

Town of Camden Opera House Committee
Monthly Meeting
May 14, 2012
Tucker Room
5PM

Present: Kate Bates; Susan Dorr, Chair; Kerry Hadley, Manager; Aimee Phelan-Deconinck; Don White, Select Board Liaison; Bob Williams

Absent: Raymond Brunyanski, Hal Owen, Maryanne Shanahan

Meeting called to order by Susan Dorr at 5:06 PM.

Minutes from the Regular Meeting held on April 29th were approved.

June 19th Select Board Meeting

1. The revised Vision/Mission Statement will go before the Select Board.
2. PR plan for fundraising for the 3rd Floor renovation (if have one in time)
3. Housekeeping: Hal Owen to be voted for committee Emeritus status

Review of Downtown Master Plan

1. Brian Hodges attended the meeting to discuss the Downtown Master Plan which is slated to be up for public comment at the Select Board meeting on Tuesday, May 15th. He discussed the history of the plan from its inception in September with the input from a consulting firm, and the working group consisting of CDAC, Downtown Business Group and the Chamber of Commerce. He emphasized the amount of community involvement that went into the plan, which was noted by his colleague who reviewed the Plan and said it was one of the best she has ever read.
2. Brian noted that the Opera House (OH) has its own chapter in the Plan and plays a major role as an historic site and economic generator.
3. Kerry Hadley questioned the need to support/pass the entire plan, as it seemed not to be a plan but a compilation of ideas, some of which would be supported by entities; others not. Brian noted that the Plan is not an edict but rather a “compilation of concepts to address the needs and issues of the town.” He stressed that the Plan would provide ways to address different opportunities that could benefit the town.
4. The conversation that followed centered on what acceptance of the Plan would actually mean. Both Brian Hodges and Don White clarified its purpose as a “guiding document” and “framework” and that all of the individual plans expressed within it would have to go through the regular process of hearings and determinations in order to be put into effect.
5. Kerry Hadley expressed admiration for the amount of work put into the Plan but noted that there were mistakes in the information referring to the OH that made her uncomfortable. She raised the question as to whether the Plan was being moved through the process of acceptance too quickly.

6. Brian Hodges replied that it is a living and breathing document and further expressed the Plan's importance in terms of the granting process.
7. Susan Dorr asked if Opera House 3rd floor would meet the "blight criteria," that is necessary in order to receive one of the grants suggested. Brian Hodges felt that it does," but the hurdle would be whether the community at large would accept that designation when competing with other communities for those particular grants."
8. Bob Williams expressed his concern over the volume of the document, and asked about the relevance of specific projects/letters mentioned in the Plan. Brian Hodges replied that they are only there to show examples of community involvement. The conversation continued with Bob expressing concern for the person/s who may not agree with all of the plans mentioned in the Plan and Brian iterating that the Plan is a broad representation. Kate Bates suggested that the "alternative is gridlock. Kerry asked Brian if there was priority for any one part of the Plan to be put into effect, also stating that the word "Plan" was perhaps misleading as the document was more a compilation of "ideas."
9. The conversation concluded with Don White expressing the need to approve the Plan in order to facilitate granting opportunities for the community, and Brian Hodges pointing out that on page 5 of the Plan it is written that the Plan belongs to Camden. Kate Bates and Susan Dorr were going to attend the Select Board Meeting. A motion was made for Kate to speak on behalf of the Committee at that meeting.

501c3 Discussion

1. Kerry Hadley opened the conversation on this topic stating that the next step for the 3rd floor renovation was to ensure that donations from citizens are tax deductible, which they are. She also researched benefits/cost of applying for 501c3 status in order to have more grants available to apply to – only a limited amount of grants are available to municipalities. Kerry and Susan had met and discussed pros and cons and felt that currently it was not a priority in the larger picture as it would add a "layer of bureaucracy and administration to an already full plate" to the staff of the OH. Don White disagreed given the importance of grants, especially those for 501c3's that the OH would miss out on. Kerry felt that we haven't even applied for grants that we ARE eligible for and needed to prioritize projects or none would occur and Susan Dorr agreed saying that, first, a PR plan needed to be put in place in order to get the word out about the plans for the renovation.
2. Kate Bates added that approval for 501c3 status isn't guaranteed and that the OH didn't have structures in place to support it if approval was granted.
3. Don White expressed that it would be beneficial to go through the process and try. Kerry Hadley concluded that it would require additional administrative support.

Box Office Study Update

To be discussed at the next meeting. Kerry Hadley said that Sarah Morehead from UMO school of economics/Knowledge Transfer Alliance who is conducting an analysis of our ticket sales and reviewing alternative software and structures has been interviewing/researching various firms and focused on a few that she will demonstrate to Kerry and Dave next week. She also came

during an Opera House produced performance to observe our current system in action. In the meantime, Dave had our internet guru in and our existing equipment has been updated to the new server, and is operating more quickly so it is more usable in the short term till we decide on a new service.

New Business

1. The OH office has brought in a new intern who is working out very well.
2. Josh Hixson, Owner/Chef of **40 Paper** will be hosting a satellite party at the OH. An article about the event will be in The Scene this week.
3. Concluded with Kerry Hadley confirming that “business is blooming.”

Susan Dorr adjourned the meeting at 6:29PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Aimee Phelan-Deconinck