

**Approved**

**VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE  
PERFORMING ARTS STUDY COMMISSION  
Village Hall, Ante Room  
801 Burlington Ave.**

**February 4, 2004  
7:30 a.m.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Commissioner Urban, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Eichmann, Ms. Murphy, Mr. Humphreys, Ms. Schroeder, Mr. Jaros, Ms. Weiher

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Ms. Gottlieb, Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Hamernik, Mr. Ball, Mr. Wilkey

**STAFF:** Douglas Kozlowski, Staff Liaison to the Performing Arts Study Commission, Janene Cerulli, Recording Secretary

**OTHERS:** None

Mr. Urban called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

**I. Approval of Minutes**

**Mr. Urban** asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2003 meeting.

Mr. Johnson motioned to approve. Mr. Humphreys seconded.

Minutes were approved.

**Mr. Johnson** asked that the pages of future minutes be numbered. He also noted that on what would be page four, the dates appear to be incorrect. The years that are mentioned should be 2004 instead of 2003, and 2004 should be 2005.

**II. Definition of Performing Arts Center**

**Mr. Urban** said that discussion at last meeting was to come back with a definition of a performing arts center. He opened the floor for discussion.

**Mr. Johnson** said that he belongs to the League of American Historic Theatres. He surveyed some of the members and asked them for definitions of performing arts centers. He handed out copies of the email replies that he received and highlighted their definitions.

**Mr. Humphreys** began to read what he had prepared. He said he didn't feel he was qualified to do a full needs assessment, but that is underway, so we can analyze and

develop what we think the community will support. He said he is primarily interested in providing a first class facility for local and nearby arts organizations. Secondary to that would be a larger, regional center for touring productions, if it can be justified. To that extent, he foresees a proscenium auditorium with 300-500 seats. He said that number is negotiable, but the needs assessment would help determine what seats are currently being filled and what we think the opportunities are. The facility would support both theater and music and would be able to handle a moderate sized orchestra and/or a dance troupe and a reasonable sized play. The facility would include appropriate backstage facilities for scene storage, dressing rooms, and possible fly loft (a stage tower that you can raise and lower). The wish list also includes an orchestra pit, with the size to be determined by the needs assessment.

He also envisions a 100 seat black space, separate from the other space, for smaller theater presentations, plays, recitals, etc. It would be a reconfigurable space that can be set up in different formats. He thinks that the Mac Arts Center would serve as a decent model.

The options he would like to see are an art gallery for changing art exhibitions, (similar to what you see in the library lobby), rehearsal spaces, scene/costume shops, a catering kitchen, storage space for frequent users, and a Sears Home Gallery. Other possibilities include meeting rooms for community groups and perhaps for Village functions and permanent office space. He said that a facility like this needs occupancy, to have somebody there. When there are no performances, the building is dark. Having office space there, for possibly the Chamber, Downtown Management, or Tourism and Events Department keeps the space open to the public and not closed off. These possibly permanent tenants could share an office infrastructure of copy machines, etc. Temporary office space could also be offered to frequent users. Possibly DGTV studios could be housed at the facility.

**Mr. Kozlowski** agreed with that idea. He said that at the least, the facility should be outfitted to accommodate videotaping.

Finally, if feasibility could be demonstrated, Mr. Humphreys envisions a separate larger facility for regional touring productions.

**Ms. Murphy** said that in comparison to Mr. Humphreys, her views might be a bit more simplistic. She has always liked the Theater of Western Springs. In her mind, it represents the community theater prototype. She recently attended a production there and received a back stage tour of the facility. They have a base of volunteer support and have 2,500 subscribers. It has a 400 seat main stage, 125 seat forum theater/rehearsal space, a small room for children's productions and drama students, a large prop storage area, dressing rooms, and set shops. They have a box office and a small kitchen area.

She said that this is a community theater. It is funded by grants, tickets and donations. It is free standing and self-governing. The building is used every day from after school to early evening for educational programs and then used for rehearsal for the productions. Volunteers provide maintenance for the building. The facility is run by their own board of directors. She said it is more of a theater community with a strong social base, not just a performing arts center.

**Mr. Jaros** said that Ms. Murphy's description is very similar to Mr. Humphreys'. He compared the two. There was some banter regarding Western Springs' lack of music.

**Mr. Humphreys** said that is a major difference between Theater of Western Springs and his concept. Western Springs is a theater. His concept includes music and dance.

**Mr. Jaros** said that is a fundamental difference between the two. How would this be determined? There was discussion that the differences in features in the facility would be determined by the needs survey.

There was discussion about how the Theater of Western Springs is funded, operates, and some of its history.

**Ms. Schroeder** said that after they take a look at the needs study, they should consider the need for meeting space and classes for children. She referred to the Beverly Arts Center in Chicago and said that when she was growing up, the facility served a need for many. Kids went to summer school classes there for music, theater, and art. The community had a vested interest in the facility as everyone used it in some way. It would be important that the facility is something that the whole community can take part in, not necessarily just for theater performances. She feels that everyone is looking for meeting space and it should be considered. It would also gain community support.

**Ms. Eichmann** then shared her own vision. She referenced some comments made by Mr. Humphreys at the last meeting regarding the facility serving as both an artistic engine to foster the performing arts and quality of life in the community, but also be an economic engine. In looking at the financial implications of a performing arts center, you can't just look at the budgets, but the impact the facility will have on the business community. She feels that the center should be constructed in the downtown area or close to it.

She envisions a small theater with about 300 seats with convertible front row seats to accommodate a small pit orchestra. She mentioned some specific measurements of the stage/performance area. It would include good acoustics, storage areas for risers, etc. owned by the theater, and dressing rooms. Bookings would include small self-presenting or partially subsidized professional music groups, plays, dance programs etc. as well as local groups, including established ones in neighboring communities. Two additional rooms would provide small meeting space for up to 50 people and the other for use as an art gallery, special crafts, music workshops, etc. She would also like to see a catering kitchen. She believes an arts management staff is necessary, which can be a combination of volunteers and non-volunteers. One problem she foresees with having more than one theater group housed at the facility is the sharing of space equally. There has to be a manager to coordinate things and make decisions when the two groups cannot agree on space/rehearsal/storage issues. She spoke of an interesting stage floor at a theater at her son's university that should be looked into. The floor is similar to a Marley dance floor. Any kind of set piece can be anchored into the floor. After the production, the holes are filled with a substance and the surface is restored.

**Mr. Johnson** referred to the piece he distributed to the group and commented how much of what has been said is included in the responses he received. One thing he found interesting in speaking with architect Chris Wineman, was that a large number of performing spaces do not have their rehearsals at the facility itself because the real estate is so expensive. According to Mr. Wineman, rehearsal space is more important than performing space, as there are more rehearsals than performances and you can't afford to be using performance real estate for rehearsals. Many places make the mistake of tying up performance space with rehearsal time, which produces little or no revenue. He also spoke of some interesting box office concepts. One of Mr. Wineman's clients located their box office in the busiest mall in Denver. The box office needs to be open as many hours as possible and be located where there is foot traffic. Mr. Wineman suggested in their conversation that three things be considered: the components of the box office, performance space, and rehearsal space. It was also advised that storage at the facility be limited. Every theater group will want to store their things if allowed and it can get out of control. Mr. Johnson also noted that several people that responded to him mentioned that a performing arts center is multi-functional facility—not just theater, but also dance, music, performance space, etc. so that it serves everybody, which as everyone knows, can be difficult to do.

**Ms. Weiher** said that it sounds like everyone is pretty much close to being on the same page, at least as far as the wish list goes. She did read the comments to the survey and made changes. Her vision is to accommodate the small arts groups in and near the Village. She does not see bringing in large touring companies, as there are enough venues in the area to compete with. She would like to see much of what Mr. Humphreys suggested, but doesn't know whether or not it's possible, but it is a goal to work towards. She would like to see a space that is adaptable and used for as many groups as possible. She agrees with Ms. Eichmann that management of the facility is essential, with possibly a couple paid positions to oversee the facility. She also likes the idea of having the box office in a location such as downtown.

There was discussion about making ticket sales available online. There was other discussion about the use of Lincoln Center, the types of classes offered there and the age groups. There was discussion regarding the gap of students not served by school arts programs because only a certain number of students are accepted, yet there are who kids still want to participate and learn.

**Ms. Weiher** said that Grove Players use Lincoln Center's auditorium for their plays. It is an old building with old equipment. There are no dressing rooms, orchestra pits, etc. but it still gets used all the time. She said that there is a huge need out there for space.

**Mr. Kozlowski** said that he was at a meeting of the Partnership for Healthier Communities, which is a coalition of social service agencies, the school districts, park district, and police and fire. Since the discussion was about the need to bridge the gap for certain demographics, he mentioned the Partnership's 40 Assets Survey. Part of that survey addresses what enrichment activities are provided for the middle group of kids to keep them on the straight and narrow. The survey discussed how the arts could fill a void for these students. He made mention to that group of the Performing Arts Study Commission (PASC) and made them aware of what is being

studied. The Partnership for Healthier Communities would like to present some of their materials to PASC at a future date to benefit the goals of both groups and build community support for the project.

**Mr. Humphreys** said that two points could be touched on; what facilities they would need and what kind of support they could lend to us.

**Mr. Urban** suggested that the presentation be set up at a time when all members of the commission could be present.

**Mr. Jaros** asked whether the auditorium at the Lincoln Center is amenable for some sort of refurbishing, to make better use of it. He is not sure if it is amenable for reconfiguration to modernize it and make it more useable for the performing arts. However, if a structure already exists with a large enough room, if it is indeed large enough, then he assumes that it could be redone for a fraction of the cost.

**Ms. Weiher** said the Lincoln Center auditorium is probably on the high side of a small theater. She thinks it is something to be looked at.

**Mr. Humphreys** said he would have a concern about ceiling height. There would also be the issue of backstage facilities.

**Mr. Urban** interjected that perhaps we were putting the cart before the horse and asked to close the discussion regarding the definition of a performing arts center. He heard a lot of the same ideas. In summary, the definition of performing arts that he has heard is a “multi-purpose structure designed to accommodate local and regional profit and not-for-profit theater, musical and art performances”.

Someone asked if music included dance. Mr. Urban asked if we wanted to be so specific as to say musical, art, theater, dance, etc. in the definition.

The consensus seemed to be that at this time we did not want to be so specific. Mr. Urban said that as the minutes come back next time, we’d take this current definition and polish it so that we have a finalized definition to add to our mission statement.

There was some discussion over what else to include in the definition.

**Mr. Urban** said that we would discuss this topic again next time and finalize a definition, as he wanted to move on to the survey discussion.

**Mr. Johnson** questioned if we wanted to include regional in the definition, as he wonders whether we would have the money or the ability to be regional.

**Mr. Urban** said he does not want to eliminate the potential for some regional group from using the facility someday and that is why he used the word regional in his definition.

**Ms. Weiher** said she would like to see local as a primary goal, and regional as a secondary. Mr. Urban said that could be stated in the definition. There was discussion about using the term regional and what some thought it would mean.

There was some discussion regarding the Metropolis Arts Center in Arlington Heights and its impending sale.

After some discussion of the term not-for-profit, Ms. Eichmann suggested using the term local arts organizations. There was mixed discussion of a few points unrelated to the discussion of the definition of performing arts center.

**Mr. Urban** suggested that they move on to the survey.

### **III. Review of Draft Survey**

Regarding the cover page and to whom the survey would be sent, **Mr. Jaros** asked that Brotherhood of Harmony Chorus be added.

**Mr. Urban** asked to include the school districts and churches, as well as non-local (out of town) profit groups. There was discussion to include Hinsdale Music Club, Artists Showcase West, The Planko Folk Music Society, and the Library (to get a list of who uses their space and what other spaces they may use for their programs.)

**Ms. Weiher** asked Mr. Humphreys if he would be willing to organize sending out the email with the survey to the groups.

**Mr. Kozlowski** said that if given the list of contacts, the Village could send the survey, and perhaps even use the Village's return permit number to get the surveys back.

**Mr. Urban** asked if we wanted to include the Chamber on the list. The group agreed.

**Mr. Urban** said he had nothing but accolades for the survey. He asked for any comments to be addressed now, as he would like to get this out as soon as possible.

**Ms. Schroeder** said that maybe the survey should be sent to some businesses that may be in need of meeting space. **Mr. Johnson** said that at this time we're not trying to develop a mailing list of potential users, but get some feedback of needs. Ms. Schroeder clarified that this may be further down the line, but businesses should be asked their needs at some point.

**Mr. Humphreys** mentioned adding Vox Caelistis choral group to the list.

**Mr. Kozlowski** mentioned to Ms. Eichmann that she had spoken of putting the survey on the internet and allowing respondents to take the survey there.

**Ms. Eichmann** said she thinks people would print it and fill it out manually and mail it to a given address.

**Mr. Kozlowski** commented that having the survey on the internet may open it up to too wide of a group. He said that the way the survey is structured, it will be difficult to tabulate the results if there is a larger response.

**Ms. Schroeder** asked if there could possibly be more than one survey. There was some discussion pertaining to using the survey as a start to assess needs and then having a second survey available online for residents to respond to.

**Mr. Humphreys** agreed that at some point we will need to go to the community and ask for more input.

There was discussion about making the public aware of what the commission is doing. It was suggested that perhaps something could be included in the Village newsletter.

**Ms. Eichmann** addressed a portion of the 1999 DuPage County Performing Arts Needs Assessment regarding the Arts Incubator program in Arlington County, Virginia and disputed some of that information.

**Mr. Urban** said that the goals of the next meeting will be to finalize the definition of a performing arts center, finalize the survey and set a deadline for its mailing.

**Ms. Weiher** had some comments about the survey she wanted to review. She incorporated most of Mr. Humphreys' ideas except for the questions about scene and costume shop and storage.

**Mr. Urban** said that after today's discussion, there should be questions about storage needs. After discussion about whether or not to include storage needs questions on the survey, the consensus was yes to ask them.

**Ms. Weiher** asked if a question regarding set building shop space should be included.

**Mr. Johnson** agreed it should be asked to get a sense of direction.

**Ms. Murphy** wondered if a question should be asked of the groups whether or not they have an educational component. The group agreed it was a good idea.

**Ms. Weiher** said that she also added a question to ask if the groups displayed or sold merchandise in the lobby. She asked if there were any other additional comments. There were none.

**Mr. Humphreys** asked for a deadline for the survey. **Mr. Urban** said February 28, the next meeting. **Ms. Weiher** said she needed a date before then and said February 15.

There was some discussion regarding email communication and correct email addresses.

**Mr. Urban** said that one of the items he would like to put on the agenda for the next meeting is location, meaning the location of the proposed facility.

**Ms. Murphy** asked if the Feb 28 meeting would be at Village Hall or Public Works.

**Mr. Kozlowski** suggested we keep it at Village Hall as the recording equipment is here and room space is reserved for the Saturday meeting dates. The group confirmed that the meeting time would be at 8:00 a.m.

#### **IV. Adjournment**

**Mr. Urban** asked if there was any other final discussion. There were no further comments.

**Mr. Urban** adjourned the meeting at 9:22 a.m.