

**Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee
Minutes
March 20, 2007**

Item 1: Meeting Called to Order by Alan Friedman at 11:38 am.

Roll Call

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

Committee Members Absent: Ron Beach
Stephan Schweissing

Parks & Recreation Staff Present: Joe Stevens, Director of Parks & Recreation
Tim Seeberg, TRCC/Avalon Theatre Manager
Juli Adams, Event Planner
Dina Jones, Administrative Clerk

Guests: Krystyn Hartman, G. J. Symphony Executive
Director
Roger Davidson, G.J. Musical Arts Assoc.
Board of Director

Item 2: Approval of February 8, 2007 Minutes

Alan Friedman moved to approve the February 8, 2007 Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee minutes. Andre' van Schaften seconded.

Motion adopted by the Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee: Yes 5 No 0

Item 3: Sub-Committee – Strategic/Business Plan Update & Next Steps

Andre' van Schaften began by explaining one of the sub-committee members, Ron Beach was on vacation this week. Since the 8th of February there has been one sub-committee meeting because of vacations. The group has modified the Strategic Business Plan and has agreed on each one's responsibilities to put the plan together. Now each is working at their respective sessions. Another meeting is scheduled for the 2nd of April and possibly two other work sessions are scheduled after that before the next Avalon Advisory Committee meeting on the 17th of April. It is the plan of the sub-committee to have a draft ready a few days prior to that time to give everyone a chance to read the plan and be prepared to discuss it. We would like to have added to the agenda for the next Avalon Advisory Committee an in depth work session to discussion and review the plan as a group.

Andre' van Schaften continued by stating there have been a couple of very positive developments after several meetings with some of the members. Harold Stalf has been working with Tim Seeberg and subsequently with Joe Stevens and Andre' van Schaften to come up with a modified capital improvement recommendation that involves the proposal to build an annex next to the Avalon Theatre on 7th and Main Street. This has come about because the purchase of the building that houses the green room did not come through. This plan has evolved into a session with the architect and he's at work hopefully, before the next meeting, to give us a quick overview. Andre' van Schaften asked Harold Stalf to give us more details on this recommendation.

Harold Stalf met Joe Stevens at City Hall and discussed the idea of what else can be done to proceed further. It came to mind that the parking lot to the east of the Avalon Theatre is something we have been working with a lot on the 7th Street portal redesign. We have taken a small corner of that parking lot, a triangle approximately 10 foot on the side. The rest of the lot is twice as big as the building next to the Avalon that houses the current green room. Also this building has the walkway between so it wouldn't have been an adjoining facility. It would have been better but when you think about what it could be and what it needs to be, Harold Stalf feels this building is not the answer. For the long-term it is probably really good that we didn't purchase the building. For the short-term we are still in need. In looking at this, what we drafted was a design that shows that instead of 3100 sq. ft. of the building to the west, there will be 6200 sq ft. on the east parking lot. The east parking lot currently has 13 parking spaces which are nice to have but with the 7th Street roundabout, we're having to close the driveway into that parking lot. It will only be accessible from the alley and therefore we would have to create perpendicular parking, not angled parking, with one directional access and it reduces the parking from 13 spaces to 7. We drafted a design that was taken to Daniel Gardner at Chamberlin that shows an annex that has a significant lobby that would be probably 1200 to 1500 sq. ft. It's probably twice as big as the current lobby, an additional larger concession stand, and a 96 seat theater for the Cinema. Behind that would be about a 2500 sq. ft. wing space, rehearsal space that would be great support for the Symphony and other really major acts. There would be a freight elevator going to the basement that would be adequate to haul large equipment. It could be hauled downstairs with a passageway that would connect to the area under the stage. The area under the stage was looked at for a half a million dollar renovation to be dressing rooms at one point about five years ago. Ed Lipton added that it wasn't quite that much, about \$350,000. Harold Stalf continued that the area would be accessed by ripping out the old broiler and everything taking that space. That access would make that storage under there because there isn't any decent human access into that area that would be ADA compliant. The remainder of the basement under the annex would have green rooms, dressing rooms facing the rear and accessing to the wings and the stage and the front of it would be a small lobby with a lot more bathrooms. That potentially could be accessed from the stairwell to the basement of the current facility. Another entrance that's an outdoor entrance box office so people could do will call without coming through the ticket line and purchase tickets outside. A small marquee at an angle reflecting this triangle that is being taken, showing it angled with the marquee in a major access point of what's call the million dollar location, 7th and Main. The other pieces of this would be an elevator that

could go from the lower lobby in the basement to the main lobby up to the projection booth above the concession stand there and to the balcony. The other piece Andre' van Schaften is doing is looking at some point, instead of blowing out the back wall of the theater and taking on a half million dollars or more in utility refinement, we would bring the stage forward. To bring the stage forward 20 feet, which would be keeping the with the size of the high school stage, we would have to remove 5 to 6 rows of the seating. This could be done in two ways. One either have removable seating and a portable stage or secondly have a stage that somehow telescoped over the seats leaving the seats in place and simply take out one row for an aisle. It would be reduced from a 1000 seats to an 850 seat range. With two concerts for the Symphony it would be at approximately 1700 which is bigger than what they have today. It's going to be a question on whether the Symphony could buy into this. It's requiring us to know the same size of wing space, the storage capabilities, the restroom capabilities, the lobby capabilities and additional concessions. This should significantly enhance their income potential of the building and the practical use of the building. This has to work for the Symphony if we are going to do it. It would work for the Cinema and it would work for Ron Wilson because it could either be a more compact and intimate house or it could be the large house it is today less the 37 seats in the balcony. We would need to address the proscenium arch, we would need to address improving the downstairs seating, potential fire safety issues still, and some work painting and enhancing the main hall. It seems to those involved that it is meeting most of the weaknesses of the building. The Cinema would have a 365 operation while automating it with the main house to what is really a movie palace.

Harold Stalf spent last week in Tucson, Arizona and had the opportunity to tour the historic Fox Theater in downtown. Built in 1929, it is a 1200 seat bonnaville house/movie palace. Their Foundation makes it very clear that there are a hand full of movie palaces in the west. The Avalon is one and the Fox in Tucson is another. They spent 13 million dollars on this renovation. It is just like the Avalon but they are boxed in. Their calendar, viewed at foxtucsontheater.org, looks like the Avalon did five years ago. It has 6 to 8 events per month. Two or three are significant events. The rest are B movies that no one goes to. It's an incredible facility. They took out three rows of the side aisles, four seats in, totaling 24 seats, and made that a flat platform for disabled and folding chairs for companion seating. That little cut out met the regulations which is 2% of the house for disabled seating.

Harold Stalf reiterated that what we need to look at is what's the highest and best economic use of the building and what capital investments we have to do to make it work for all potential users. If we can pull that off, Harold Stalf thinks that is the type of thing that would make the Avalon Theatre really work for our goal which is a business plan from now until the year 2023 which is the anniversary. Talking with several people including Daniel, we are guessing it is a 2 ½ million dollar project but in reality it is closer to 3 million. If we were to adopt this, we would have to get a better handle on the projected cost and then we could talk seriously on how to go forward with it. We would hopefully address all our needs. The proscenium arch is certainly one of the major ones. Lighting for the orchestra out in the house is something that is not there today that can be done fairly straight forward. The arch could really be crucial to being able to pulling that

off.

Andre' van Schaften explained by matching the annex proposal with the needs that the Symphony has given us, he believes it is a shoe fit. If we can get the City Council to go along with this, and possibly make this a 2 to 5 year reality, this would be great for the Symphony as well as Grand Junction. In working to our strategic business plan, we will need a lot of financial information. Andre' van Schaften and Stephan Schweissing are working on getting two years worth of financial information and results as well as their budgets. This information is needed not only to put this plan together but in anticipation for when we start talking further with the Symphony in terms of what their expectations are and what the cost structure is going to be, also in terms of past funding that has been accomplished. Andre' van Schaften is suggesting a financial sub-committee which will work hand in hand with the Strategic Business Plan committee to look over, review and come up with hard financial facts. He suggests major users, Stephan Schweissing, major stockholders, Tim Seeberg for the City, and Harold Stalf. Andre' van Schaften motioned to establish this financial sub-committee, Alan Friedman seconded the motion.

Motion adopted by the Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee: Yes 5 No 0

Harold Stalf agreed Tim Seeberg should be on the financial sub-committee since he is Manager of Operations for the Avalon and would have the reports for the past 5 years. Tim Seeberg clarified the motion that he would serve more as a source of input and guidance for both the committee and sub-committee but not be an actual member of the financial sub-committee. Stephan Schweissing would serve to give input about the Cinema. Discussion ensued with Ed Lipton about the Foundation's financial information and a request for a quarterly report would be helpful information if available.

Andre' van Schaften asked to schedule a meeting with the financial sub-committee and to add to the agenda for the April 17 meeting to discuss the next steps after reviewing the Strategic Business Plan draft. Andre' van Schaften also suggested a meeting with the Cinema Board, Avalon Foundation and the Downtown Development Authority to go over a preliminary presentation for the City Council. Harold Stalf agreed that it is important to go to the City Council with the blessing of those players as well as the Symphony to let the City Council know they are all in favor of the plan or if it needs more work.

Krystyn Hartman received clarification that Chamberlin, Daniel Gardener in particular is the architect for the Avalon. Krystyn asked if a sketch of the proposal would be possible to take back to the Symphony. Andre' van Schaften is hoping to have that by the April 17th meeting. After some discussion it was decided that the Symphony would be involved after the legalities are work out.

Andre' van Schaften concludes by requesting some input and thoughts in terms of a work session in June with the City Council. Joe Stevens said we will need to request a workshop with the City Council and this group. Joe Stevens thinks it is important the group has a unified front for all the users also the arts and culture community as well as endorsements from the Arts and Culture Commission. The more we have with this the

better off it will be. Joe also recommends having visuals. What the Council wants to know is not where the money is going to come from but more importantly the different groups going to use the Avalon. We need to discuss how we are going to make it work for the users. If we can show them a foot print that would be useful. A major anchor would be to show the square footage. The City Council has been real supportive of downtown. Discussion was had about the profits in alcohol sales. Harold Stalf talked about the Mormon Report and what it really said was, your not losing that much money on the Avalon and where you get a return in community benefit is well worth the investment. That is why the financial piece is so important. Maybe we'll loose a little more but is it worth it to have a more fully functioning venue or not? That is where Council gets to make their policies. Alan Friedman requested everyone keep in mind sale tax revenues will increase by bringing people downtown and buying things in the stores and restaurants. Ed Lipton feels the numbers don't add up when \$100,000 dollars in revenue is generated a year and this is a 2 ½ million to 3 million dollar project. Ed believes that has to be addressed. Harold Stalf feels operating programs and capital programs should not be compared to each other. Once we get a rough estimate we can go and do our capital campaign. Joe Stevens thinks a lot of it is how you package the presentation. When you have people coming from the outlying area, you look at what they generate. They'll stay at the hotels downtown and go to restaurants. The average person will spend about \$100 a day.

Krystyn Hartman said the Symphony had two performances of the silent film last month at the Avalon, With the new ticket system she was able to track every body. 15% to 20% of those tickets came from out of town. Those from Denver, Wyoming, Utah and the surrounding areas had to stay overnight. The performances had 750 people in attendance the first night and a little over 800 people the second night. One of the other things the Symphony has noticed, even on the Tuesday night performances, 20% of those in attendance are from outside the area. Krystyn would be happy to supply their percentages and where the demographics are.

Harold Stalf asked if our time frame is appropriate of if we are going to fumble because of the Symphony's deadlines? Krystyn Hartman responded by saying there is a venue planning committee within the board that evolved from the long-range planning committee. They commissioned an engineering study of the high school to find out what it would cost to make improvements to it. Because of the building codes and age of the building, it came back that they couldn't do anything. This committee is continuing to evolve and continues the process of looking at other venues. They don't have any hard deadline because the purpose of the committee is very much exploratory. They are taking an really in-depth assessment of what their needs are and what are the opportunities within the community. There chief concern is the stage size, restrooms, and acoustics. The Symphony would very much like to be involved in the planning process of the Avalon Theatre once the footprint is established. Tim Seeberg explained how Krystyn Hartman has helped organize a series of meetings with all the performing cultural arts in town to discuss these type of things. Tim asked how the other stake holders in the community that are in the cultural arts play into this, or does it? Krystyn Hartman thinks she needs to go back to the committee and inform them that they may

want to include this Avalon project into the roundtable discussions and get their needs and information back to the Avalon Advisory Committee. Krystyn invited the Avalon Advisory Committee to the next roundtable discussion on March 29 at the Whitman Building. She will email Tim Seeberg the information and he can forward that to everyone.

Roger Davidson added that one of the positives of rebuilding the Avalon Theatre is that it attracts industry to this area. The principals who make those decisions are use to good quality cultural art activities and in turn are building to attract personnel at the higher level that they would hire to relocate to this area. It is difficult to sell somebody to come to an area like this that is pretty far removed from everything unless you have those kinds of outlets. Roger commented on the stage. The current stage has a lot of limitations. One of those is having to cut down the size of the orchestra. It would make a more moving concert to have a full orchestra. Harold Stalf injected the size of the stage would not be significantly bigger, unless they go out the back of the building. That would be a long-range plan but probably would not be within our grasp in the next 15 years. We are not going to give up that vision but it is not this step.

Krystyn Hartman wanted to make everyone aware that there is a strong possibility that an association will be formed that will encompass the cultural arts, museum, and science. It would allow organizations, businesses, and individuals to be members. This would be a marketing advocacy that would do research and look at the possibilities of the cultural district and things like that going into the future. Krystyn will keep us posted as it gets closer.

Marianne North wanted to thank the Symphony for their very thorough presentation and positive attitude in spite of the unknown.

Item 4: Determine Next Meeting Dates

It was decided the next Advisory Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, April 17. The meeting will be held at Two Rivers Convention Center and lunch will be provided.

Item 5: Items for Next Meeting

A work session to review and discuss the sub-committees' Strategic Business Plan for the Avalon Theatre and the next steps.

Item 6: Other Business

Marianne North commented that she is glad Andre' van Schaften formed this financial sub-committee because it is very hard to develop a business plan without financial information. The resolution does say the Avalon Foundation, Downtown Development Authority, Cinema at the Avalon and community members shall provide any and all written materials or information included that is reasonably necessary or required by the community to use as a guide to evaluate. The things that would be helpful to complete financials would be budgets, fund-raising activities, capital contributions, operation's revenues and losses, and anticipated usage.

Item 7: Adjourn

Alan Friedman asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Harold Stalf moved and Andre' van Schaften seconded. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation.

Meeting adjourned at 12:40p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dina Jones
Administrative Clerk