

Theatre Workshop of Nantucket

Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, September 11, 2018
Upstairs at The Corner Table
22 Federal Street, Nantucket

Directors present: John Copenhaver, Nina Duchaine, Beth English, Jane Forman, Ellie Gottwald, Susan Lucier, Chris Mortenson, Maria Roach, Lisa Soeder,

Directors on the phone: Marianne Moscicki, Les Silverman

Council members present: Kathy Garre-Ayars, Victoria Girvan, Susan Hostetler, Peggy Kaufman, Jeff Lucier, Linda Mason, Joanna Roche

Council member on the phone: Carole Beller

Staff present: Danica Connors, Justin Cerne, John Shea

Welcome and Call to Order: Susan L. called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. She welcomed everyone and apologized for inadvertently scheduling the meeting on Rosh Hashanah.

Approval of Minutes of the August 6, 2018 board meeting: Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

President's Remarks:

- A big thank you to Susan Hostetler for hosting a private party to raise money for A Safe Place and TWN. We received two checks totaling \$1,500.
- We are still collecting money from the benefit paddle raise. A couple of commitments are still outstanding.
- Justin and Susan have started interviewing General Manager candidates.
- Best wishes to Judy Seinfeld and her family. Her son suffered a severe accident but is on the road to recovery.
- The Annual Meeting on October 8 will be held in the Community Room of the Police Station. Executive sessions will be a regular part of this and every future board meeting.
- Fall Appeal: Susan introduced Danica, who talked about the process for personalizing appeal letters and handed out packets of note cards and various prospect lists. Justin said that personal notes make a huge difference in fundraising effectiveness.

Treasurer's report: Chris said he finally received financial statements from Dolphin Resource Group, and he distributed packets that included P&L budget comparisons for 2016 actual, 2017 budget and actual, 2018 budget and 2018 actual through July; a balance sheet as of July 31, 2018; and an updated cash report. He started his report with a "history lesson":

- Chris was elected Treasurer in June 2017. A month earlier, then-board president Leslie Bains summarily fired our long-time bookkeeper Adam Berman and hired Worcester-based Dolphin, despite the fact that they had no other Nantucket clients and no other theatre clients. We are now working to terminate our relationship with Dolphin as of December 31, 2018, and to bring Adam back as our bookkeeper. He knows our complicated operation well and won't require a learning curve; however, our relationship with him will be more formal than it was in the past.
- Under the administration of Joe Hale, we lost money in 2014, 2015 and 2016, despite the success of the 2016 benefit featuring Meryl Streep—primarily because other fundraising was neglected and expenses were not properly controlled.

- Under the administration of Leslie Bains, Chris estimated that we lost money in at least the first half of 2017, because revenue assumptions were too optimistic, fundraising was neglected and expenses exceeded budget. In September 2017, Ms. Bains resigned and Susan L. was elected president.
- Through seven months of 2018, we generated a surplus of \$21K. August was also profitable and we are slightly ahead of budget, but “we cannot declare victory yet.” To close the year in the black, we must have strong ticket sales for *The Cocktail Hour* and *Miracle on 34th Street*, a successful Fall Appeal and a few more producer and/or grant commitments.
- On August 21, Chris, Susan and Justin met with ReMain to request additional financial assistance, and we are in the process of preparing formal proposals for a grant to fund a strategic planning process and another matching grant.
- The Budget Committee has begun working on the 2019 budget with a goal of showing a meaningful surplus without unrealistic revenue assumptions.

Development report: Jeff provided a few updates:

- Vantage Philanthropy’s engagement ended on August 31, but they are willing to help us through the transition. Jeff will follow up on open items.
- We want to get a head start on 2019 sponsorships.
- The Verdura jewelry trunk show resulted in a donation to TWN of \$21,115, and we will receive their check next week. Thanks to Carole Beller for introducing us to Verdura and thanks to Max and Pam Berry for hosting the event. Verdura wants to do it again next summer.
- We have underperformed in the Grants category, but we hope to send out a few more requests before yearend, and we are exploring options for next year.
- What we really need is a “cushion”—a.k.a. a sustaining fund or endowment. Our new strategic plan will address this.

Comments and suggestions

- Carole offered to make introductions to people at Fidelity Foundation and the Fidelity Charitable Giving Account and to explore the feasibility of building an endowment with gifts of appreciated stock.
- John S. was shocked to read that the Dreamland received a \$300K grant from the state of Massachusetts to expand their movie theatre into a full theatre space.
- Joanna asked about our office lease. It expires on December 31, 2019, but we can sublet with the landlord’s permission. Justin asked for suggestions of any potential sub-letters.

Marketing report: Ellie said she is finishing up the final business sponsor recognition program in the Bennett Hall lobby.

- “We will not reinvent the wheel” next year.
- Working to establish how cabarets work so we can produce them with no out-of-pocket cost and they will run smoothly.

Nominating and Governance: reporting for Terry Schubach, Susan L. said a new lineup of Board and Council members will be presented for approval at the Annual Meeting in October. Terry will send out names and background information next week.

- We need to recruit experts in finance, law and real estate; please send suggestions to Terry.
- Victoria spoke about the need for diversity. She will reach out to Charity-Grace Lambert at the African Meeting House.
- John S. revealed that he is working with Neville Richen on a show about Absalom Boston, the first African-American whaling captain.

Artistic Director's report: Justin said *Footloose* met its revenue projection and *Moby Dick Rehearsed*, featuring new immersive elements added by John S., sold out every night.

- MDR is our “signature Nantucket piece.”
- The Latter Day cabaret was a big success, and both cabarets made money; many thanks to Chris for his support.
- *The Cocktail Hour* by A.R. Gurney opens Thursday night. Bennett Hall is totally transformed as a theatre in the round. Directed by Dan Foster, the production is “a lovely blend of professional and local talent.” Revenue projections are aggressive. Justin asked everyone to come and bring friends.
- Thanks to Anna-Karin Dillard for hosting the cast welcome party on Labor Day.
- Eighteen local actors auditioned for *Miracle on 34 th Street*. There's lots of young talent on the island. We are the only island theatre that puts local kids on the stage with pro actors. Hoping for producer or grant support for what we do for children, which is “unique to Nantucket.”
- We are only halfway through our season and there's still a lot happening, so it's important to keep the energy up.
- Justin thanked Susan H. for writing thank you notes for him and sending them with copies of the Playbill to those who attended her soiree.
- Justin is deeply involved in the budget process. Housing is our biggest expense, and we need to find ways to bring it down. John S. said the Nantucket Yacht Club has a large dormitory whose rooms are empty for part of the year and might be rentable.
- We need to stay aware of the competition but focus on what we do well: what happens on the stage.

Comments and suggestions

- Joanna suggested applying for a grant to fund actor housing from the Community Preservation Committee, an entity separate from the Town of Nantucket that gives out over a million dollars a year.

New Business

- Susan L. said that following a suggestion from Kay Bernon, she and Justin are creating a timeline for the rest of this year and next year to guide us in accomplishing our objectives in a timely fashion and to see at a glance what's ahead. Items will include (but not be limited to) Business Sponsorship sales, the 2019 Producer package, the Benefit kick-off (with the possibility of honoring someone), grant planning, and the Fall Appeal.
- John S. displayed a copy of a new book by India Blake, *Before the Curtain Goes Up*, which features backstage photos of a TWN production. He suggested selling copies in our lobby for a share of the revenue. Justin and John will discuss sponsoring a book signing and cocktail party event at Bennett Hall.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 10:22 a.m. and the Board convened in Executive Session.