Sterling Opera House Consultant Selection Committee

Special Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 3, 2025

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call and Quorum

Members present included Mr. Gino DiGiovanni, Mr. Brian Coppolo, Ms. Dana Florenza, Mr. Matt Welander, Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Amy Pettinicchi, Mr. Hyder, and Mr. Joe Minglello. The record reflected that all eight members were present, and a quorum was established.

4. Public Portion

The Chair opened the public portion and asked whether anyone from the public wished to speak. After checking both the room and remote participation, no public comments were offered.

Upon motion by Mr. Coppolo, Second by Ms. Florenza, the Committee voted unanimously to close the public portion. Motion carried.

5. Consultant Interviews

The Committee proceeded to conduct consultant interviews for the Sterling Opera House project. The Chair noted that the first scheduled presentation was Bonham and Douglas.

Motion: To enter executive session for consultant interviews

Motion by: Dana Florenza and Second by: Matt Welander. Vote: Unanimous

Time Entered Executive Session: 6:05 p.m.

Discussion Regarding Executive Session Procedure

The Committee discussed whether consultant presentations should be held in executive session or open session, including whether certain non-committee members who had been involved with the Sterling Opera House project could remain for executive session. Concerns were raised regarding notice, transparency, and compliance with public meeting requirements for a special meeting.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that consultant presentations would be held in open session, followed by executive session for questions and answers with each firm as appropriate.

At approximately 6:17 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Florenza, Second by Mr. Welander, the Committee voted unanimously to return to regular session. Motion carried.

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5-1 Bonham and Douglas / Theater Projects Presentation

Tom Douglas of Bonham and Douglas summarized the firm's historic preservation and theater renovation experience, including landmark projects, master planning, phased renovations, fundraising support, grant materials, and compliance with National Park Service standards.

Mike Lindauer of Theater Projects reviewed theater planning needs, including guest and performer areas, seating, sight lines, lighting, audio/visual systems, rigging, stage functionality, and technical infrastructure.

The presenters discussed priorities, intended building users, review of the 2011 drawings, phasing, stage and backstage limitations, budgeting, downtown economic impact, and alignment with fundraising capacity.

In response to public questions, the presenters addressed fundraising, capital campaigns, grant opportunities, tax credits, in-kind contributions, and clarified that the proposed scope would focus on assessment, planning, and recommendations rather than full bid documents.

At 6:39 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Florenza, Second by Mr. Sullivan, the Committee voted unanimously to enter executive session with the presenters for further discussion. Motion carried.

At 7:09 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Pettinicchi, Second by Mr. Hyder, the Committee voted unanimously to return to regular session. Motion carried.

5-2 GWW Architects / Theater Projects Presentation

Chris Alcock and Lindsey McCook of GWW Architects, with Mike Lindauer of Theater Projects, presented the team's qualifications, including experience with performing arts projects, historic sites, building assessments, public engagement, and phased planning.

The presenters outlined a process involving research, site investigation, stakeholder input, draft review, refinement, and a final report, and noted that renderings could support fundraising once a preferred direction is identified.

The team discussed historic preservation, code and accessibility considerations, architectural needs, building systems, visitor amenities, and performer support spaces.

Mr. Lindauer reviewed theater-specific issues, including seating, sight lines, stage access, performer circulation, technical staff needs, lighting, rigging, audio/visual systems, and comparable theater projects.

During questions, the Committee discussed parking, downtown revitalization, stage and technical needs, cost impacts, fundraising, endowment considerations, and long-term operational sustainability.

At 7:46 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Florenza, Second by Mr. Coppolo, the Committee voted unanimously to enter executive session with the presenters. Motion carried.

At 7:55 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Florenza, Second by Ms. Pettinicchi, the Committee voted unanimously to return to regular session. Motion carried.

5-3 Silver Petrucelli & Associates / Theater Projects Presentation

David Stein, Dean Petrucelli, Amanda Cleveland, and Mike Lindauer presented for Silver Petrucelli & Associates and Theater Projects, summarizing the team's municipal, historic preservation, architectural, engineering, interior design, and condition assessment experience.

The presenters cited relevant theater, public building, historic preservation, and accessibility projects, emphasizing in-house engineering, estimating, grant support, and integrated project delivery.

Ms. Cleveland addressed interior planning and potential building uses, while Mr. Lindauer reviewed programming, needs assessment, technical systems, and theater planning.

The team outlined a work approach including programming, research, field investigation, conditions documentation, code and systems analysis, cost estimating, recommendations, prioritization, grant support, and coordination with governing bodies.

During questions, the presenters discussed delayed funding, theater loading and stage access, potential freight elevator needs, and the historic value of first-floor spaces.

At 8:27 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Florenza, Second by Mr. Coppolo, the Committee voted unanimously to enter executive session with the presenters. Motion carried.

At 8:43 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Florenza, Second by Mr. Welander, the Committee voted unanimously to return to regular session. Motion carried.

5-4 Steinberg Hart / Stages Consultants / Webb Management Services Presentation

Evan Delli Paoli of Steinberg Hart, Damian Doria of Stages Consultants, and Carrie Blake of Webb Management Services presented the team's qualifications, proposed approach, and continuity with prior Sterling Opera House planning work.

The team described expertise in performing arts design, theater planning, market and feasibility studies, business planning, operations, engineering, building systems, cost estimating, and comparable historic theater projects.

The presenters noted that the building retained strong historic features and emphasized a study focused on realistic uses, public reactivation, and alignment between physical improvements, operations, market demand, and funding capacity.

Committee goals discussed included a multi-purpose, affordable community venue supporting local and regional performances, schools and community groups, downtown economic development, first-floor gathering space, revenue opportunities, sustainable operations, and partnerships.

The presenters reviewed seating flexibility, balcony use, stage and rigging needs, acoustics, technical infrastructure, market demand, operational models, partnerships, and a realistic fundraising and phasing path.

The team outlined a twelve-week study including building assessment, market and needs analysis, options development, cost estimating, and a final report with potential paths forward.

At 9:31 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Florenza, Second by another member, the Committee voted unanimously to enter executive session with the presenters. Motion carried.
At 9:48 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Florenza, Second by Mr. Welander, the Committee voted unanimously to return to regular session. Motion carried.

6. Recommendation of Consultant

Following completion of the consultant interviews and executive session discussions, the Committee considered whether to recommend a consultant to the Sterling Opera House Commission and the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen.
Upon motion by Ms. Florenza, Second by Mr. Coppolo, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend Steinberg Hart to the Sterling Opera House Commission for its decision and recommendation to the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen. Motion carried.

7. Adjournment

Upon motion by Mr. Sullivan, Second by Mr. Welander,
the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at approximately 9:49 p.m.
Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Desroches