



Town of Thomaston
Selectman's Office
Town Hall
158 Main Street
P.O. Box 136
Thomaston, Connecticut 06787
Phone: 860-283-4421 Fax: 860-283-1378

DRAFT

**THOMASTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, JUNE 7, 2010**

Roll Call:

Meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

First Selectman Mone, Selectman Scheppard and Selectman Barrett, Sr. were present. Deborah Bournival, Administrative Assistant, was in available to take the minutes.

Opera House Commission/Presentation of Long Term Operational Model:

In attendance from the Strategic Planning Committee, Regional Board and the Opera House Commission were Becky Skinner, Lucille Killiany, Matt Kamens, Julianne Torrence, Marie Galbraith, Roy Bouffard, Mark Goodwin, Agnes Dunn and Joan Gangloff.

Becky Skinner explained that it was the recommendation of the Strategic Planning Committee to continue current operations only through the end of the year. As of the first of the year, the new operational model will be in place. This new model was endorsed by the Opera House Commission at a special meeting on May 27, 2010. Becky explained the model as follows:

1. Contract with an outside organization to operate the theatre in a manner consistent with the Town Ordinance of May 31, 1967 (amended 1971, 1976, 1989) creating the Opera House Commission and with the Bylaws of the Opera House Commission. These documents state the purpose of the Commission as:

- *Providing for entertainment, concerts, celebrations, and festivals in, or in connection with, said Opera House and for the use and enjoyment thereof by the inhabitants;*

*Special Board of Selectmen Meeting
Monday, June 7, 2010
Page Two*

- *Maintaining, conducting, and operating said Opera House as a recreation place and place of public assemblage for the inhabitants;*
- *Managing, maintaining, improving, operating and conducting the Opera House in the Town Hall Building*

These documents further state that the Commission has the power and duty to:

- *Negotiate, enter into and execute such written leases or agreements for the use of said Opera House by others as it shall deem to be in the best interests of the inhabitants of the Town.*

The Strategic Planning Committee proposes no change to the ordinance creating the Commission and proposes that the Commission will remain the governing body.

2. Encourage and support the Regional Board in establishing an non-municipal organization with 501(C)3 status (for example, “Friends of the Opera House”) for the purpose of supporting the Commission in raising funds and securing grants to maintain, improve, and renovate the Opera House.

Recommendations concerning the type of agreement with an outside organization:

- **Commission retains the authority** to oversee all activities in the Opera House.
- Contracted organization (CO) would pay **monthly rent**; Town would pay for utilities. Amount of rent is yet to be determined but it would be more than required to pay for utilities. Rental income would go toward the deficit, building maintenance and renovation.
- Contract would state the **purpose** of the CO, for example, “*CO operates for the primary purpose of promoting theatre arts, producing theatrical plays, improvisation and related performance arts, conducting workshops and classes in theatre and related performance arts.*”
- Initial contract would for **no more than 5 years**; if arrangement works well, renewals could be for longer terms.

In reference to the second bulleted item on this page, First Selectman Mone said that while the ordinance does state that we can “lease”, the restrictive covenants prevent it. Rental income would go toward the deficit, building maintenance and renovation as well as to offset facility operational costs. First Selectman has asked the commission to follow up on the language contained in this model with the town attorney. Selectman Scheppard said the word “rent” should be “fee”. Julianne Torrence said they chose “rent” and not “fee” so it didn’t look like it was tied to sales revenue.

*Special Board of Selectmen Meeting
Monday, June 7, 2010
Page Three*

In reference to third bulleted item, Selectman Mone said the contracted organization should be encouraged to allow town /community events (i.e. dance studios, graduations, school plays, etc.). It was suggested to add this to the RFP when formulating it.

Selectman Scheppard said he would like to be involved in the RFP process. First Selectman Mone encouraged the commission to utilize the services of the Finance Director as well.

In reference to the last item, Julianne Torrence said there should be an escape clause built in. First Selectman Mone said the contract should probably be less than five years.

Selectman Mone said Atty. Rybak was contacted early on in the year to have preliminary discussions. He said any/or all questions can be presented to Atty. Rybak through Selectman Scheppard and/or Chairman of the Opera House, Lucille Killiany.

- **Programming/community relations:**
 - Programming Considerations to be included in the Contract with the CO are to be determined, and may include but are not limited to:
 - A minimum number of performances/year to encourage and promote the economic development of Thomaston as well as to preserve the history and culture of the Thomaston Opera House
 - The CT Organ Society shall maintain their current access to the Thomaston Opera House including, but not limited to, 2 performances, access to maintain the organ, “free-play” time the first Sunday of the month to use the organ, and resources to promote their productions as per the contract currently in place with the TOH
 - The CO will meet at least quarterly, and as needed, to present a performance schedule to the TOH Commission for review and discussion.
- **Facility:**
 - Contract would state the specific areas the CO has permission to use, for example, theatre and stage areas; old box office area; new box office and Arts Center; sewing, costume, makeup, work rooms; bathrooms within these defined areas.
 - Contract would address access by CO and patrons to public rest rooms and other areas of the Town Hall complex (for example, meeting rooms).
 - Town responsible for ice and snow removal.
 - Commission/Town responsible for structural repairs (i.e. leaky faucets, electrical, etc.).
 - CO responsible for cleaning and general upkeep and day-to-day maintenance (i.e. light bulbs, bathrooms, fixtures/equipment, etc.).
 - Due to the TOH Historical status, any alteration or improvements, including signs, must have prior permission of the Commission/Town.

*Special Board of Selectmen Meeting
Monday, June 7, 2010
Page Four*

- CO is responsible for coordinating and complying with fire, building, health, and safety/security codes and regulations as set forth by National, State and Town laws and ordinances.
- Facility must be accessible for inspection by the Commission/Town at all times.
- **Liability insurance and indemnification** will be spelled by contract with specific details about type and liability limits (for both parties).

Proposed Timing for Transition

- Regional Board endeavors to establish “**Friends of the Opera House**” by **8/31/2010**.
- **Request for Proposal (RFP)** drafted and issued by **7/31/2010**.
- Receive **responses** to RFP by **8/31/2010**.
- Research and evaluate responses to RFP and **select an organization** by **10/15/2010**
- **Finalize contract** by **11/30/2010**
- Discontinue current operations and **transition to new operational model** by **1/1/2011**.

Public Comment:

Gary Kingsberry of 175 Hickory Hill Road voiced his concern - he has noticed the absence of the wording “community theatre” throughout this model. He wants everyone to remember that community theatre is made up of many volunteers who are the heart of the Opera House.

Paul Yoos wanted to emphasize to the boards that all overhead costs should be taken into account when leasing or renting to a contracted organization.

Christine Yoos said the parking situation during shows and rehearsals should also be taken into consideration as well.

George Paris, a resident of town who has been a volunteer and actor of the Opera House for many years, said if it weren’t for community theatre, he wouldn’t have moved here 16 years ago.

Selectman Scheppard wanted to thank the Opera House Commission and the Strategic Planning Committee for coming through with this model – lots of hard work went into it.

A motion was made by Selectman Scheppard to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 p.m. Motion was seconded by Selectman Barrett, Sr. With all in favor, motion carries.