January 13, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: 6:03pm, meeting called to order by Brian Coppolo

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: Dana Florenza, Brian Coppolo, Gino DiGiovanni, Carleigh Paecht, Karleen Guluzzy

Additions, Deletions, Corrections, and Adoption of Agenda: DiGiovanni motions to adopt the agenda as presented, Guluzzy seconds.

Approval of November Minutes: DiGiovanni motions to approve, Florenza seconds.

Public Portion: None

Old Business - Update on Architect Walkthrough: DiGiovanni discusses the RFP that was approved by the BOA, and the walkthrough that architect firms had of the Opera House recently. There were around 22 people in the building, with architects submitting questions before bids are due back on January 15. DiGiovanni did some research on the previous study which included information on the work done by Save Our Sterling. Overall, about $1.8 million was invested into the building between 2010 and 2013. We discuss the estimated cost for the rest of the work at the time, to which Dave Condon voices concern about a higher possible cost regarding equipment such as a fly system for a working theater. DiGiovanni states that the previous study is just a framework for a new one.

New Business - Upcoming Event at Twisted Vine: Guluzzy reports that we will be holding an event at the Twisted Vine on Saturday, February 1st from 2:00pm to 5:00pm. We will have some presentations to show the public, and there will be some appetizers, water, and soda provided for free. Dinners and other drinks will be sold.

Adoption of 2025 Regular Meeting Schedule: Florenza motions to adopt the regular meeting schedule, Guluzzy seconds.

Adjournment: 6:51pm Florenza motions to adjourn, Guluzzy seconds.

Received
FEB 22 2025
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Sterling Opera House Committee

Consultant Selection Committee (CSC) Meeting Minutes

Date: January 27, 2025
Location: City Hall and via Zoom
Meeting Type: Regular Meeting

---

1. **Call to Order**
   The meeting was called to order. Once audio and connectivity issues were resolved, all participants confirmed they could hear and be heard.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
3. **Roll Call**
   Committee members and staff were present both in person and remotely.
   A quorum was achieved.

4. **Public Portion**
   The Chair opened the public portion of the meeting and invited public comments.
   No members of the public wished to speak. Motion: To close the public portion of the meeting
   - **Motion by:** Linda
   - **Second by:** Dana
   - **Vote:** Unanimous in favor
   - **Result:** Motion carried

5. **Executive Session – Review of Consultant Submissions**
   Motion: To enter executive session for the purpose of reviewing consultant submissions related to the Sterling Opera House RFP
   - **Motion by:** Brian
   - **Second by:** Dana
   - **Vote:** Unanimous in favor
   - **Time Entered Executive Session:** Approximately 6:41 p.m.

   The recording was paused, and any individuals attempting to enter the meeting during this time were held in the virtual waiting room.

6. **Motion to close Executive Session at 7:05 pm:**
   - **Motion by:** Linda
   - **Second by:** Brian
   - **Vote:** Unanimous in favor
   - **Result:** Motion carried

7. **Selection of Short List – RFP for Sterling Opera House**
   Following discussion, the committee identified a short list of firms to advance in response to the RFP.

Received
JUL 17 2025
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Short-listed Firms:

1. Steinberg Hart
2. Silver & Petrelli
3. GWWO
4. Bonham & Douglas

Motion: To approve the short list of firms

- **Motion by:** Dana
- **Second by:** Linda
- **Vote:** Unanimous in favor
- **Result:** Motion carried

The firms will be notified by the Clerk.

8. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

- **Motion by:** Amy
- **Second by:** Rob
- **Vote:** Unanimous in favor

The meeting was adjourned at **7:07 p.m.**

9. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for:
February 3, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Desroches

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.

Received
JUL 17 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

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

Sterling Opera House Commission

Special Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2025

1. Call to Order

The meeting of the Sterling Opera House Commission was called to order at **6:05 p.m.**.

3. Roll Call

Members present:

Carleigh Paecht, Brian Coppolo, Gino DiGiovanni, Dana Florenza, Karleen Guluzzy

The record shows that **all five members were present**, constituting a quorum.

4. Public Portion - No one from the public was present.

Motion: To close the public portion.

- Motion by: Dana Florenza
- Second by: Karleen Guluzzy
- Vote: Unanimous approval

Result: Public portion closed.

5. RFP Submission Shortlist Discussion and Possible Action

The Chair presented the motion recommending **Steinberg Hart** as the selected firm for the RFP, to be forwarded to the Board of Aldermen for approval.

Motion: To recommend Steinberg Hart to the Board of Aldermen for approval and award of the RFP.

- Motion by: Dana Florenza
- Second by: Brian Coppolo
- Discussion: None
- Vote: Unanimous approval

Result: Motion carried.

6. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting.

- Motion by: Dana Florenza
- Second by: Karleen Guluzzy
- Vote: Unanimous approval

The meeting was adjourned at **6:07 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Desroches

Received
JUL 17 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Sterling Opera House Commission

Regular Meeting

Minutes

Date: April 7, 2025

Received
JUL 19 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

---

1. **Call to Order -** The meeting was called to order at 6:13 PM.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**.

   Commissioners and attendees stood for the

3. **Roll Call**

   Roll call was conducted with the following members present:
   Dana Florenza, Brian Coppolo, Gino DiGiovanni, Karleen Guluzzy.
   A total of four members were present, constituting a quorum.

   - Carleigh Paecht - Absent

4. **Public Portion**

   The public portion was opened, no member of the public wished to speak.
   Public portion closed.

5. **<u>Committee Update</u>**

   - The Sterling Opera House Committee, in coordination with the Board of Aldermen, selected **Steinberg Hart** as the firm responding to the RFP.
   - The Board of Aldermen approved the selection and authorized **Mayor DeMartino** to sign the contract on behalf of the City.
   - Steinberg Hart and the City's attorney worked collaboratively to develop the contract.
   - As of the meeting date, the contract was not yet finalized, though progress was reported and completion was anticipated soon.

   5-a. Nonprofit Corporation & 501(c)(3) Status

   - Paperwork for establishing a nonprofit corporation is underway.
   - Signatures are being obtained from the initial board members, including the President of the Corporation.
   - Once completed, documents will be returned to Attorney Dillon, who is providing legal services pro bono, for filing with the State of Connecticut.
   - The corporation is expected to be formally established within approximately two to three weeks, at which point additional board members with fundraising capacity or specialized expertise will be recruited.
   - Following incorporation, required governance documents will be prepared, including articles addressing the disposition of funds in the event the project cannot be completed, ensuring funds are transferred to another 501(c)(3).

- The 501(c)(3) application (approximately 42 pages) will then be submitted. Processing time is estimated between 90–120 days, with acknowledgment that federal staffing reductions may impact timelines.

5-b. Funding Challenges & Outlook

- Concerns were discussed regarding potential reductions in federal, state, and institutional arts funding, including the National Endowment for the Arts.
- Several foundations previously open to applications have paused or suspended grantmaking due to reduced investment returns.
- Individual philanthropy is also expected to decline.
- Construction cost increases and anticipated tariffs on steel were acknowledged as added challenges.
- Despite obstacles, commissioners expressed cautious optimism and noted the project timeline allows flexibility before construction begins.

5-c. Community Outreach & Public Engagement

Upcoming and potential outreach opportunities discussed included:

- St. Mary's Festival (typically the week following July 4)
- Memorial Day Parade, including potential display materials in front of the Sterling Opera House
- Participation in City of Derby 350th Anniversary events
- Additional citywide or regional events in Shelton, Seymour, and surrounding communities
- Consideration of a citywide public meeting at Derby High School to provide updates and recruit volunteers and board members

5-d. Historical & Promotional Materials

- A rare 1889 glass negative photograph of the Sterling Opera House was discussed.
- The image has been professionally inverted to allow print reproduction and may be used in future promotional materials and fundraising efforts.

5-e. Long-Term Vision & Strategic Planning

- Discussion highlighted opportunities for:
- Revitalization of surrounding downtown businesses
- Potential museum

6. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:38 pm

- **Motion by:** Dana Florenza
- **Second by:** Carleigh Paecht
- **Vote:** Unanimous in favor

Respectfully submitted by:
Jennifer Desroches

Received
JUL 19 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Sterling Opera House Commission
Regular Meeting
Minutes

Date: May 12, 2025 **Time:** 6:01 PM

1. Call to Order - Chair Dana Florenza called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance - The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call

Dana Florenza, Brian Coppolo, Gino DiGiovanni, Carleigh Paecht, Karleen Guluzzy.
All five members were present. A quorum was established.

4. Public Portion

Linda Hooper – (Old Ripton Garden Club) 61 East Village Road, Shelton, Connecticut, spoke on behalf of the Old Ripton Garden Club of Shelton. She stated that the club will be decorating a room at the **Osborne Homestead Museum** as part of Derby's 350th anniversary celebrations. Their assigned theme is the **Sterling Opera House**, and she requested guidance and possible access to marketing materials, artifacts, or historical items.

There being no further public comment, the public portion was closed.

Commission Response:

- Mr. DiGiovanni offered to serve as the primary contact and provided his email address for follow-up.
- The Commission indicated it has marketing materials and potential artifacts that may be loaned for the display.
- Ms. Hooper stated the exhibit will be installed before Thanksgiving and open from the day after Thanksgiving through Christmas.

There were no additional public comments. The public portion was closed.

5. Committee Updates

5.1 Artifacts, Signage, and Storage

Discussion was held regarding historic signage, carvings, and display cabinets created by retired Fire Chief Andy Cota. These items are currently in his possession and are being offered back to the Commission for Preservation.

Key points discussed:

- The importance of retaining all existing Sterling Opera House artifacts.
- Potential storage options, including a climate-controlled room in the basement of City Hall.
- The need to coordinate with the Mayor's Office regarding storage and future display.
- Preservation considerations, including proper temperature control.

5.2 Derby 350th Anniversary Celebration

The Commission discussed participating as a vendor during the Derby 350th Anniversary Celebration scheduled for **May 30 – June 1, 2025**.
After discussion, the Commission agreed to participate on **Saturday, May 31, 2025**, from **12:00 PM to 9:00 PM**, with setup beginning at 10:30 AM.

Planned activities and materials include:

- Information table and banner
- Pamphlets and marketing materials
- Framed historic photo prints
- Potentiel merchandise (prints, ornements, key chains, etc.)

A **motion** was made to authorize submission of the vendor application for the Derby 350th Anniversary Celebration and allow the sale of merchandise at the event.

- **Motion:** Gino DiGiovanni
- **Second:** Brian Coppolo
- **Vote:** Unanimously approved

6. Festivals and Community Outreach

Additional festivals and events were discussed for potential participation:

- **St. Mary's Church Festival** – July 10–12, 2025
- **Ansonia Harvest Festival** (September – date TBD)
- **Seymour Pumpkin Festival**
- **Ansonia Winter Market** (December)

Consensus was reached to continue planning participation and to coordinate marketing materials accordingly.

7. Marketing and Public Communications

- Discussion on leveraging social media and public outreach to function as an information hub for Sterling Opera House updates.
- The possibility of posting recorded interviews and radio segments concerning the project.
- Ideas for future fundraising events, including guided walking tours, lectures, and entertainment-based fundraisers.

8. Incorporation and Legal Update

David Condon reported that **Sterling Opera House Restoration, Inc.**, has been officially incorporated.

Key highlights:

- A 501(c)(3) application is in progress to establish a fundraising arm.
- All current contributions of professional services are being treated as in-kind donations.
- Discussion of future fundraising structure, governance, and financial flow between the nonprofit entity and the City.

- The need for a future executive session to formalize financial and operational procedures.

9. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:52 p.m.

- **Motion by: Gino DiGiovanni**
- **Second by: Dana Florenza**
- **Vote: Unanimous in favor**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Jennifer Desroches

Received
JUL 19 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Sterling Opera House Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
June 9, 2025

1. Call to Order - The regular meeting of the Sterling Opera House Commission was called to order at **6:03 p.m.** on **June 9, 2025**,

2. Pledge of Allegiance - The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call

Dana Florenza, Brian Coppola, Gino DiGiovanni, Carleigh Paecht

Commission Members Absent:

- Karleen Guluzzy (entered the meeting at 6:04 p.m.)

A quorum was established

4. Public Portion - No public comments were made. The public portion was closed.

5. Update on Tours

The Commission discussed the recent public tours conducted during Derby's 350th Anniversary kickoff celebration.

- Approximately 450 members of the public attended tours of the Sterling Opera House, marking the first time in nearly 20 years that the public accessed the main staircase and open floor.
- Attendees traveled from across the tristate area, including New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.
- Commission members expressed gratitude to all volunteers and speakers who contributed to the event's success.
- The tours were described as well-organized and effective, providing a strong template for future events.
- Interest was expressed by attendees in accessing City Hall and lower-level areas of the building.
- A proposal was made to create a **virtual or video tour** of City Hall for future fundraising or benefit events.
- All safety, fire marshal, and building security requirements were met.
- The Elizabeth Street entrance was opened and used successfully, with consistent foot traffic.
- The event was promoted through radio and other outreach efforts, and attendee contact information was collected for future communications.
- Discussion included the possibility of hosting additional tour days due to long wait times reported by attendees (up to three hours).

Potential Future Events Discussed:

- A collaborative fall event with local businesses, including dinner and guided tours, possibly around the Halloween season.
- Coordination with the Mayor's office and administration before finalizing dates.

- Consideration of photography workshops and tour events scheduled earlier in the day to maximize natural light.

6. Merchandise Discussion and Possible Action

- The Commission reported all t-shirts sold out, indicating strong public interest.
- Discussion included:
- Reordering t-shirts, particularly in medium, large, and extra-large sizes.
- Updating the t-shirt design to reflect the current appearance of the Opera House, including the cupola.
- Bundling merchandise and printed marketing materials to support cost efficiency.
- Additional merchandise ideas included pens, bracelets, mugs, sunglasses, tumblers, keychains, and prints.
- The Commission reviewed the launch of the Opera House website (sterlingopera.com) as a landing page directing visitors to social media platforms.
- A social media photo contest was proposed, allowing tour participants to submit photos for a chance to win merchandise.

7. Upcoming Events

- St. Mary's Festival:July 10–12, 2025, 5:00–10:00 p.m.
  the Commission will participate on **Friday, July 11, 2025** only.
- **Ansonia Harvest Festival**: Date pending.
- **Seymour Pumpkin Festival**: Application submitted and currently under review.
- Additional local events and holiday fairs were discussed as potential opportunities.
- The **Osbornedale Commission** announced that the Sterling Opera House will be a featured theme in an upcoming exhibit.
  The Commission will loan selected artifacts, images, and historical materials.
  Storage needs for certain artifacts were discussed.
  Coordination with City staff and Osbornedale representatives will continue.

8. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn at **6:30 p.m.**

- Motion: Gino DiGiovanni
- Second: Karleen Guluzzy
- Vote: Unanimously approved

was made and seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:
Jennifer Desroches

Received
JUL 20 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Sterling Opera House Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
July 14, 2025
6:00 PM

---

1. Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at **6:04 PM**.

2. Pledge of Allegiance - The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call

- Dana Florenza, Gino DiGiovanni, Carleigh Paecht

Members Absent / Late:

- Brian Coppolo (arrived at 6:10 PM)
- Karleen Guluzzy - absent

A quorum was declared.

4. Approval of Minutes - No prior meeting minutes were available.

Motion: To table approval of minutes
Moved by: Brian Coppola
Seconded by: Karleen Guluzzy
Vote: Unanimous – Motion carried

5. Public Portion

Paul Stefano – 57 Academy Hill

Mr. Stefano discussed an opportunity to use a podcast on a Roku channel as a avenue to inform the public about Sterling Opera House-related topics, including Commission updates. The Commission expressed interest in exploring the platform as a communication tool while noting the importance of remaining mindful of fundraising restrictions during the early phases of the campaign.

Dave Condon (Public Comment)

Mr. Condon discussed best practices for large fundraising campaigns, emphasizing the importance of conducting a **silent phase** to protect major donor strategies. He advised that fundraising goals should not be discussed publicly until campaign plans have been finalized.

The public portion was closed.

6. Report on 501(c)(3) Status – Dave Condon

Mr. Condon reported the following:

- Corporate documents for **Sterling Opera House Restoration, Inc.** have been filed and approved by the State of Connecticut.
- The required annual state report was filed on June 1, 2025.
- A new EIN has been established, and prior EIN issues have been resolved.
- A professional firm, **Bright Bridge**, has been retained to complete the 501(c)(3) application.

- Expenses to date include filing fees and professional services; some costs were donated or deferred for later reimbursement.
- IRS approval is expected within **5–7 months**.
- Contributions may be accepted during the review period, with tax deductibility retroactive upon approval.
- The nonprofit will not file a 2024 IRS Form 990 because there was no financial activity; 2025 will be the first filing year.
- The nonprofit board will need to be expanded in the future.
- Further clarification is needed regarding the respective roles of the Commission, the Board of Aldermen, and the 501(c)(3).

The Commission thanked Mr. Condon for his work.

- Coordination continues with **Steinberg Hart** regarding design concepts and feasibility planning.
- An updated property survey (estimated at approximately $1,800

8. Discuss Upcoming Events

- Harvest Festival in Ansonia on October 4th
- Pumpkin Festival (waiting on).

9. Adjournment

Motion: Can I have a motion to adjourn at 6:28
Moved by: Dana Florenza
Second by: Carleigh Paecht
Vote: Unanimous – Motion carried

Respectfully submitted by:
Jennifer Desroches

Received
JUL 20 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Sterling Opera House Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Date: Monday, August 11, 2025

1. Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at **6:02 PM** by the Chair.

2. Pledge of Allegiance - All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll Call

The Clerk called the roll. Present were:

•Dana Florenza, Carleigh Paecht, Karleen Guluzzy, Gino DiGiovanni.

A quorum was declared.

- Brian Coppolo - absent

4. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to **table the approval of the minutes**.

- Motion: Dana Florenza
- Second: Karleen Guluzzy

Motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Portion

The Chair opened the public portion of the meeting.

Mark Garfalo, Town Clerk for the City of Derby, addressed the Commission regarding Item #6 and requested that the report include an update on who was interviewed as part of the Steinberg Hart study.

No additional speakers came forward.

The public portion was closed.

6. Report on Meeting with Steinberg Hart / Feasibility Study Update

The Chair reported that a progress meeting with **Steinberg Hart** had taken place and that materials from the meeting had been distributed to the Commission by email.

Interviews Conducted for the Study were reported to include:

- Brian Coppolo, Karleen Guluzzy, Matt Welander, Dave Condon
- A representative from Center Stage (Shelton)

Extensive discussion followed regarding the **preliminary recommendation not to include a fly system** in the feasibility study.

Key discussion points included:

- Concerns that omitting a fly system could limit future programming and touring productions
- The importance of making long-term decisions during initial construction rather than retrofitting later

- The need for further clarity once stage dimensions, structural design, and elevator placement are finalized
- Recognition that the current document is a feasibility study and not a final design decision

It was emphasized that **no final determination has been made** regarding the fly system and that further evaluation and expert input will occur as the project advances.

7. Committee Updates

a. Osbornedale Kellogg Museum

The Commission reported that the Osbornedale Kellogg Museum plans to feature the Sterling Opera House in a November exhibit, and artifacts are being gathered for temporary loan.

A large Sterling Opera House display located on a resident's property will also be evaluated for potential inclusion in the exhibit.

b. Survey Update

Funds have been transferred for surveying services. **Freddy D'Amico** has been retained as the surveyor and has obtained the necessary documentation.

The survey results will help guide final decisions regarding elevator placement, access points, and stage layout.

c. Upcoming Site Visit

Steinberg Hart staff, including mechanical, HVAC, and structural engineers, are scheduled to return to the site to take additional measurements and continue planning.

d. 501(c)(3) Status Update

The Commission reported that **Sterling Opera House Restoration, Inc.** has:

- Filed for 501(c)(3) status
- Received a new EIN
- Opened a bank account
- Been certified as a registered charity by the State of Connecticut (valid through August 2026)

The organization will serve as the fundraising arm for the restoration project while remaining legally separate from the Commission.

8. Discussion of Upcoming Events

- **Ansonia Harvest Festival (October 4, 2025):** General support expressed for participation; follow-up required.
- **Citywide / All-Class Reunion (August 30, 2025):** Discussed as a potential outreach opportunity; concerns raised regarding feasibility, timing, and suitability for tours.

Proposed Walking Tour Fundraiser (October 11, 2025):

- Route beginning and ending at Twisted Vine
- Guided walking and Opera House tours
- Tentative ticket price: $20
- Limited attendance and timed entry proposed
- Strong support expressed for concept pending approval and logistics

Future use of third-party nonprofit ticketing platforms to minimize fees was discussed.

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn at **6:57 PM**.

- Motion: Brian Coppolo
- Second: Karleen Guluzzy
- Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:
Jennifer Desroches

Received
JUL 21 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Sterling Opera House Commission
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
October 6, 2025

1. Call to Order - The regular meeting of the Sterling Opera House Commission was called to order on **October 6, 2025, at 6:07 PM**.

2. Pledge of Allegiance - The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call

Dana Florenza, Brian Coppolo, Gino DiGiovanni, Carleigh Paecht, Karleen Guluzzy

A **quorum was present**.

4. Approval of Minutes

There were no minutes available for approval.

Motion to table approval of minutes.

- Motion: Brian Coppolo
- Second: Karleen Guluzzy
- Vote: Unanimous, motion carried

5. Public Portion

No members of the public (in person or via Zoom) requested to speak.

The public portion was closed.

6. Committee Updates

- The **feasibility study and market analysis** are currently underway.
- The **survey, documentation, and maps** have been filed with the City and provided to **Steinberg Hart** for use in the final stages of its study.
- An update from Steinberg Hart is anticipated within the next week.
- The goal is to present the findings to the City and Board of Aldermen around Thanksgiving or shortly thereafter.
- No further committee updates were reported.

7. Report on Ansonia Harvest Festival

- The Harvest Festival was well attended, with vendors located throughout multiple streets.
- Attendance appeared to be stronger than in previous years, aided by favorable weather.
- The Commission's tent received steady foot traffic, and names and email addresses were collected.
- Walking tour signage helped generate interest and encouraged ticket sign-ups.
- Overall, the event was considered successful.

8. Discussion: Upcoming Walking Tours (October 11, 2025)

- Tours are scheduled from **2:00 PM to 6:00 PM**, limited to **10 participants per group**, leaving every **20 minutes**.
- Ticket sales are approximately **30%**, with expectations of last-minute purchases dependent on weather.

- Additional social media promotion and website updates are planned.
- Same-day ticket availability may be offered if capacity allows.
- **Twisted Vine** will serve as the meeting and registration location and will open early for the event.
- Tour logistics include:
    - Registration and check-in at Twisted Vine
    - Guided walk along Elizabeth Street
    - Entry and interior tour of the Opera House, led by speakers including Anthony and Dave
    - Return route via the Green
- Scripts for tour guides will be finalized and distributed by mid-week.
- Stickers will be used to identify tour participants.
- Confirmation received that the **mayor's office** will provide access and security for the Opera House.

9. New Business

Raffle Fundraiser

- A Harvest Festival raffle was conducted successfully; the winner will be contacted directly.
- A proposal was introduced to conduct a **Christmas raffle fundraiser**, featuring a **$250 Amazon gift card**.
- Proposed details:
    - Ticket price: $10
    - Maximum of 200 tickets
    - Conducted online via **Zeffy** (Zeffy.com no transaction fees)
    - Tentative run: October 11 – November 10
- **Motion** to proceed with organizing the fundraiser:
    - Motion: Brian Coppolo
    - Second: Dana Florenza
    - Vote: Unanimous, motion carried

Community Outreach

- Information was shared regarding **Steve Cooper**, a promoter with experience organizing successful events, as a potential future contact.
- Suggestion made to consider participation in **Shelton Day** in 2026 due to strong attendance.

10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting adjourned at **6:32 PM.**

- Motion: Dana Florenza
- Second: Brian Coppolo
- Vote: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Desroches

Received
JUL 24 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Sterling Opera House Commission
Regular Meeting
Minutes
Date: Monday, November 10, 2025

---

1. **Call to Order -** The meeting was called to order at **6:02 PM**.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance -** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. **Roll Call**

   Dana Florenza, Brian Coppolo, Gino DiGiovanni, Carleigh Paecht, Karleen Guluzzy.
   A quorum was declared with five members present.

4. **Approval of Minutes -** No prior meeting minutes were received.

   Motion: To table approval of minutes.
   - **Moved by:** Dana Florenza
   - **Second by:** Karleen Guluzzy
   - **Vote:** Unanimous approval

   Result: Motion carried.

5. **Public Portion**

   Marc Garofalo, Town Clerk for the City of Derby, addressed the Commission and raised the following points:
   - Mr. Garofalo commented on the Commission's use of elected officers and noted that, under Robert's Rules, the chair typically presides over the meeting
   - The Commission should work collaboratively with the mayor and administration, particularly regarding public disagreements aired during election season.
   - He encouraged the Commission to work cooperatively with the administration and the Mayor's Office in support of the Sterling Theater restoration effort, emphasizing the importance of bipartisan cooperation in the renovation effort.
   - He reminded the Commission of the need to obtain the proper permit for raffle fundraising and offered assistance with ticket sales through the Clerk's Office.

   No additional public comments were offered.
   Public portion closed.

6. **Committee Updates**

   Raffle Fundraiser
   - An Amazon gift card raffle is underway.
   - Total tickets sold to date: **7 tickets for $10 each ($70)**.
   - Cost of raffle prize: **$250**, resulting in a deficit.
   - Discussion being held regarding extending raffle deadline.

   Motion: To extend the raffle deadline to Monday, November 24, 2025, at midnight.
   - **Moved by:** Brian Coppolo
   - **Second by:** Karleen Guluzzy
   - **Vote:** Unanimous approval

   Result: Motion carried.

   It was agreed not to add bonus tickets for early purchasers due to cost concerns.

7. Reports

Twisted Vine Walking Tours

- Total attendance included 56 tickets sold, with additional walk-up attendees.

The public participation was strong and feedback was positive.

- The tour featured historical information in Derby as well as the Sterling Opera House.
- Gross revenue exceeded **$2,000**.
- Feedback from attendees was very positive, with many expressing appreciations for the historical component of the tours.
- Merchandise was also sold during the event.
- No safety or logistical issues were reported.
- The event generated significant community engagement, including the following:
- Community members and skilled tradespeople expressed possible interest in supporting the project.
- Interest from a professional magician in participating in a future fundraiser.
- Increased social media followers and continued interest in future tours, potentially in spring 2026.
- Commission members commended the committee on a successful event.

8. New Business

Holiday Fundraisers

- The Commission discussed Sterling Opera House holiday ornaments featuring the building and notable historical performers.
- Members considered selling the ornaments online and/or at the City's Christmas tree lighting event.
- Staff will determine whether vendor participation is permitted at the tree lighting event.

501(c)(3) Status Report

- Sterling Opera House Restoration, Inc. received **501(c)(3) approval on October 13, 2025**.
- Public charity status had been approved by both the State of Connecticut and the federal government
- The organization's fiscal year ends on **December 31**.
- Bank account summary: Opening balance: $100
  Walking tour deposits: $2,150
  Service charges: $45
  Ending balance: approximately $2,205
- Expenses paid personally totaled $1,800, as follows:
  EIN filing: $319 (donated)
  Connecticut corporate filing: $50 (donated)
  Bright Bridge Services: $1,300 (reimbursement to be requested later)
  Federal filing fee: $500 (reimbursement to be requested later)

Dave requested a full accounting of income, expenditures, merchandise sales, and donations raised to date so that proper records can be maintained. He also discussed next steps, including obtaining a construction estimate, establishing a construction budget, identifying non-negotiable

restoration components such as the fly system, recruiting additional board members for Sterling Restoration Inc., and creating a charitable account structure with the Valley Community Foundation

Future plans include:

- Development of a construction budget (target: first quarter of 2026)
- Establishment of an operating endowment
- Expansion of the 501(c)(3) Board
- Exploration of grant funding, foundations, and in-kind donations
- Future fundraising initiatives including auctions and ticketed events

Members discussed the importance of creating an endowment sufficient to support future operations and maintenance. Dave stated that a minimum of two years' operating costs should be included, along with funds for ongoing maintenance and upkeep. Members also discussed future theater operations, potential management models, naming opportunities, in-kind donations, and fundraising strategies.

Members discussed the possibility of including in-kind contribution requirements in future bid documents and noted that construction materials and services needed to meet applicable code and project requirements.

No formal action was taken.

9. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:55 PM.

- **Moved by:** Dana Florenza
- **Second by:** Karleen Guluzzy
- **Vote:** Unanimous approval

Respectfully submitted
Jennifer Desroches

Sterling Opera House Commission
Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
Monday, January 12, 2026
6:05 p.m.

Received
JUL 22 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

1. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. A temporary chair was required for the meeting. Brian Coppolo nominated Gino DiGiovanni to serve as temporary chair. The nomination was second by Dana Florenza The motion was carried unanimously, and **Gino DiGiovanni served as temporary chair.**

2. Pledge of Allegiance
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call
Members present included Dana Florenza, Gino DiGiovanni, Brian Coppolo, Carleigh, Paecht and Karleen Guluzzy.
A quorum was present.

4. Approval of Minutes
The Commission noted that there were no December minutes because the December meeting had been canceled, and minutes from previous months were still pending. A **motion** was made to table approval of minutes by Brian the motion was **second** by Dana. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Portion
The public portion was opened. A member of the public asked whether the Commission had received an update from the firm preparing the assessment. The Chair stated that the matter would be discussed later in the agenda. There were no additional public comments, including from participants attending via Zoom.
motion was made by Dana to close the public portion.
seconded by Carleigh. The motion was carried unanimously, and the public portion was closed.

6. Election of Officers
Chairman
Nominations were opened for Chairman. Dana nominated Gino DiGiovanni for Chairman, noting his long-standing involvement with the Commission and his role in advancing the Commission's work since its inception. The nomination was second by Brian. There being no further nominations, a motion was made by Carleigh and seconded by Dana to close nominations. The motion carried unanimously.

With no objection, one vote was cast for the sole nominee, Gino DiGiovanni. The vote carried unanimously, and **Gino DiGiovanni was elected Chair.**
DiGiovanni thanked the Commission and stated that it had been an honor to serve as part of the Commission from the beginning. Brian Coppola also thanked Dana for her role in initiating and supporting the project.

Vice Chairman

A motion was made by Dana and seconded by Karleen to open nominations for Vice Chair. The motion carried unanimously. Gino DiGiovanni nominated Brian Coppola to serve as Vice Chair. Dana seconded the nomination.
There being no further nominations, a motion was made by Karleen and second by Dana to close nominations. The motion carried unanimously. With no objection, one vote was cast for the sole nominee, Brian Coppolo. The vote carried unanimously, and **Brian Coppola was elected Vice Chair.**

7. Committee Updates

The Commission noted that most updates would be addressed under New Business. It was reported that the firm was finalizing its assessment and related information.

8. New Business

Steinberg Hart Assessment and Final Presentation

Gino DiGiovanni reported that the Commission had received an email update from Evan, the project manager from Steinberg Hart. The firm continues to work on assessment and market analysis and expects to provide scheduling information for a final presentation. The Chair stated that the information has been gathered and is being compiled, with the hope that a final or near-final product may be available by the next meeting.
The Chair explained that the assessment process has included review of HVAC, utilities, ductwork, structural conditions, and design options. He noted that the building never had combined heating and ventilation, and that roof-mounted units were not considered feasible or cost-effective. The Commission expects to schedule a formal presentation once the firm is ready.

Fly System Discussion

The Commission discussed the proposed theater Fly System. The Chair stated that a Fly System would be included, but that it would be scaled appropriately for the venue's intended uses rather than designed for full Broadway-style productions. Brian Coppola stated that the system should support a variety of events, including comedy shows, small musical performances, and similar programming.
The Chair explained that installing a Broadway-style Fly System would require substantial structural modifications, including work from the basement upward, new footings, foundations, and steel support columns, and would displace areas needed for HVAC equipment. He stated that the proposed system would meet the venue's needs and

support lighting, audio, speakers, and related equipment without requiring extensive structural reconstruction.

Fundraising Events

Karleen reported that she is exploring future fundraising events, including a possible cabaret-themed event at Twisted Vine. She stated that several performers in the arts community have expressed interest in donating their time to support the Opera House. The event would likely include ticketed admission, with food and beverages available for purchase separately.

The Commission discussed ticket pricing and noted that the prior walking tour had a strong turnout, though pricing may have been somewhat high. Brian Coppola offered to research comparable cabaret-style events at nearby theaters and provide pricing information for future discussions.

Karleen also expressed interest in holding another walking tour when the weather improves, potentially in the spring or summer. She noted that materials from the prior tour are available and could be reused, making a future tour easier to organize.

9. Next Meeting

The next regular meeting was scheduled for Monday, February 9, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. The Chair stated that the Commission would be updated by email regarding the status of the Steinberg Hart presentation and any related scheduling.

10. Adjournment

There being no further business,

Motion was made by Karleen to adjourn.

Second by Dana.

The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Desroches

Sterling Opera House Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: February 9, 2026

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Location: Derby City Hall and Zoom

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Roll Call

The clerk called the roll. The following members were present: Gino DiGiovanni, Brian Campolo, Dana Florenzano, and Carlene Glossy. One member was noted as excused. A quorum was declared with four members present.

3. Approval of Minutes

No minutes were available for approval. A motion was made by Dana Florenzano and seconded by Brian Campolo to table approval of minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Portion

The Chair opened the public portion for comments, questions, or concerns unrelated to the feasibility study presentation. Members of the public attending in person and by Zoom were invited to state their name and address for the record before speaking.

A request was made to create an agenda item to open a public hearing following the presentation. The Chair explained that the presenter would pause at intervals during the feasibility study update to allow questions and discussion after each section rather than holding all questions until the end.

There being no further public comment, a motion was made by Dana Florenzano and seconded by Brian Campolo to close the public portion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Feasibility Study Update by Steinberg Hart

The Commission received a feasibility study update regarding the Sterling Opera House from Evan Delli Paoli, Principal with Steinberg Hart. Mr. Delli Paoli explained that Steinberg Hart is serving as the architect and lead organizer for the study, with supporting work from Webb Management Services, Stages Consultants, McLaren Engineering, and Kohler Ronan Engineers.

Mr. Delli Paoli stated that the market needs assessment, existing conditions assessment, and capital improvement recommendations had reached a point where the information was being compiled for cost estimating. He stated that the final report and cost estimate were expected to be presented at a future Commission meeting.

Market Needs Assessment

Mr. Delli Paoli summarized the market needs assessment conducted by Webb Management Services. The assessment evaluated cultural arts trends, the regional market within thirty- and sixty-minute drive times, competing venues, and likely user demand. The study found a market opportunity for a midsize venue and recommended that the primary use of the Sterling Opera House be commercial entertainment, including live music, comedy, and popular entertainment events.

Received
JUL 15 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Secondary uses identified included meetings and events, curated film programming, community and nonprofit use, school-based programming, civic gatherings, and other activities that could help keep the building active between ticketed events.

The study recommended future completion of a business plan and identification of a third-party operator. Suggested next steps included building a list of potential operators, developing a targeted request for proposals, evaluating responses, establishing a memorandum of understanding between the City and an operator, and eventually transitioning to a lease agreement if appropriate.

Existing Conditions and Historic Requirements

The presentation reviewed the existing condition of the Sterling Opera House, including the exterior masonry, basement, street-level spaces, audience chamber, stage, stairways, and balcony areas. Mr. Delli Paoli stated that the City's past efforts to maintain the exterior, roof, cupola, and windows helped limit deterioration within the building.

The consultants noted that the building contains load-bearing masonry walls and significant wood framing. Much of the historic stair and railing system may be retained under the applicable existing building code, subject to reinforcement and code review. The building will require substantial new mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection, and life-safety systems, including a full sprinkler system.

The study also evaluated historic preservation requirements, including the building's status on the National Register of Historic Places and potential eligibility for historic tax credits. Mr. Delli Paoli reviewed the importance of preserving historic character, using compatible materials, and ensuring that any new additions remain visually secondary to the historic building.

Proposed Improvements and Building Program

The proposed building program includes improvements to support public access, performer support, production needs, building utilities, and life safety. A modest accessible addition with an elevator was discussed to provide access to audience areas while preserving the historic roofline and minimizing the visual impact of the addition.

The proposal includes an accessible entrance, public lobby areas, restrooms, dressing rooms, green rooms, production support spaces, loading access, emergency egress stairs, and new building systems. The existing main stair would remain and be celebrated as part of the historic character of the building.

Several seating options were presented, with total capacities ranging from approximately 550 to 613 seats depending on aisle configuration, balcony tier spacing, and seating comfort considerations. The consultant noted that the final seating approach should be further reviewed with a future operator.

Stage, Platform, Acoustics, and Systems

The consultants discussed the existing stage and the difference between a full stage with a fly system and a more modest performance platform. Based on the market assessment, the preliminary recommendation favored a platform suitable for live music, comedy, popular entertainment, and smaller theatrical uses, while recognizing that a larger fly system could be evaluated as an alternate.

Acoustic considerations included exterior noise isolation, potential sound transmission from amplified events, HVAC noise control, and the choice between fixed and variable room acoustics. The presentation also reviewed proposed new mechanical, electrical, plumbing, sprinkler, and fire protection systems.

Project Phasing and Cost Estimating

Mr. Delli Paoli explained that the team is evaluating potential phasing to identify the minimum work necessary to reopen the building and begin generating activity and revenue. Phase-related considerations included the audience chamber, performance platform, accessibility improvements, emergency egress, performer support, street-level spaces, loading, and exterior equipment areas.

The cost estimate will include hard construction costs, soft costs, equipment, furnishings, professional fees, permitting, legal and miscellaneous allowances, contingencies, and escalation. The consultant stated that the final report will include recommendations, phasing information, and cost information.

6. **Public Questions and Discussion**

Members of the public and Commission participants asked questions and offered comments regarding the feasibility study, historic restoration, accessibility, seating comfort, theatrical capability, fly system options, lighting and sound positions, orchestra pit considerations, movie screenings, concessions, restrooms, operator selection, fundraising, endowment needs, potential in-kind contributions, and the future RFP process for contractors.

Questions were raised about the type of wood used in the existing structure, acoustical considerations, preservation of historic features, the possibility of theatrical performances, the need for a fly or rigging system, use of the neighboring building or exterior access areas, and how contractor qualifications for historic restoration would be reviewed.

The consultants stated that theatrical performances would not be excluded, but the preliminary recommendation is not for a Broadway-scale fly system. They indicated that alternate rigging or fly-system options could be included for further review and cost comparison. The consultants also stated that film screenings could be accommodated with appropriate portable or installed equipment. Discussion also addressed the importance of identifying an operator, developing a fundraising strategy, considering an endowment, pursuing available grants and historic funding opportunities, and preserving the Sterling Opera House as a community asset. The Chair stated that the presentation materials would be shared and posted for public review.

7. **New Business -** There was no new business.

8. **Adjournment**

The Chair thanked Steinberg Hart and the consultant team for their presentation and work on the feasibility study. A motion was made by Dana Florenza and seconded by Brian Coppolo to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:13 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Desroches

Received
JUL 16 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Sterling Opera House Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday March 9, 2026
Time: 6:00 PM

---

1. Call to Order - Chair called the regular meeting of the SOHC to order at 6:00 PM on Monday, March 9, 2026.

2. Pledge of Allegiance - and Moment of Silence - Commission members and attendees stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. The Chair then requested a moment of silence in remembrance of a Commission member's family member and a member of Commissioner Karleen Guluzzy's family.

3. Roll Call

Present: Gino DiGiovanni; Dana Serna; Carleigh Paecht; Karleen Guluzzy.
Absent: Brian Coppolo.
The Clerk noted four (4) members present and that a quorum was established.

4. Additions, Deletions, and Corrections to the Agenda

No additions, deletions, or corrections were stated. The agenda proceeded as presented by consensus.

5. Approval of Minutes - A list of prior meeting minutes was referenced;
The Commission has not yet received them.

Motion: To table approval of the minutes

- **Moved by:** Dana Serna
- **Second by:** Karleen Guluzzy
- **Vote:** Motion carried unanimously

6. Public Portion - No members of the public spoke. The public portion was closed.

7. Old Business

The Chair reported that an email update had been received from Steinberg Hart regarding the market analysis and feasibility study. The firm is finalizing the report and gathering the data needed to complete the cost-plus analysis, which is expected to provide an overall project cost to bring the facility to an operational "up and running" status. The Chair stated that the firm's approach remains to present the work in phases, consistent with its prior presentation. The Commission anticipated a presentation at next month's meeting; however, if the timing does not align, the Chair indicated that a special meeting would be scheduled to present the final report to the public, with notice to be provided by email.

Dave Condon (50 Beatrice Drive, West Haven, CT) provided a financial update. He stated he needed to process a $1,900 reimbursement as directed by his accountant for tax filing purposes and that he intended to donate approximately $500 related to state filings and the

Employer Identification Number (EIN). He also referenced $250,000 in services from DNS. Mr. Condon reported that a checking account had been opened at Webster Bank and that he established a dual-entry checking system. He stated that next steps included expanding the 501(c)(3) board and, once Steinberg Hart's project numbers are received, developing a fundraising/resource development plan. He suggested holding a large public meeting (e.g., at a high school auditorium) to present the plan and build public awareness and support.

8. New Business

Commissioner Karleen Guluzzy provided an update on discussions with the Twisted Vine regarding a potential "cabaret night" fundraising event. She described a proposed two to three-hour event (e.g., 5:00–8:00 PM) featuring multiple entertainment acts (examples discussed included a magician, singer, and/or acoustic musician) to showcase the variety of programming envisioned for the Sterling Opera House. The Twisted Vine would retain restaurant food and beverage sales, while the Commission would receive revenue from ticket sales. Seating capacity was discussed as approximately 70–80 attendees, depending on table configuration. Commissioner Guluzzy stated she continued to seek local entertainers to participate and requested recommendations from Commission members.

Commissioner Guluzzy also reported a conversation with Chris Gilleran (New England Society for Paranormal Research) regarding a potential paranormal-themed event. She stated Mr. Gilleran offered to volunteer his time at no cost and proposed an evening program including a presentation and related activities. Timeframes discussed included approximately 9:00 PM to midnight, with an alternative earlier schedule (e.g., 8:00–11:00 PM) considered for fall months due to earlier sunset. Capacity constraints were discussed based on current limits for small tours (noted as approximately 10 people in the building at a time). A concept was discussed to run multiple one-hour sessions over three hours (for an estimated total of 30 participants) with a potential ticket price range discussed of $50–$100 per person, depending on offerings.

Mr. Condon expressed support in pursuing additional events to generate moderate income and stated that such efforts would help advance longer-term project goals. He said that, during prior tours, the Fire Department had permitted up to 20 people at a time when fire personnel were present. He supported both the paranormal event concept and the cabaret event. The Chair noted that a magician associated with a Shelton-based group had previously expressed interest during a tour, and it was suggested that Center Stage may also be contacted regarding potential performers. Commissioner Guluzzy asked for input on preferred timing; Saturdays were identified as the best option for Commission participation, and she indicated she would check venue availability accordingly.

9. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 6:15 PM

Vote: Motion to adjourn carried by voice vote, 4-0 (unanimous of members present).

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Desroches

Sterling Opera House Commission

Regular Meeting

Minutes

April 13, 2026

1. **Call to Order -** Chair called the regular meeting of the SOHC to order at 6:01 PM
2. **Pledge of Allegiance** – The Board stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **Roll Call**

Commission members present: Gino DiGiovanni; Dana Florenza; Carleigh Paecht; Karleen Guluzzy (via Zoom). Commission members absent/excused: Brian Coppolo (excused). The Clerk noted four (4) members present; a quorum was established.

4. **Additions/Deletions to the Agenda -** No additions, deletions, or corrections were made. The agenda was approved as presented by unanimous consent.
5. **Approval of Minutes**

Motion: To table approval of the prior meeting minutes.
Moved by Dana Florenza;
Seconded by Carleigh Paecht.
Vote: Aye (4) – DiGiovanni, Florenza, Paecht, Guluzzy; Nay (0); Abstain (0).
Motion carried.

6. **Public Portion**

Gary Collins, 273 Derby Avenue, addressed the Commission regarding the existing windows at the Opera House. He stated that, based on his research, retaining the windows preserves the building's historic aesthetics and may be less costly than boarding or otherwise removing/altering them. He noted that in the late 1800s windows provided daylight for afternoon performances and were beneficial for fire response at a time when fire resources were more limited. Mr. Collins suggested considering fireproof curtains/shutters as a way to address safety, sound control, and winter heat retention while keeping the windows intact. Commission members discussed that they were not in favor of removing the windows and considered the concept of heavy curtains and additional soundproofing measures. No further public comment was offered (including via Zoom), and the public comment portion was closed.

7. **Old Business**

Steinberg Hart update: The Chair reported that Steinberg Hart had previously provided a project status update and that Evan (Steinberg Hart) advised by email that the grant application work was approximately 99.9% complete, including the market analysis/study. The Chair stated the intent to place Steinberg Hart on the May meeting agenda to present final findings, with the goal of having a completed report available for the Commission and the public and to inform next steps.

Received
JUL 16 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

8. **New Business**

Cabaret fundraiser at Twisted Vine (June 6, 2026): Karleen Guluzzy presented planning details for a proposed fundraiser "cabaret night" to be held at Twisted Vine on Saturday, June 6, 2026, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM. She outlined a program featuring three acts (approximately 30 minutes each) and noted that the Commission had already secured a magician (Brian Lizette) and a musician/organist (Gary Harger, St. Mary's). The remaining need is to book a comedian for a shorter (30-minute) set, which narrows the available pool; suggestions from Commission members and the public were invited. Ms. Guluzzy discussed capacity and ticket pricing assumptions. She stated the venue could comfortably accommodate approximately 75 attendees, with a potential maximum of around 80 depending on table configurations. Proposed ticket prices ranged from $20 to $25 per person. She provided revenue estimates of approximately $1,500 if 75 tickets are sold at $20, and approximately $1,875 if sold at $25. The Commission discussed a pricing structure that encourages group seating, such as $25 for individual tickets and a discounted price (e.g., $20) for parties of four (4) or more. Food and beverage: It was discussed and clarified that the ticket price would cover the entertainment event; food and alcoholic/non-alcoholic beverages would be available for purchase through the restaurant (cash bar/regular restaurant service). Event flow: Ms. Guluzzy described a draft schedule including a brief opening period for attendee arrival and introductions, intermissions between acts to allow table service and clearing, and a closing period for wrap-up activities. Ticketing/seating logistics: The Commission discussed using the Commission's Zeffy account for ticket sales to ensure funds are deposited directly to the Opera House account. Concerns were raised about managing seating for groups when individuals purchase tickets separately. Options discussed included (a) configuring Zeffy to allow purchase by table/party size (e.g., "party of 8"), and/or (b) collecting party information via a separate sign-up form (e.g., a QR code leading to an online form) prior to payment, with the Zeffy payment link provided afterward. Ms. Guluzzy agreed to research Zeffy configuration options and report back. Raffle/door prize: The Commission discussed adding a door prize (e.g., a restaurant gift card) and a 50/50 raffle to increase fundraising and attendee participation. It was noted that raffle participation would be limited to event attendees on the night of the fundraiser. The Chair stated that the Police Department would be contacted to confirm any requirements. Consensus to proceed: By unanimous consent (no objections stated), the Commission agreed to move forward with the June 6, 2026 fundraiser at Twisted Vine, with details to be finalized as planning continues. Next steps included confirming raffle requirements, finalizing ticketing/seating logistics, completing a flyer, and coordinating promotion including social media, The Patch, and the City newsletter.

9. **Adjournment**

Motion: To adjourn.by Dana Florenza (no second.)

Vote: Unanimous by voice vote; no opposition heard. The meeting adjourned at 6:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Jennifer Desroches

Sterling Opera House Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

June 8, 2026

1.Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call

Present: Gino DiGiovanni Jr., Brian Coppolo, Dana Florenza, Carleigh Paecht, and Karleen Guluzzy. A quorum was established.

4. Additions, Deletions, or Corrections to the Agenda

There were no additions, deletions, or corrections to the agenda.
Motion by Brian Coppolo, seconded by Dana Florenza, to accept the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval of Minutes

No minutes were received for approval.
Motion by Brian Coppolo, seconded by Dana Florenza, to table approval of the minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Public Portion

The Chair opened the public portion and asked whether anyone present in the gallery or on Zoom wished to speak. There being no public comment, a motion was made by Karleen Guluzzy and seconded by Carleigh Paecht to close the public portion. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Old Business

Cabaret Event Recap

Karleen Guluzzy reported on the cabaret event held at Twisted Vine. She stated that approximately 35 to 40 people attended, with additional ticket purchases from individuals who were unable to attend. The event raised approximately $850, and an additional $40 was received from ornament sales, bringing the total proceeds close to $900. Karleen thanked Gary, Brian, and Chris for performing and noted that the event was well received. Commission members discussed the success of the event, including the strong attendance, positive public response, and benefit to both the Opera House and Twisted Vine. Members noted that many attendees stayed for food and drinks and that the event appeared to generate interest in future programs.
It was further noted that many attendees were from outside Derby, including surrounding communities such as Seymour, Oxford, and Bethany. Members discussed the value of reaching a broader audience and increasing awareness of the Sterling Opera House beyond Derby.

Received
JUL 16 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

Members also discussed questions received from attendees regarding City support and involvement. Chair DiGiovanni stated that he would speak with City representatives, including Linda and Joe, regarding future participation and support at events.

8. New Business

Walking Tours

Karleen Guluzzy discussed interest in holding walking tours again, noting that the tours held the prior fall were successful and that members of the public continued to ask when the Opera House would be open for tours. Members expressed support for exploring another walking tour, potentially in September. Chair DiGiovanni stated that he would discuss the matter with the city liaison and report back to the Commission.

St. Mary's Festival

Chair DiGiovanni reported that St. Mary's Festival would be held July 9, 10, and 11, 2026, and that the Commission was welcome to set up a table as it had done in prior years. Members discussed participating for at least one evening in order to maintain public visibility, share information, and potentially sell merchandise.

Members discussed the possibility of attending on Friday, with Thursday as an additional option depending on festival logistics and member availability. Karleen Guluzzy stated that she would inquire about booth placement at the next festival meeting, including whether the Commission could be located in an area with better foot traffic. She would report back by email after confirming details.

Paranormal Event Proposal

Chair DiGiovanni reported that he had been in contact with Charles Rosen, producer of paranormal conventions in Connecticut, regarding a possible event involving Twisted Vine and the Sterling Opera House. The proposed event would include a meal at a local restaurant, an introduction to paranormal equipment, and limited access to the Opera House, subject to City approval and Commission protocols.

Members discussed the proposal and noted that paranormal programming may draw interest because of its connection to local history and the public's curiosity about the building. Members also discussed whether a documentary-style project or other limited format could be considered if full tours were not possible.

Chair DiGiovanni stated that July was likely too soon for such an event and that November 21 or 22, 2026, appeared to be the next available dates provided. He stated that he would discuss the proposal with the city liaison along with the walking tour request and report back to the Commission.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by the chair at 6:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Desroches

STERLING OPERA HOUSE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Monday, July 13, 2026
6:00 p.m.

---

1. Call to Order
The regular monthly meeting of the Sterling Opera House Commission was called to order at 6:02 p.m. on Monday, July 13, 2026.

2. Pledge of Allegiance
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call
Members present were Gino DiGiovanni, Brian Coppolo, Dana Florenza, Carleigh Paecht, and Karleen Guluzzy. Five members were present, and a quorum was established.

4. Additions, Deletions, Corrections to Agenda - None

5. Approval of Minutes
The Chair reported that the Commission continued working with Linda Fusco to bring prior meeting minutes up to date. Dana Florenza moved to table approval of the minutes.

6. Public Portion
The Chair opened the public portion and invited members of the public attending in person and by Zoom to state their name and address for the record before speaking.

Dave Condon, 50 Beatrice Drive, West Haven, Connecticut, provided an update regarding the 501(c)(3). He reported that the organization filed its first Form 990 with the federal government, its first state report, and the required forms to maintain its status as a public charity, all of which were approved. He stated that the organization remains in good standing for another year. Mr. Condon also reported that he spoke with the president of the New Haven Center for Performing Arts, which oversees the Shubert Theatre, Tennis Center, and other venues, and that the discussion was very positive. He stated that once the Steinberg Hart report is received and the project cost is known, the fundraising plan will be developed, and the 501(c)(3) board will be expanded. He further stated that the organization intends to begin actively recruiting board members and preparing a fundraising plan for the project.

Gary Collins, 273 Derby Avenue, Derby, Connecticut, spoke in support of the Sterling Opera House project and expressed concern that the current administration should be more actively involved. He stated that the project is important to Derby and could generate revenue for restaurants and other local businesses. Mr. Collins encouraged greater participation by City officials and public support for the project.
The Chair noted for the record that Alderwoman Sarah Widomowski was present on Zoom. There being no further public comment, a motion was made and seconded to close the public portion. The motion carried unanimously.

Received
JUL 17 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office

7. Old Business

a. Report on Meeting with Linda Fusco on June 26, 2026

The Chair reported that, following inquiries from entities interested in holding fundraising events at the Sterling Opera House, he and Dana Florenza met with Linda Fusco. The Chair stated that Ms. Fusco spoke with the Mayor and advised that events may only take place if they are citywide events, like the 350th celebration or Derby Day. The Commission noted that future inquiries, including walking tours and similar events, would need to be adjusted accordingly.

8. New Business

a. Steinberg Hart Final Findings and Recommendations

Evan Delli Paoli, principal and architect with Steinberg Hart, presented the final findings of the comprehensive study for the Sterling Opera House. He explained that Steinberg Hart led a larger consultant team that included Webb Management for arts advisory and market assessment services, Stages Consultants for theater and acoustics consulting, Kohler-Ronan Engineers for mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and fire protection engineering, KCI/McLaren Engineers for structural assessment, and Cost Plus Consultants for cost estimating.

Mr. Delli Paoli stated that the study focused on three primary areas: a market needs assessment, an existing conditions assessment, and recommendations for capital improvements. He explained that the market assessment examined local and regional arts trends, competitor venues, and potential user demand. The study identified a market opportunity for a venue smaller than 1,500 seats but larger than approximately 300 seats, and concluded that the Sterling Opera House could fill a regional gap. The recommended primary uses included presented live arts and entertainment, such as comedy and popular music, with secondary uses including nonprofit rentals, commercial rentals, film, educational programs, and community gatherings.

Mr. Delli Paoli reported that the study recommends next steps including completion of a business plan and future identification of an operating partner. He outlined a process for identifying an operator, including developing a contact list, publishing a request for proposals, evaluating respondents, entering into a memorandum of understanding, and later transitioning to a lease agreement.

The existing building was described as approximately 28,000 gross square feet, with approximately 18,000 to 19,000 square feet of usable space. Mr. Delli Paoli stated that the exterior has been reasonably well maintained, with expected issues such as brick efflorescence and repointing needs. He noted that the building is a zero-lot-line site and that an easement or variance would be needed for a proposed elevator addition, accessible entry, loading dock, and exterior equipment areas.

The presentation reviewed the condition of the interior, including peeling lead paint and deterioration of plaster, but noted that the building appeared generally dry and free from significant rot or decay. The existing horseshoe-shaped balcony and intimate audience chamber were identified as key historic features to be preserved. Mr. Delli Paoli stated that

the Connecticut building code and existing building code allow preservation of historic elements, provided required life-safety improvements are incorporated.
The structural assessment found that the building is primarily wood-framed, with load-bearing brick masonry walls and some cast iron columns. The study recommends new mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection, and sprinkler systems. Acoustical recommendations include replacing deteriorated plaster surfaces and designing new HVAC systems to minimize mechanical noise.
The study also evaluated historic tax credit opportunities, noting that the Sterling Opera House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Delli Paoli outlined the anticipated historic tax credit process, including evaluation of the building's eligibility, review of proposed rehabilitation work during design, and final review of completed work by the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service.
The capital improvement recommendations included reusing lower-level and street-level spaces for theater support functions, dressing rooms, production offices, public lobby space, restrooms, and related uses. The concept includes a modest elevator addition to provide accessible access to the orchestra and balcony levels, as well as access for back-of-house functions and loading. The proposal also includes exterior areas for loading and mechanical/electrical equipment.
The presentation addressed proposed floor plans, stage improvements, life-safety stair towers, seating layouts, acoustic improvements, and mechanical infrastructure. Three potential seating options were presented, ranging from approximately 550 to 613 seats, depending on row spacing, aisle configuration, and seating comfort. The study recommends retaining flexibility so that future decisions may be coordinated with an operating partner and business plan.

Following the presentation, discussion was held regarding whether to reopen the public portion for comment. It was noted that the report had been received for the first time that evening and should be made available to the public for review before additional comments are received at a future meeting.

Motion by Brian Coppolo, seconded by Dana Florenza, to reopen the public portion for comments regarding the Steinberg Hart presentation. Motion carried unanimously.
Public Portion -Reopened

Dave Condon commended Steinberg Hart on the quality and thoroughness of the study, stating that it was one of the most comprehensive theater studies he had reviewed. He cautioned that federal funding and tax credit opportunities may be uncertain and noted that state funding, grants from national historic theater organizations, and other fundraising sources should be explored. Mr. Condon stated that a realistic fundraising campaign may take approximately thirty-six months rather than twenty-four months and that construction financing may be supported by pledged commitments if a sufficient percentage of pledges is secured. He further stated that a business plan should consider

revenue-producing uses within the building, including possible restaurant or tenant space, and emphasized the need to approach the project with realistic expectations regarding competitive bidding, construction costs, and rising material costs. Mr. Condon thanked Steinberg Hart for their work and stated that the study provided an important foundation for moving the project forward.

There being no further comments, the Commission returned to the regular order of business.

9. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Dana Florenza and seconded by Karleen Guluzzy The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Desroches

Received
JUL 17 2026
Derby, CT Town Clerk's Office