

Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee

January 15, 2008

Item 1: Meeting called to order by Chair Ron Beach at 11:38 a.m.

Roll Call

Committee Members Present: André Van Schaften
 Harold Stalf
 Katherine Roy
 Ron Beach
 Edward Lipton
 Stephan Schweissing

Committee Members Absent: Alan Friedman

Guests: Kirk Gustafson, Grand Junction Symphony
 Roger Davidson, Grand Junction Music Arts Association
 Ron Wilson, Sandstone Entertainment

Parks & Recreation Staff Present: Joe Stevens, Director of Parks & Recreation
 Tim Seeberg, TRCC/Avalon Theatre Manager
 Juli Adams, Event Planner
 Tressa Fisher, Administrative Specialist

Chair Ron Beach asked that everyone introduce themselves. Mr. Beach reported Downtown Development Authority Director Harold Stalf will be resigning effective May 2008. Ron Beach commended Mr. Stalf for his expertise and knowledge, and thanked him for all of the contributions he has made to the Committee and the downtown area. Harold Stalf thanked the Committee for the opportunities he has been given and wished them well. Good Luck Harold Stalf – You will be missed!

Item 2: Approve Minutes

Ron Beach requested a correction be made to the July 26, 2007 minutes, stating the Avalon Theatre Advisory “Committee” was referred to as the Avalon Theatre Advisory “Board” throughout the minutes.

Stephan Schweissing moved to approve the July 26, 2007 Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee minutes with the above correction. It was seconded.

Motion approved by Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee: Yes 6 No 0

Item 3: New Officer Oath of Office – Stephanie Tuin

Stephanie Tuin stated City Council decided last summer they wanted all of the City’s volunteer board members to sign an Oath of Office, swearing to support the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of Colorado, and the City of Grand Junction ordinances. The oath included

the Committee members swearing to perform their duty and serve the citizens of Grand Junction. Mrs. Tuin distributed the forms and obtained signatures from all members present.

Item 4: Grand Junction City Council October 15, 2007 ATAC Strategic Business Plan – Presentation Review and Summary

André Van Schaften reported the ATAC Strategic Business Plan had been presented to City Council on October 15, 2007, at which time the City agreed to contribute 50% towards the cost of the acoustical analysis. Mr. Van Schaften stated the Committee indicated they would request a second workshop with City Council in March. André Van Schaften said the Committee is currently right on track with their original schedule. Mr. Van Schaften stated the fundraising analysis should be launched as early as May.

Item 5: Acoustical Analysis Document – Review and Discussion

Tim Seeberg distributed copies of the January 10, 2008 Acoustics Survey and Action Plan completed by Kirkegaard Associates. (See attached) Mr. Seeberg summarized the report, referring to Page 1, Paragraph 3. Tim Seeberg stated Kirkegaard Associates consists of highly qualified acousticians who spent two days reviewing the structure, sound, and dynamics at the Avalon Theatre. Mr. Seeberg stated Kirkegaard Associates focused heavily on how the room would work dynamically with the Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra by accommodating their needs, along with the needs of the other user groups. Tim Seeberg said the report findings indicate the room is not in good acoustical shape and has serious deficiencies with regards to sound. Mr. Seeberg stated a considerable amount of work would have to be done to the theater, and that no estimates have been provided at this point, as Kirkegaard Associates were strictly charged with analyzing what improvements would need to be made.

Ed Lipton asked if the report included an opinion as to whether or not refurbished seats would affect the acoustics. Tim Seeberg responded that Kirkegaard Associates had provided him with a verbal summary, in which they stated the choice of seats is critical with regards to acoustics. Ron Wilson agreed the seats can affect the sound and suggested there is a difference between foam filled backs and bottoms, versus the current hollow seats. Kirk Gustafson stated the seats at Grand Junction High School are designed with hard backs and bottoms, as they opted to give up comfort for better sound. Tim Seeberg also discussed the issue with the sight lines from the balcony, stating “what you do not see, you will not hear”.

Mr. Seeberg stated the HVAC system was also identified as a major problem with the acoustics. Harold Stalf agreed with the items listed as major issues, stating the Avalon Theatre was rebuilt in 1947 as a movie theater, consisting of the hollow movie theater seats, and perpendicular walls as opposed to the preferred curved walls, as well as the long overhang of the balcony that limits the value of the sound. Kirk Gustafson stated the ceiling also acts as an acoustical curtain, holding in the sound. Tim Seeberg agreed, stating in order to get the theater even close to where they would like it to be, it would consist of a very sizable expense. Harold Stalf stated the cost of a new performance hall is approximately \$50 million, while the value of the existing building is difficult to estimate. Mr. Stalf stated to recreate the theater within the current shell, it could cost \$10 million or more. Harold Stalf stated he recently met with Daniel Gartner from Chamberlin Architects PC, and Rich Keller with Shaw Construction Co., stating they had not had the opportunity to review the findings, yet stated they would be happy to evaluate and provide cost estimates at the February Avalon Theatre Advisory Committee meeting. Mr. Stalf stated the Committee should consider who the current users are, along with how to make the theater a better place for as many users as possible at a minimal cost. Ron Beach agreed,

stating the Committee needs to find the most cost effective option to meet the most users' needs. Harold Stalf expressed the importance of the final product being high quality, as, should the Committee put forth such large fundraising efforts for major improvements, they need to do it right the first time versus being second guessed by the contributors. Kirk Gustafson agreed, stating it is important to satisfy all of the parameters, not just one or two if hoping to get 1/10 of the acoustical results. Stephan Schweissing suggested the Committee use Kirkegaard Associates' report as an action plan to obtain cost estimates for review. The Committee agreed they would like to see ballpark numbers before further discussions. Kirk Gustafson stated the big question will be whether or not they will be able to raise such a significant amount of funds in this community.

Ed Lipton asked how other historical theaters deal with their outdated amenities. Harold Stalf responded he knows of a couple other theaters with similar acoustic issues, and stated the theaters are currently being used as movie and concert halls. Tim Seeberg stated he would be distributing an article regarding a theater in San Diego that is almost a carbon copy of the issues the Avalon Theatre is facing, in which they paid approximately \$27 million to renovate. (See attached) Ron Wilson expressed his concern with the Kirkegaard Associates' report, stating there is not a number of seats listed with options 1 – 3 and the drawings appear to show fewer rows.

Ed Lipton asked if there have been any complaints regarding the current acoustics in the theater. Stephan Schweissing responded the Cinema at the Avalon has received multiple complaints regarding the HVAC system disrupting the sound. Ron Wilson also reported he has had performers request for the HVAC system to be turned off during their performances in order to reduce the noise level. Ed Lipton asked, if the only complaints are regarding the HVAC system, why take on the expense of a huge renovation? Joe Stevens asked if Grand Junction High School chose to complete "all" of the improvements from their study. Kirk Gustafson stated, due to cost, the high school chose to only purchase the enclosure shell. Harold Stalf briefly discussed the difficulty in understanding the dialogue in the movies, stating the baffles need to be used.

Harold Stalf asked the Symphony what the minimum improvements would have to be for the orchestra to play at the Avalon Theatre. Kirk Gustafson responded, in addition to the acoustic problems, the square footage is also an issue for the symphony, as they can not currently fit on the stage. Kirk Gustafson stated, he could request direction from his board, if the footprint for the stage were to increase and the acoustical changes were made.

Harold Stalf discussed the possibility of the building being closed for a year or more during a major renovation and expressed concern for the impact it would have on the current users. Stephan Schweissing stated, while the Cinema at the Avalon would prefer not to close for a year, they would return once reopened. Mr. Schweissing stated it would be similar to the recent opening of the Regal Movie Theater, in which they originally lost many of their customers; however, they are now returning. Stephan Schweissing stated an advantage of being closed for a year would be that it would allow the Cinema at the Avalon to focus their energy on fundraising during that time. Ron Wilson stated the publicity of such a large renovation project should generate additional business once the facility is reopened. Mr. Wilson stated such an event would most likely create community excitement, resulting in more business.

Kirk Gustafson asked if the committee wants to pursue completing the "minimal" improvements, removing the Symphony from the picture, or do they want to go the full distance and make the theater a "gem" in the downtown area. Ed Lipton briefly discussed the growth in the community and the potential need for a larger theater with additional seats and handicapped seating. Tim Seeberg said the Committee originally agreed to establish a plan to appease the community for 25 years. Kirk

Gustafson said a theater with a capacity beyond 1,250 seats affects the acoustics differently, resulting in the need to make additional modifications to accommodate the sound. Kirk Gustafson said the Symphony is not as concerned about the number of seats as they are the acoustics issues, stating they can hold multiple performances if necessary. Ron Wilson stated there tends to be a community use for any size hall and said he prefers 900 – 1,000 seats for his events. Harold Stalf recommended moving forward with the feasibility study while reserving the right to discontinue later if necessary.

Ed Lipton discussed the current management of the facility and proposed the Cinema at the Avalon manage the theater. Mr. Lipton suggested the Cinema contract with the City to provide management services, and that the liquor license stay with the Cinema, making the license 300 days more valuable at a smaller cost than what the City is paying. Ed Lipton suggested the net revenue from the liquor sales and rental fees for the events not related to the Cinema be paid to the City, resulting in essentially the same arrangement as the existing one. Tim Seeberg responded there are discussions currently taking place regarding how to combine operations with the Cinema, including the possibility of maximizing the liquor license. Harold Stalf stated the issue was discussed last year, at which time the Cinema was not interested in managing the theater. Tim Seeberg stated additional options are currently being explored and he plans to report more information soon.

Ron Beach summarized the meeting, stating the user board representatives have agreed to meet with their boards and return with their preferences at the February meeting. Harold Stalf will continue working with Chamberlin Architects PC and Shaw Construction Co. to obtain cost estimates. Chairman Beach stated the Committee will also continue moving forward with the RFP for the feasibility study. Tim Seeberg confirmed the Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra is still committed to contribute up to \$5,000 towards the acoustical and fund-raising feasibility studies, and that the DDA will also contribute an equal share towards this. Mr. Seeberg said the City will finance both studies up front and will bill the contributors for their share of the expense.

Item 6: Other Business

No other items were discussed.

Item 7: Adjourn

Harold Stalf moved to adjourn. Ed Lipton seconded. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation.

Unanimously Approved: Yes 6 No 0

Respectfully submitted,

Tressa Fisher
Administrative Specialist