

**Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee
Minutes
April 17, 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
Stephan Schweissing
Harold Stalf
Edward Lipton

Committee Members Absent: Ron Beach

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

Item 2: Approval of March 20, 2007 minutes

Alan Friedman moved to approve the March 20th, 2007 Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee minutes. Andre' van Schaften seconded.

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

Item 3: Strategic Business Plan Work Session & Next Steps

Andre' van Schaften began by asking if everyone read the strategic/business plan. The conclusion is to modify the report, make changes if necessary, have meeting with the Foundation Board, Cinema Board, and the Downtown Development Authority to discuss and present reports and ask for their input.

Harold Stalf showed the architectural layout. He feels we need to listen to Symphony & Ron Wilson and their needs.

Joe Stevens believes this is more than what City council wants.

Andre' van Schaften asked if the City Council will not be appreciative of this. Do we need to keep it short-term only?

Joe Stevens said the City Council has not said from a policy prospective.

Ed Lipton thinks this committee should focus on the priority. His objection is spending too much time on the long-range.

Harold Stalf asked if the City Council wants this to actually be a functional and economical viable venue. With those addressed, how much would the subsidy be? Do they want to keep it as it is today? That's the fundamental question.

Joe Stevens agrees that question needs to be out front. The Advisory Committee needs to have in their report a recommendation to the City Council on what the recommendation is. That's a good question. What should it be? Joe Stevens thinks there is two schools of thought. One is the way it is and basically solidify it with the seats, paint, acoustical treatment, fire curtain, and whatever it takes to make it function and also restrooms and anything else that you can throw out there. If that is what City Council would like to see, that is fine, and that is the direction we will go. If they want something beyond that, it's going to raise a lot of other issues and we have taken the liberty to suggest based on conversations with users like the Symphony that this might be a viable home for them. That's another question. It's going to raise other questions about should this be basically what it is and we'll continue to support it with X number of dollars per year and that's all your going to have at that facility. It's not going to be the cultural arts venue that this would be. It raises the other issue the feasibility of this versus building another new facility somewhere else.

Andre' van Schaften believes the report is very clear and we have completed what the City Council has charged us with. What they feel are the objectives of this committee. What we have basically done is said here's our vision and when it comes to the building itself we came up with three recommendations. We are in sync in terms of the short-range recommendations and yes, we should do that. Andre' van Schaften doesn't think that we have said in our report that we should not do it. We are intending to give the City another choice which is a longer-range and we call it a medium-range. We have identified what Symphony and Chamberlin have talked about several years ago and we call that our long-range. We spend very little time with that and explain it is something out there in space. Andre' van Schaften wants to bring out that he thinks we are not that far away from each other. In our report, as far as the building, given two choices, one is short-range that must be done. Andre' van Schaften doesn't think any where in the report it says we are going to overlook that. Where Andre' van Schaften differs to Joe Stevens understanding of our charge is that in any strategic business plan you offer choices.

Marianne North had a question before we proceed. She thinks there is an underlying assumption here that needs to be addressed. One thing our sub-committee is working on is enhancing or increasing the usage of the Avalon Theatre. In the spirit of increasing the usage, we felt that unless there was some expansion of the theatre, the usage could not be increased beyond what it is now. If we feel the City Council is concerned about increasing the usage, then she feels we have taken to that task. This is the underlying assumption of all of this.

Alan Friedman thinks we are all saying the same thing. He sees everybody's point and

agrees with them all. If the City Council is expecting something different from us, it is really a shame. We came to the conclusion and are obligated to share on our conclusions, after two different meetings on form and functions, certainly we need congressional media to proceed with these changes obviously and definitely needs to be done in a year term. If I were a councilman I would want to know why are we doing this. We have to share the vision as to why. If the vision is for the this to become a performing arts center for the community, the City Council needs to know why are we going to spend X number of thousands of dollars on seats. You need to have a vision to justify why we are spending money on the seats and we are sharing that vision. Ed Lipton's point is well taken, we need to come to an answer for short-term. The conclusion, therefore, has to be why are we doing this as the report. Maybe the emphasis on the report needs to be more on the short-term and our vision less.

Joe Stevens thinks that what the City Council wants to hear from reading right from the report is an annual report documenting your fund raising efforts and your recommended capital improvements. Alan Friedman said the fund raising efforts is to have the Avalon Theatre generate more revenue to have it subsidized by various groups such as Cinema or the Symphony. To Joe Stevens that is where the report should focus on to City Council is on your fund raising efforts and what your capital improvements are and if this is it, it needs to be incorporated in there. Joe Stevens is suggesting this is going to surprise a lot of people. Harold Stalf doesn't think it will at all. Alan Friedman says the information still needs to be shared. Harold Stalf continued by pointing out everything is researched by funding for the arts in this town. The botanical gardens' and the arts center's are vulnerabilities. He thinks there is a real grounds swell in the community to address the validity of the arts and the under investment that happens in the art in this town and he thinks City Council would embrace this type of report, this doesn't mean they are going to fund it. What Harold Stalf thinks they want to see is a lot of thought by citizens of a committee that they appointed have gone into the viability of this building. We all know the building currently is an economic obsolete building. If we keep investing in these terms, we may have less programing in the future than what we have today. We have to look at it's economic potential and what it does for this to take to realize it's economic culture of the Avalon Theatre. Joe Stevens is only suggesting that when you take it into context of this, and take it in the context of forming an independent board of directors he differs with that perspective because he doesn't think City Council really anticipates or expects it in this environment. He could be wrong. Alan Friedman said they may not expect it but that is just the conclusion we have come to. Joe Stevens believes it is fine to share it but he can say, with every confidence, that he would be more than a little surprised if they are going to be supportive of creating another body to oversee the cultural arts community knowing what the history has been in the valley with regard to that. He's not saying that that won't work but he doesn't think you would lock into that particular model at this point in time.

Alan Friedman addressed this one issue to each Avalon Advisory Board members to see if the board, as a whole, believes that we shouldn't exist and we should just basically tell the City they need to have a managing board as described in this document.

Joe Stevens believes that was the direction they were going with the Sunset 2012. It was pretty simplistic thinking when this was put together it was resolved the Mormon study that there were needs that needed to be addressed and how best to address those needs is to get a broad grass roots group of folks that have experience in different disciplines to come up with a way to address the capital funding needs that were identified in that study. If there were others that come to light such as this that was fine.

Harold Stalf reminded everyone that this group is not a 501c3 in the amount that they charge to do any proactive fund raising, just a five year plan. Harold Stalf thinks the plan shows a management style that could hopefully be a structure of fund raising. Having said that, having fund raising on repairs and maintenance on a venue that isn't economical viable is really tough fund raising. If you have a vision you can get a community to embrace it and major funders to embrace it, then you can do some real fund raising. If we keep ourselves boxed in to the smaller scale, Council wants someone to pay the bills but we need to think bigger to get it done.

Ed Lipton has two advantages over most people here in regards to this. Number one, he was at the meeting in January when this was discussed when our committee first began and number two, he has been on the Avalon Board for 11 years which incorporates the management of the Avalon Theatre to the tune of the first six years. Basically the Downtown Development Authority provided the staff. The Downtown Development Authority's director was the manager of the Avalon Theatre. When Ed Lipton started on the board, the city gave them \$20,000 a year and the Director of the Downtown Development Authority, Barbara Creaseman and her staff ran the Avalon Theatre and the Avalon Board served as a policy provider and an overseer of the budget. It worked well but not financially well because they had the same problems financially that the Avalon has had for the last 15 years. The management of the theatre ran reasonably well. The Downtown Development Authority contributed something like \$35,000, the City contributed \$20,000 a year and revenue took up some of the slack. Ed Lipton is a proponent accentually going back to that which he reads in the first recommendation that there be a management board with a manager. The manager runs the Avalon Theatre not managed by the City Council, not managed by any of us and that the board also served as the fund raising part of the theatre. Alan Friedman stated that this board is appointed and the future board by the City Council. Ed Lipton is saying to do away with that. There is a City Council representative. He disagrees with having other users as board members, that creates too many problems. Having them as consultants, absolutely, we couldn't have done it without them. It should be done sooner than later. What we need to make that recommendation more solid is a specific number. What's it going to cost? What's the down side? Ed Lipton feels this theatre is never going to make money from its own revenue. How can we narrow the gap? What are the methods of increasing revenue? We are dealing with one now, the concession stand and the one in the report is the liquor license. Ed Lipton thinks we should start there. That is doable quickly. It needs a financial commitment and very little else from the City. If the City Council wants to appoint the first board that is fine. The board should not be run by the City Council. My experience from being at the meeting a year ago January was that at least one City Council member made, as a condition of this report, the City continue to manage it. With

regards to the second recommendation Ed Lipton agrees with Harold Stalf that we should not put money into something if we are going to bulldoze in the next phase or a phase five years from now. There are things that have to be done at the Avalon Theatre now that will survive whatever comes of this. Those are the arch, the sprinkler system, the safety issue of a vent over the stage so that a fire on the stage has a place to go. They are not going to cost \$220,000, Ed Lipton thinks it going to cost more like a half million dollars. The third recommendation is the implementation in large measure. Ed Lipton endorses the plan and should present it to the City but should not spend a lot of time on it. Andre' van Schaften clarifies that Ed Lipton agrees the first recommendation is fine. The second which is the short-term needs elaboration and some more character. Andre' van Schaften agrees that we are offering several solutions. That it should be a bit broader and that we should spend more time on the short-term because one may get the feeling that we are only recommending this one, but we're not. We are recommending that the City spend some money to make the current Avalon Theatre more viable.

Stephan Schweissing informed us that when he met with the Councilmen to talk about being on this board, his impression at that time was that this was an issue that was raised at a time that the management of the city was in black and there were, as we came to later know, there were possibly difficulties in the vision of the city. Stephan Schweissing's impression, when he met with the Councilman he met with, was they didn't really know what we were suppose to do. He doesn't say that critically of the council members because he thinks the prior manager approached it in an unusual way. So he thinks there was a lot of confusion about where we are headed and what we were suppose to do. He disagrees a little with Joe Stevens in terms of not seeing what we are doing being in black and white. Stephan Schweissing would prefer taking a more broad brush while we're here and we might as well present our vision. He agrees with Harold Stalf that it doesn't mean it will be funded, but the door is open and we might as well walk through. At the same point, Stephan Schweissing truly believes that it is time that we start the process. City Council knows what the problem is but needs some direction on what to do. Whether it's funded, he doesn't know but he thinks that the vision regarding the Avalon is why we were created. That may not be politically correct but that is how he feels. He thinks we should incorporate the best of what we're all talking about.

Marianne North doesn't care what their intentions were, the discussions among us was involved and quite clear that the operation and the planning of the Avalon needed to be streamlined and moved along. Her senses are that some entity needs to move forward. The foundation board could be that entity. She thinks they have the 501c3. We need a fund raising mechanism. There needs to be someone more actively involved and buy in or nothing is going to get done.

Stephan Schweissing thinks that instead of recommending in our short-term goal, don't put a garden in the parking area, we need to say don't spend money there because we are hoping down the road to do this. Don't spend \$20,000 or \$50,000 to put a park there because that is where we hope to expand the building. If we're not thinking of using that building we shouldn't be investing \$500,000 in all the things we talked about or doing anything because we are planning to shut the building down. We have to have that

thought process.

Harold Stalf poses the question, can this really become a viable performing arts venue?

Stephan Schweissing said we need to say the Avalon will never be a viable asset to the community and we might as well close the doors and stop putting money into it. If that is what our vision is we shouldn't try to convince anyone to put five thousand dollars into it and use the money towards a park or something. If that is what our vision is we should just say so and be done with it.

Harold Stalf expressed that fact that it is a question of how the community values it. The Avalon versus a golf course or a new street. How many people go to concerts there? How many go to films there and say "over my dead body are you closing this thing." Then we are right back to this. Harold Stalf thinks we need to bracket it and frame it to Council as the community demands the need for these offerings, some of which are at the Avalon, some can be added to the Avalon.

Andre' van Schaften completely agrees with Stephan Schweissing and Harold Stalf . He very much appreciates everyone's input and agrees we should focus more on the short-term of it.

Stephan Schweissing thinks what we should say is if council is not willing to make commitment # 1, Then we are done and should stop there.

Alan Friedman intentionally stayed out of the planning process so he would have an unbiased objective view. He respects Ed Lipton's view very much and his points are very well taken. Basically what he said earlier, we are all in agreement. Shifting things around, expanding the immediate and minimizing the verbiage on the long-term, but the long-term needs to be there. It is a shame if they don't want to have it. It doesn't need an advisory board it needs a functioning operating board that can do something. For it to function, there has to be a board running it. The board will work with limitations the best they can. Alan Friedman did prejudge what the City wanted to hear. It may have made a difference if we knew what they wanted to hear but if they created us to come to this conclusion then they have to listen to our conclusion.

Joe Stevens thinks some of the words that that are being used to talk about the current facility is very accurate. Stephan's comment on the Council not knowing why we were created, to a degree that is true. One reason Joe Stevens knows we were created is to facilitate working as city staff into one body. The City Manager at the time did not want to work with three different entities. You were created to speak as one voice. The other thing, when we talk about what the value of Avalon is today and talk about subsidization, the City Council is happy with how the Avalon is operating today. Questions we need to be asking City Council is this what you want us to be about and status quo, that is the baseline. There are other menus you can add on to it. They are trying to create amenities above the status quo. The focus is the capital improvements not operation. We used the same model as Two Rivers Convention Center whether it be good bad or indifferent. If

we create another structure, with an operating body and a board of directors, that is an area we need to discuss with council members. You don't want to go into a public meeting and have debate. You want them to receive the report, take it under advisement and get back to you. The other factor that Joe Stevens can not put a value on is the value of the arts and culture. We need to make that case with some idea on what it would cost if it goes to implementation. Is City Council willing to support the Avalon as it is or are they willing to go higher?

Harold Stalf agrees there is a lot of questions on this and he does not know that we are done. Joe Stevens fears if we present it the way we have it today it is going to be a Pandora's box. We need to go at it a little more effectively.

Marianne North wanted clarification on whether we should only focus on the capital improvements.

One thing Joe Stevens said we need to work on and one charge in the ordinance is to create bylaws. This would further define what you are doing as an operating committee. The charge is specific. It should talk about fund raising and go back and look at the capital and come up with a methodology to make improvements at the Avalon. That was to take into account the user groups, and the different bodies and foundations as a 501c3 saying what's the next project. The assumptions are City Council would be coming to the table with a lion share of the money for health safety issues. Some of those have been talked about. The other thing, we put money in the budget, \$30,000, to assist with chairs. The idea was for the committee to say we have commitments from organizations and we can match that or better so we will go after the chairs. Joe Stevens is assuming that is what they are looking at.

Marianne North asked Joe Stevens if he think this advisory committee would be able to function in a way to get things done or do we say the foundations would do this? Joe Stevens believes Council would like this committee to be the strong arm.

Alan Friedman feel we need a managing body to do that. We cannot spend the money as an advisory committee. He would be happy to take this report, revising it with Ed Lipton suggestions, expanding on the short-term being more general. Alan Friedman offered to meet with individual council members over the next 30 days so there are no surprises and we know what direction we are headed.

Harold Stalf believes we need more time. We have a lot more input to seek. We made a sincere effort to listen to Sandstone, the Cinema, and the Symphony. If we try to accommodate the Symphony in this building, suddenly we are building a new building. The question is how much do they buy in or they don't. We need to know that long before this is taken to any council members. We need to go to each party involved to find out where they stand. We need to get the building opened more, get more people, and build something that is going to have substance to it. That is the board chair of the Downtown Development Authority opinion. We also need to hear this from Cinema at the Avalon and the Foundation. What are their realistic expectations about the

management structure and the short-term investment. We need to spend the month of May meeting with all interested parties and stakeholders. We meet in June and go over what we had right and what needs changed. Redraft it and all agree with the report.

Joe Stevens feels one thing we need to think about on the report, depending on how far you want to go, don't be overly concerned about having all the answers for the City Council. If you have generalized ideas and concepts that is probably sufficient. If you get direction that casts what we need to do, that's great. One thing as long-term, if you're going to form a separate body and have your own board of directors, you need to talk about the ownership issue, long-term lease, or over site of the building within that context as well. Joe Stevens thinks that if you are going to have a board of directors, City Council will probably want to step back in the ownership interest.

Ed Lipton feels historically they never have. When the Downtown Development Authority staff ran the Avalon, the City was a silent owner until a few years ago. Ed Lipton would like to suggest the City acquire the building to the west of the Avalon by eminent domain if in no other way. Over the short run that will solve some of the problems. It will provide room for another theater and the green room could be improved a little. Over the long run, if the long-term plan were to be adopted, that piece of property could be sold.

Harold Stalf believes it is our job to heighten the awareness to this community about the Avalon. He feels people take the Avalon for granted. Let's take pride in it. We need to publicly have a vision. People will ask, where's that vision. There needs to be constant awareness in the building, and the media that the Avalon Theatre is heart and soul of the cultural community. There is a plan for it and a method for rally and support. Then City Council would want more of a role in it.

Alan Friedman will try to meet with council members to let them know of the direction we are looking at. It was decided that each committee member take this to their boards and report back to us at the next meeting.

Joe Stevens wanted to express the one thing elected officials, regardless of where you live, do not want to be put in a corner. They like options. He would caution spending too much time and energy on creating a Board of Directors. Joe Stevens doesn't think it is something that would be decided upon in the next five years for the Avalon and doesn't know if it needs to be. Keep that in mind. If the Avalon Committee think it does, by all means, raise the issue. Joe Stevens does think from a City's perspective as two anchors downtown, Two Rivers Convention Center on one end and the Avalon Theatre at the other, because of the success of the Avalon, no one would be an advocate to close it down and board it up. The City Council has made a very generous commitment to support the Avalon Theatre.

Harold Stalf feels we should present this to the arts commission as well. Joe Stevens feels what would do more for the Avalon Advisory Committee more than anything else is to get representatives from the arts community to support the continuation of the Avalon

Theatre. Secondly, for long-term aspirations, the key is the Symphony. Not just with their ideas but with their knowledge and fund raising.

Marianne North wanted to know if it would help to put the health and safety issues under the short-term plan. Then have a big emphasis that these will satisfy current usage. If increased usage is to be developed we must expand the Avalon Theatre and here is our long-term plan.

Harold Stalf cautions, if we go to major benefactors in Denver we need to have the full package with our two stages to let them know we are serious. We have to be honest about the Cinema to the Avalon performing in a 1000 seat hall, it's not economically viable. It's not long-term good when it's shut down all the time. You have to have a 365 day operation or you cannot keep running a business like that in any kind of economically viable way. If we are not honest with City Council, and we don't say that, about six months from now Cinema's business is off the table and they are going to move out, we need to know Cinema's position on that. Success is hurting Cinema more and more. The more we rent the house for other things, it limits their capabilities.

Item 4: Determine date to present the Strategic Business Plan to City Council

It was determined modifications need to be done to the Strategic Business Plan before it can be presented to City Council.

Item 5: Determine Next Meeting Dates

It was decided the next Advisory Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, June 19 at 11:30am. The meeting will be held at Two Rivers Convention Center and lunch will be provided.

Item 6: Items for Next Meeting

Strategic Plan Update & Discussion

Item 7: Other Business

No other business at this time.

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 1:30p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dina Jones
Administrative Clerk

