alan Friedman at 11:40 a.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: Tim Seeberg, TRCC/Avalon Theatre Manager
Cristina Duncan, Administrative Clerk
Dina Jones, Administrative Clerk

Guests:

Item 2: Approval of Minutes

Ron Beach moved to approve the October 17th 2006 Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee minutes. Andre' van Schaften seconded.

Harold Stalf wanted one thing changed on the minutes and that was in the Downtown Development Authority section under Item 3, second sentence. He wanted to clarify that he was referring to the Colorado Historic Conservation and not the Downtown Development Authority.

Motion adopted by the Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee: Yes 7 No 0

Item 3: Expanded uses for the Avalon Theatre & Discussion

The floor was opened up for discussion about ways the Avalon could be utilized beyond current uses (Cinema, concerts, private events, non-profit shows, community events). Andre Van Schaften expressed an interest in replicating a season ticket show program which he has seen in operation elsewhere with similar theaters. The format would be similar to a series of shows where patrons purchase tickets for the entire series. Alan Friedman added that the board should explore implementing volume rental rates for show programmers or promoters that would be based on theater usage. If there is a level of up front commitment from the event organizer, a volume rental discount could be offered. This should encourage theater rentals, which would mean more events and more people attending Avalon events. Tim Seeberg interjected that volume rates could be explored, however that is technically a Council decision as to whether or not we should be given freedom to negotiate such rates. Currently, there are set rental rates that have been approved by Council and intended to be used consistently in all rental request situations. Implementing volume rates could open the committee up to public questioning as to rate consistency. The current rate structure is the same for all events, with the only distinction given to for-profit events vs. non-profit events. Harold Stalf suggested that this discussion is a step ahead of where this committee should be headed at the moment. This committee first needs to define the Avalon's usage purpose and formulate a strategic business plan that encompasses this among other larger issues. He stated that it is premature to suggest volume discounting. The reality in his view is that if event frequency increases significantly, the Cinema at the Avalon's existence is threatened.

Discussion ensued over questions of what types of events cost more than others to organize and service from the Avalon's perspective. Again, the discussion turned then to does it make sense to encourage more events to book the Avalon? Harold Stalf explained that the committee is in the business of making the building economically strong and that the committee should explore why certain community groups do not use the Avalon to put on their events. The answers may hinge on aesthetics, size of the hall or even acoustics. The committee should ask themselves – do we want to compete for events happening at other venues? If so, then why? The implications of these questions are that the idea of changing the current balance of Cinema, concerts and other occasional events will be profoundly impacting to the Avalon's future in the downtown framework. Stephan Schweissing picked up on this point to discuss the impacts to the Cinema at the Avalon. He pointed out that when you book more events to the Avalon you potentially disrupt Cinema's operation. Movie distributors offer strict guidelines as to when their movies are shown and for how long they must run for. For example, a concert booked on Saturday may stop us from acquiring key movies. This is a backbone of Cinema's existence. The more certain key nights of the week are booked with events, the more likely Cinema could be seriously hurt. Cinema therefore will be very concerned if this committee's direction is to increase event nights at the Avalon. We should strive for a balance from a usage standpoint.

Alan Friedman suggested that success of the Avalon may be attributable to actual counts of people attending the theater week in and week out. In essence, more people in seats is a good thing. Or, the more events, the more people, the better off we are. Harold Stalf interjected that Cinema will surely be a victim of such prioritization. This formula implies that Cinema's existence is simply threatened. Ed Lipton added that the decision to fill the Avalon 30 days a year vs. 300 days a year is a central issue with this board now. Stephan Schweissing insisted that if the goal is to fill four weekends per month, for example, Cinema will go out of business. Or, more optimistically, Cinema would resort back to Cinema Saturdays only. Marianne North suggested that some sort of art film fest could run during the week consistently if someone could start it up and going. She posed the question of, can other similar models of film showing occur at the Avalon?

Discussion ensued further about the implications of the new Regal 14 and how impacting this could be to the Cinema at the Avalon. Not all committee members think the Cinema is in trouble per se, however their ability to operate is seriously threatened potentially with the new theaters opening (at least in the short term). Again, the discussion turned back to how added events impact the Cinema. Harold Stalf mentioned that to think that it is wise to run 4-5 events per month with the rest of the days 'dark' at the Avalon could be disastrous to downtown. Keeping the lights on at the Avalon daily is a good thing he continued. Alan Friedman suggested exploring the running of second-run movies at the Avalon. There are small organizations, such as in Glade Park that may wish to run these movies for fundraising purposes. Harold Stalf commented that this kind of approach is short-lived. The creation of regular running film festivals are in a way mythical in terms of success. Marianne North suggested there must be ways to run Cinema movies and events together without seriously threatening one or the other. Harold Stalf suggested in response that operating two screens either in the Avalon or in conjunction with the building next door to the Avalon could be the answer to achieving that goal. Stephan Schweissing commented that Cinema has tried film promotions of different kinds before and they simply did not work.

A question was posed about how can this committee find more promoters to book events at the Avalon? Would the influx of more promoters threaten Sandstone Entertainment, currently a major user of the Theater? Harold Stalf commented that the question should be how do we help users be more successful?

The discussion turned to the topic of what the Advisory Committee's role is going forward. Ed Lipton suggested that the committee's role is to stick to higher level basics. This committee should not get into the business of deciding who uses the Avalon and when. This is the Role of Two Rivers Convention Center. Ed went on to underscore that committee's function is to improve functional and aesthetic value of the Avalon theatre. It is also to support the multi-cultural use of the Avalon. The committee should further make the building more attractive for all users.

Item 5: Preparation of Business Plan

Alan Friedman suggested the need to form a committee to develop a strategic business plan. Asking for volunteers, Andre Van Schaften responded that he is willing to head the committee. Stephan Schweissing and Marianne North both offered to serve on the committee. In discussion it was decided that the goal at this point is to present a comprehensive plan to Council by sometime in March 2007.

Item 7: Presentation from Cinema at the Avalon - continuation from previous meeting

Stephen Schweissing presented on the history, purpose and mission of Cinema at the Avalon, including staffing structure, movie scheduling and operating philosophy. He indicated that currently, operationally, Cinema is struggling given the current movie market with the arrival of the Regal 14 and other related factors. Stephen underscored the desire for Cinema to stay at the Avalon since they wish to stay downtown and the Avalon is certainly the most unique facility to show their movies and programs. Stephan outlined his views on the current movie market in and around Grand Junction, which is extremely competitive. Cinema serves a very specific niche and even though their audience is waning, this is temporary, and will rebound in their favor after a few months time. Stephan also mentioned that the Cinema business plan is very basic and simple and sponsorship is a key reason Cinema is a viable operation today.

Liquor License:

The question was raised as to whether or not beer/wine can be sold at the movies? The suggestion is that the sale of alcohol may boost Cinema attendance. Harold Stalf stressed that all the assets of the Avalon must be maximized. The liquor license is one of them. He suggested the current configuration is inefficient. Potential daily liquor sales at Cinema movies are too marginal to absorb the cost of TRCC staff selling the alcohol to Cinema movie goers. Tim Seeberg commented that options to re-configure the liquor license arrangements are being reviewed. The goal is to see how each party can gain use of the license efficiently and legally without being a financial burden to either party. The end result will be worked into the contract rental agreement between Cinema and the City. We hope to have an agreement signed by January 2007

Item 8: Life Safety Issues: Deferred discussion due to time

Item 9: Specifics on the seats: Deferred discussion due to time

Item 10: Fundraising discussion: Deferred discussion due to time

Item 11: Look over plans for the concession stand remodel: Deferred discussion due to time

Item 12: Determine next meeting dates

Andre Van Schaften suggested that the Strategic Plan sub-committee needs to meet to discuss the first steps of the strategic business plan. The sub-committee decided to meet Dec. 5th. Stephan Schweissing offered to take notes of their discussion to bring back to the next Advisory Committee meeting, which is scheduled for December 19th.

Item 13: Items for Next Meeting : None discussed as the meeting was adjourned due to time constraints.

Item 14: Other Business: None brought up due to time constraints.

Item 15: Adjourn

Alan Friedman asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Stephan Schweissing so moved and Andre Van Schaften seconded. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation.

Meeting adjourned at 1:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Seeberg
General Manager