



COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES, VETERANS, CULTURE, AND RECREATION

Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Chair

Councilor Alisa F. Klein

Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra

MINUTES

Monday July 20, 2015

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street

Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building, Northampton, MA

1. Members present/absent: Councilors Marianne LaBarge, Alisa Klein and Gina-Louise Sciarra were present.
2. Meeting Called to Order: At 4:00 pm Councilor LaBarge called the meeting to order.
3. Announcement of Audio/Video Recording of Meeting: Councilor LaBarge announced that the meeting would be videotaped.
4. Approval of Minutes of June 15, 2015 & May 18, 2015: Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the minutes of June 15, 2015 and May 15, 2015 as a group; Councilor Klein seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No.
5. Public Comment: None
6. *4:05 p.m. Presentation given by the following:* Debra J'Anthony, Executive Director, Academy of Music; Tom Douglas, Thomas Douglas Architects; Terry Masterson, City of Northampton Economic Development Director and Academy of Music Board of Directors Member

Mr. Douglas gave a brief history about some of the design elements of the Academy of Music. The AOM was first built in 1891. In 2008 the building's marquee was taken down; Thomas Douglas Architects was commissioned to design and erect a new marquee. The new design was approved by the Massachusetts Historical Society.

After the marquee project, Thomas Douglas Architects began focusing on the interior of the building. The goal was to renovate the interior incorporating as many of the original design features as possible. The team had also hoped to follow the original color scheme, if possible. Much of the plaster ornaments and painted plaster walls needed repair. In many areas the wallpaper was falling off. Two cantilevers were deemed to be unsafe.

Once the design features had been approved, a team of plaster repair experts and painters set to work. All of the chairs were removed and the necessary scaffolding was built. The cantilevers structures were reinforced. The decorative plaster details were repaired, the plaster walls were repaired, and then the painters set to work on first the overall painting of the walls and ceiling and then the decorative stencil designs. Mr. Douglas estimates that the renovations should last a minimum of forty years. New seating was installed according to a new seating plan that incorporated wheelchair landings in four locations throughout the first floor. Externally, the fire escapes were repaired. Future plans for the AOM include replacing lighting fixtures.

Mr. Masterson gave an overview of the economic impact of the Academy of Music. He noted that the AOM is the first theater to be municipally owned. Today the Academy is an all year venue for live theater, dance, film, music and education. Many patrons who visit the theater also visit downtown Northampton shops, restaurants, etc. In 2014 50,000 patrons viewed 116 shows and performances at the AOM. This resulted in \$2.7 million in total annual sales and purchases, including \$665,000 in ticket revenues, \$850,000 in downtown meals and beverage purchases, \$750,000 in hotel revenues, and \$179,000 in city and state tax revenues associated with meals, sales and hotel stays.

Ms. J'Anthony has been with the Academy of Music for eight years. She noted that with all of the projects at the AOM, there is a tremendous amount of devotion, heart and commitment demonstrated by staff, crew members and artists. She recognizes and appreciates that the Academy is fully embraced by the community. She believes that 18% of ticket sales come from patrons outside of Northampton. Use of the building requires extensive coordination and planning; the AOM is home to many "resident companies" and partners, such as: Pioneer Valley Ballet, Pioneer Valley Symphony Orchestra, Signature Sounds, Eggtooth, formerly Old Deerfield Productions, Valley Light Opera, Starlight Youth Productions and WGBY57. The venue also offers season series programs, such as: John Hodgman, The Nimble Arts, The Moth Mainstage, Radio Star, African Children's Choir, Selected Shorts and Women of Will. Some of the Academy productions include: Nobody's Girl, The Music Man, Jr., Valley Voices StorySlams and The Best of Valley Voices, Into the Woods, Jr., Uncle Vanya and Eurydice.

In addition to many adult offerings, the Academy also offers many children's programs, such as: Summer Musical Theater Workshops, Academy Youth Productions, Starlight Youth Productions, Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter School and Gen IV.

The AOM is home to many traditional events in Northampton; among them are: Northampton International Film Festival, First Night, Four Sundays in February, Django in June and Gen IV.

Rental of the venue is possible. The Academy of Music matches the cost of the rental and will fundraise throughout the year. The Hall is offered at no charge for certain events, such as First Night, public school concerts, Kids Best Fest and Cinema Noho. Scholarships are available for youth programs.

7. 5:00 p.m. A presentation about Grace House of Northampton was given by: Jane Banks, Director of Homeless Services Center for Human Development and Jennifer Lewis Program Director, Grace House

Grace House is a residential treatment program for mothers in early addiction recovery. The program has the capacity to house up to fourteen families; thirty-seven women and children total. Grace House programming offers a structured daily schedule. This includes group meetings and clinical sessions. Women have the opportunity to participate in AA/NA, to attend individual and family therapy, or to attend relapse prevention support groups.

Ms Lewis will be working on fundraising for the programming. Fundraising will include appeal letters, in kind donations, yard sale, etc. She will also be participating in Housing Partnership meetings (chaired by Peg Keller).

Referrals come from DPH IHR (Institute for Health and Recovery), however, she notes that women can come in voluntarily. In answer to a question about how relapses are handled, Ms. Lewis stated that the agency focuses on preventative measures; no cell phones allowed; random drug tests, searches, etc. The program is a harm reduction program and will tailor its procedures and offerings on a case by case basis. Referral into the program can come from any geographic location. The program reserves the right to refuse visitors when there is a safety concern for the women and their children.

Ms Lewis has worked in the mental health field for the past 12 years. She has always worked with families. She has recently relocated to Massachusetts and has only been with the agency for about a month. Grace House is a licensed program.

8. City Councilor Marianne LaBarge spoke about upcoming agendas for September and October.
- Jeff Harness from Cooley Dickinson Hospital will be talking about "Getting to Healthy", a presentation covering transportation and how to improve access to medical services.
 - Betsy Shally-Jensen, AIDS Care Director at Cooley Dickinson Hospital will be on hand in September. Also, Jeff Harness from the Cooley Dickinson, will be doing a presentation about "Getting to Healthy, Improving Access to Care—a study for the Cooley Dickinson Health Care Health Communities Committee".
 - Phil Korman from CISA will be in for the October meeting. Councilor Sciarra will coordinate a presentation from Town Farms.
9. NEW BUSINESS – *Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed—None.*
10. ADJOURN—At 5:49 pm. Councilor Klein moved to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Sciarra seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No.

THERE IS NO MEETING FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST 2015
The next meeting is scheduled for September 21, 2015 at 4:00 pm.

Submitted By:
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