

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
September 20, 2011 - Revised

City Commission Work Session

Mayor Pro Tempore Jones presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: City Commissioners present: Bill Bronson, Fred Burow, Mary Jolley, and Robert Jones. Also present were the City Attorney; Directors of Fiscal Services, Planning and Community Development, and Public Works; Deputy Director of Park and Recreation; Executive Director of the Housing Authority; Fire Chief; Police Chief; and the Administrative Secretary.

1. MANSFIELD CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS UPDATE

Events Supervisor Dona Hughes reported The Mansfield is an anchor for Downtown Great Falls. There were 794 event days in the last fiscal year, with a total attendance of 129,231. Non-profits comprised 86% of the activities. She added the Park and Recreation Survey in January, 2009 named the Civic Center as second amongst the top six utilized Park and Recreation facilities, with paved trails in first place.

Ms. Hughes reviewed the downtown vision, explaining the amenities that make downtown the place to be, day and night. The Mansfield provides a significant contributing entertainment factor.

Ms. Hughes reported a goal of the Downtown Master Plan is to make downtown a regional destination for entertainment, culture, shopping, and dining. Objectives include marketing downtown's entertainment, culture, shopping, and dining and increasing the utilization of the Convention Center and the Mansfield Center for the Performing Arts. The objectives are also goals of staff and the Mansfield Center for the Performing Arts Advisory Board.

Ms. Hughes noted the largest room in The Mansfield is the Theater, with seating capability up to 1,782 in an acoustic concert. The Convention Center can hold up to 2,200 for a stand-up event.

Ms. Hughes reviewed statistics for the last fiscal year for the Theater, Box Office, Convention Center, Missouri Room, and the other meeting rooms. She reported that use of the Convention Center as an extra dressing room for Broadway shows allows Great Falls to be on the route of bigger venues.

Improvements from economic stimulus and building funds included repair of the Civic Center roof, remodel of the dressing room and green room, and climate control in the Theater. The Theater sound system renovation, Phase One, was completed through funding from an Arts & Culture grant and Mansfield earned revenues. A long throw LCD projector was purchased, and two new pianos were donated valued at \$190,000.

Ms. Hughes reported The Mansfield provides three areas of service: (1) Arts, Culture, and Entertainment; (2) Tourism; and (3) Rental Space. The Mansfield Advisory Board receives public input and advises on issues intrinsic to The Mansfield. Four main goals of the Board include fundraising, public relations, marketing, and physical improvements.

The Mansfield goals include increased revenue by completing and implementing a Preferred Caterers Program, continued improvements to the light and sound systems and the audio/visual equipment, and providing internet service.

Commissioner Burow asked for clarification on the Preferred Caterers Program. Ms. Hughes responded anyone can sign a contract with The Mansfield, as long as they have the proper licensing, stating they will pay \$0.50 per head for under \$10 and \$1.00 per head for over \$10 to help defray the costs. They will also pledge to clean up after themselves. No fee would be charged when the food is donated.

Ms. Hughes noted one of the big challenges will be replacing the seating in the Theater; the seats are mechanically worn out. She recommended working with an architect to develop a plan to consider seating that would accommodate people needing assistance.

Ms. Hughes also noted goals include attracting new arts, culture, and entertainment that appeals to the young adult, working with local and national presenters/promoters; providing quality service by recruiting and retaining quality, cross-trained staff; and increasing tourism by working with the Great Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Tourism Business Improvement District, and the Great Falls Lodging Association.

Ms. Hughes reported The Mansfield is on borrowed time with the electronic message board. Scheduling software also needs to be upgraded. The Mansfield Advisory Board and staff continue to advocate for maintenance and preservation of the historic Civic Center; the public parking shortage at the Civic Center; installation of air-conditioning in the Convention Center; and updating/remodeling the Convention Center.

Ms. Hughes reviewed the alcohol policy for The Mansfield. The City doesn't own a liquor license, and The Mansfield policy doesn't allow food or beverage in the Theater. Commissioner Jones expressed concern that beer has been spilled on steps making them extremely slippery. Ms. Hughes will pass on that information for future preparation.

Ms. Hughes reported the partnership with the Montana Department of Commerce to produce the Made in Montana Marketplace will continue. The Mansfield has hosted the show for seven years in partnership with the State. She reviewed the stats for the 2011 Marketplace and noted Billings has been courting the State for the event. She noted the main mission of the show is to train local producers to go on to bigger markets.

Ms. Hughes reported that a committee of staff and The Mansfield Advisory Board has been working to develop a 12-month marketing, public relations, and outreach plan to promote the

facility; attract future events; increase ticket sales; look at community partnerships and sponsorships; identify collateral needs such as a brochure; look at in-kind trade for marketing/promotions; and increase name recognition for The Mansfield.

Deputy Director of Park and Recreation Patty Rearden noted the consensus of the committee has been to call the facility “The Mansfield” and build on that identity with a simple logo. For marketing purposes only, the various elements can be identified such as the theater, convention center, meeting rooms, event space, and box office. While the official name will remain the “Mansfield Center for the Performing Arts”, the shortened version of the name, with a simple logo, will help people identify the entire facility.

Ms. Hughes reviewed contracted and signed upcoming events.

Commissioner Bronson asked if any thought has been giving to the parking issue. Ms. Hughes responded The Mansfield Advisory Board will need to brainstorm the issue.

Commissioner Burow suggested a shuttle service from the parking garage. He asked if The Trolley Lady may be interested. Ms. Hughes questioned if a shuttle service would be cost effective.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor ~~Pro Tempore Jones Winters~~ **Pro Tempore Jones** adjourned the work session of September 20, 2011, at 6:32 p.m.