

Camden Opera House Committee
Minutes of Meeting, November 18, 2009
Tucker Room, Camden Opera House

Chairman Hal Owen was not in attendance, as he was attending a birthday party in his honor. Those in attendance sang 'Happy Birthday' to him over the phone. Mr. Owen apparently didn't recognize that the rendition was inspired by Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone theory of modern music, and suggested that we "find a key". Don White acted as Chairman in Owen's absence. Also in attendance were Stephanie Woodman, alternate Susan Dorr, and Opera House staff Kerry Hadley and Dave Morrison, who acted as secretary. Meeting was called to order at 5:33 pm.

The minutes of June 22, 2009 were approved as presented.

Agenda item #1 Committee Composition - Opera House manager Kerry Hadley reminded those present that the OH committee is allowed seven members; five members and two alternates. Inspired by a symposium she attended at the Juice Conference, Hadley suggested that the addition of a young person (high school / college age) would be a benefit to the committee, and help us to consider a broader range of programming that might appeal to a younger audience. White concurred and said that any person would be welcome to serve as an alternate, to add fresh ideas.

Agenda Item #2 Recap of first half of the year - Hadley announced that the Opera House has already met its yearly income projection in the first half of the year. She described a very busy fall season (Camden Int. Film Festival, Celtic Crossroads, Bob Marley, PopTech, Election, Maine Literary Festival, Juice Conference / Liz Lerman) made more challenging by the loss of custodian Arthur Crockett for two months, due to illness. Many of these events were particularly time-intensive for the Opera House staff.

Second Half Projection - Hadley described how Holiday Pops had moved from the Opera House (last year) to the Strom Auditorium this year, and how various people she has spoken to regretted that fact that the event was not in the downtown, in a Victorian opera house. Kerry thinks that Maine Pro Musica may move it back next year, although the moving of the orchestra instruments (which live at the Strom) is an issue. Hadley announced that there will be a film series at the COH in January called Global Cinema Visions. This will be a co-production between the COH and the International Film Festival of the Spirit, with the COH providing venue, staff and equipment, and the IFFS providing films and promotion. All in attendance agreed with Susan Dorr and Don White who stated that events in the winter that brought people to the downtown would be beneficial for all, and that it was a good idea to create the film series in January. Hadley said that she was eager to show that the Opera House could be a good venue for film. White agreed, and stated that he did not have high hopes for the restoration of the Camden Cinema, based in part on his involvement in the OH Cinema Committee. Kerry further mentioned that the Camden International Film Festival intends to make more use of the COH next year. As we discussed ways to promote, Dorr offered to set up a FaceBook page for the Opera House, an idea the Opera House staff had talked about but not had time to do.

Agenda Item #3 Facility Report - Tech. Director Morrison described the following improvements to the COH technical set-up; the purchase of a long-throw projector lens (in addition to the wide-angle lens we already own) gives us the capability to present all manner of film and video, front and rear-projected. The addition of a subwoofer to the house sound system gives us a full-range flexible system that will not only improve the sonic quality of everything we do (films in particular) but allow us to avoid renting additional gear for some in-house productions.

Morrison then gave an update on the theater lights. The Opera House has been interested in buying the lighting system from CCT for some time. Initially Hadley had hired Greg Carville, the lighting director at the Merrill Auditorium in Portland to prepare a study of our lights and make recommendations. At the time (2005) Carville valued the CCT lights, dimmer and controllers at approximately \$12,000 (note; CCT Lighting Master Paul Weintraub believes that the CCT lights are worth twice that; at this point their market value may be less than the \$12,000 estimate), and suggested that a new system could be bought and installed for approximately \$30,000 (this figure will have increased by now). Lately, a friend of Kerry's named John Searle, who is a professional sound/light tech has found a clearing house for touring bands where one can buy fairly new lighting equipment very cheap – so much so that we could potentially replace the CCT lights with better newer equipment for approximately \$15,000. White asked if the plan (once we got up-to-date figures) was to buy the used gear through JS and have CCT remove their gear. Hadley responded that what would be best was for COH and CCT to work together in some way. There was concern voiced that we wanted to continue our good relationship with CCT, and that perhaps a middle ground would be to replace those things that are seriously outdated (including dimmers and board) and buy the best of CCT's lights from them. Susan asked if we could give CCT some sort of preferential deal on lighting use (assuming that the purchase of the lights would require us to raise our rates in some way), and Don went so far as to suggest waiving any lighting fees for CCT for a predetermined period. Don White offered to be on the ad hoc committee (made up of CCT and COH staff) that would decide how to move forward.

Agenda Item #4 2011 Budget Discussion - One of the main issues continues to be staffing – Kerry said that this fall has been a reminder that we are understaffed at 1.5 people, and our current pace is unsustainable. Kerry contends that if she were paid full-time hours plus benefits it would have little impact on the budget, as she is paid overtime now. Don said that he thinks it is up to Kerry and Dave to come up with a new staffing plan to present to the town manager, and that the Committee would support us. He suggested that our other big challenge was to buy the theater lights. Kerry said that Reserve funds are available, and are distinct from the operating budget process, and that there was an advantage to making large purchases from Reserves outside of the budget approval process.

Kerry stated that another goal was to move forward with grant-writing, and discussed with Susan Dorr the possibilities of Stimulus and other funds that might be accessed through Senator Collins office.

Old / New Business –

Don asked for an updated contact sheet of committee members

Kerry gave an update on the Flatlanders show

Don suggested that committee meeting minutes be posted on the town's website

Don suggested a new meeting schedule, and explained that he felt that the committee should meet regularly every two months, and on the off-months a report from the Opera House to committee members would be appreciated. The following dates were agreed upon, with meetings to be held in the Tucker Room starting at 5 pm: (Note the new time, 5:00 pm)

Mon. Jan.25, 2010

Mon. March 15, 2010

Mon. May 17, 2010

Mon. June 21, 2010

Mon. September 20, 2010

Mon. November 15, 2010

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Dave Morrison, Acting Secretary