

MINUTES
WAR MEMORIAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Thursday, May 11, 2023

The Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco met in regular session on Thursday, May 11, 2023, at 2:00 p.m., in the Trustees' Board Room, War Memorial Opera House, President Horn presiding.

ROLL CALL

Present: President Horn, Trustee Fisher, Trustee Gatti, Trustee Kopp, Trustee Newstat, and Trustee Wilsey

Absent: Vice President Lui, Trustee Muduroglu, Trustee Pelosi (*participated by video, not counted towards quorum*), Trustee Rocco, and Trustee Wright

Staff Present: Rob Levin, Acting Managing Director/Executive Secretary

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Horn congratulated the Ballet on completing their 2023 season, which ended April 30, 2023. He stated that the Board is looking forward to next season, which will be Tamara Rojo's inaugural season at the Ballet. On behalf of the Trustees, President Horn wished the Opera the best as they embark on their upcoming summer season, with the first performance of *Madame Butterfly* set for June 3, 2023.

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Approval of Consent Agenda: Acting Managing Director Levin stated that items submitted on the Consent Agenda included: the minutes of the April 13, 2023 Regular Board meeting; the minutes of the April 13, 2023 Building Committee meeting; Rental Requests for May 11, 2023; and the Revenue, Appropriations and Housekeeping Expenditures reports for April 2023.

Following discussion, on motion of Trustee Wilsey, seconded by Trustee Gatti, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

RESOLUTION NO. 23-15

RESOLVED, By the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San the minutes of the April 13, 2023 Regular Board meeting; the minutes of the April 13, 2023 Building Committee meeting; Rental Requests for May 11, 2023; and the Revenue, Appropriations and Housekeeping Expenditures reports for April 2023 are hereby approved.

Director Levin also reported that the Borrower's Agreement between the War Memorial and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, for the sculptures displayed on the War Memorial campus, has been signed and finalized. He also stated that Café Valor, in the lobby of the Veterans Building, has reopened. He noted the hours for the café will be Tuesday through Thursday, 8:30am to 2:30pm, and they looking forward to the successful relaunch. Gina Robak, General Manager of Global Gourmet Catering, noted that there was signage put up in City Hall to announce the reopening.

Director Levin updated the Board that the department's requested capital budget expenditures were preliminarily granted, including 1.3 million dollars for one elevator modernization project in the Opera House and the remaining 7 million dollars for the mansard roof project. He thanked the finance team for pushing these projects through. President Horn also thanked Donna D'Cruz, Director of Finance and Administration, Director Levin,

department staff, and Vice President Lui for their hard work on getting this completed. Ms. D’Cruz also thanked President Horn for his assistance with the project.

REGULAR ITEMS

War Memorial Managing Director (Director II) Candidate Search: President Horn updated the Board on the search for the Managing Director. He noted that the deadline for applications has passed and there were 30 applications submitted. He also reported to the Board that Acting Managing Director Rob Levin has withdrawn his application. President Horn noted that a number of new candidates emerged, that were not captured in the previous search. He stated that the finalists will be interviewed on May 31, 2023, and hopes that the Special Hiring Committee can reach consensus. He noted that then he wants to bring it to the Board soon after, because the farther into the summer it gets, the more difficult it becomes to schedule meetings.

President Horn then invited Donna D’Cruz to speak about the vetting process. Ms. D’Cruz noted that the application deadline was May 5, 2023, and she plans to review the new applications with President Horn after the Board meeting, to determine who the Special Hiring Committee will be interviewing on May 31, 2023. She reported that after candidates are selected, the department must do a mandatory criminal background check done by the Department of Justice, before the second round of interviews and offers can be made. Trustee Fisher and Judge Kopp asked whether it was realistic to get things done prior to the June 8, 2023 Regular Meeting, if the interviews are being done on May 31, 2023. Ms. D’Cruz noted that it is a tight schedule, and she will do her best to turn around things quickly. President Horn stated that they have good candidates and ideally hopes that the Committee can come to a consensus in the first round of interviewing. He also noted that if the June 8 meeting does not give enough time to bring a candidate to the full Board, they are able to call a Special Meeting of the Board for that purpose. Trustee Pelosi asked President Horn whether he thought the expedited process reflects the strength of the candidate pool. President Horn agreed with the assessment and that as a City Department, the Department really needs a Managing Director at the helm. The Trustees briefly discussed scheduling for the next meeting and President Horn noted that staff would poll the Board for alternative dates to schedule.

Request from San Francisco Opera to install bas relief sculpture of David Gockley (San Francisco Opera’s Sixth General Director) in the Opera House: President Horn stated that prior to the meeting, Trustees received a letter from Matthew Shilvock, General Director of the San Francisco Opera, requesting the consideration of a bas relief sculpture of David Gockley, San Francisco Opera's sixth General Director, to be placed in the lobby of the War Memorial Opera House. President Horn invited Matthew Shilvock to address the Board. Mr. Shilvock noted that all summer Opera productions are currently in rehearsal, including a new production of *Madame Butterfly*, a production of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* that will wow audiences, as well as the premiere of *Frida y Diego*, noting that Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera were actually remarried at San Francisco City Hall.

Mr. Shilvock thanked the Board for their partnership on the Pamela Rosenberg bas relief, installed last year. He noted that the Opera is now turning to the commemoration of the sixth General Director, David Gockley. He stated that Mr. Gockley’s influence is not only felt at the San Francisco Opera, but on the history of American opera and world opera. He noted that Mr. Gockley commissioned nine world premieres at the San Francisco Opera, installed the Koret-Taube media suite, oversaw the redevelopment of the Veterans Building with the creation of the Wilsey Center for Opera, and his influence is indelible on the San Francisco Opera. Mr. Shilvock noted it is Mr. Gockley’s 80th birthday this year, so they hope to get this completed in the fall. He pointed out that included in the Board packet is information on a sculptor in consideration, Jennifer Fraudakis, based in Pennsylvania, as well as the proposed location for the bas relief in the Opera House. Mr. Shilvock stated that they could have Ms. Fraudakis begin to get to know Mr. Gockley over the summer, start sculpting in the fall, with a completed project by December, and respectfully requested the Board’s consideration. Trustee Kopp asked how many sculptures are on display. Mr. Shilvock responded that there are currently five bas relief sculptures for the previous five General Directors. President Horn referred the matter to the Building Committee and requested they meet to consider the matter.

Consideration of Request from San Francisco Symphony to approval to seek entitlement from the City for possible future improvements to Davies Symphony Hall: President Horn noted that prior to the meeting, Trustees received a letter from the Symphony seeking permission from the War Memorial Board of Trustees to seek entitlement from the City of San Francisco for future improvements to Davies Symphony Hall. President Horn invited Andrew Dubowski, Senior Director of Operations for the San Francisco Symphony, to address the Trustees.

Mr. Dubowski noted that the Symphony has come before the Board many times over the years for requests to make improvements to Davies Symphony Hall. He stated that there is traction and interest and initial funding to do a study, to do major improvements to the front of Davies, which has not been touched since the acoustic renovation. Mr. Dubowski stressed that they are under a deadline, which is cause for the urgency of the request. He noted that Davies opened in 1980, and in 2025 it reaches the 45-year mark: which in San Francisco is contributory to historic status, at which time it becomes much more difficult and expensive to make additional improvements to buildings. He stated that the Symphony is looking to present their designs for the front-of-house and auditorium to the Building Committee, in order to preserve the Symphony's rights to a future entitlement. He reported that plans have to be submitted and approved by the City, at least in concept, by the fall of 2025. He also noted that the process to get this in front of the City takes approximately two years, which underscores the urgency of the request. Trustee Fisher also commented that there has been a lot of high-level thinking about how to make the building more welcoming and accessible, to accommodate modern audiences and their sensibilities.

President Horn referred to the Building Committee and requested that the Committee meet to review and consider approval of the request.

San Francisco Opera (Diversity, Equity & Community) Presentation on Community Engagement Framework & Upcoming Events:

President Horn announced that prior to the meeting Trustees received a presentation and letter from Matthew Shilvock announcing the development of a new community engagement framework for San Francisco Opera. President Horn invited Mr. Shilvock to introduce his team to the Trustees.

Mr. Shilvock opened by saying one of the central premises for the Opera's Centennial season was how to deepen the connection and sense of trust with the larger community. He elaborated that this commitment is demonstrated with the artistic programming: *Frida y Diego*, the company's first Spanish-language opera, with Spanish and English supertitles, will hope to bring in brand-new audiences. Mr. Shilvock noted that this programming will continue in the fall with Rhiannon Giddens' *Omar*, which recently won the Pulitzer Prize. He continued that the Opera's Department of Diversity, Equity and Community, just concluded a year-long storytelling program, where people have been coming into branches of the San Francisco Public Library and learning how to tell their story – as each of us has an opera story inside of us. He noted in bringing these new works to the stage, the Opera is focused on providing the appropriate context to audiences, that welcomes people into this world, to engage with the space in a new way. Mr. Shilvock introduced Interim Director Ryan Marchand to share the upcoming plans for activations on the War Memorial campus with the Board.

Mr. Marchand reminded the Board that he presented to the Trustees back in Fall 2021 about the Opera's collaboration with San Quentin inmates for the art installation related to the production of *Fidelio*, and he sees the proposed current activations as a continuation of that work. He described the framework as extending the experience of the production beyond the stage, to make it more accessible and inclusive. Mr. Marchand acknowledged that this framework has been recognized by virtue of a large grant they recently received from the Koret Foundation and is excited to share how this money will be used to continue activating the space in the Opera House this summer and beyond. He stated that producing grand opera in the 21st century requires new ways of presenting the work: a cohesive, collaborative, educational and reciprocal community-focused engagement making it both relevant and approachable to audiences. Mr. Marchand described the Opera's approach in two ways: through education and through engagement, as they hope to diversify their audiences, their artistic offerings, and their donor base.

Mr. Marchand described the first activation in Memorial Court to include live performances, culturally relevant and accessibly-priced food and drink by partnering with Global Gourmet Catering, and an interactive arts experience. He noted that for *Frida y Diego* the interactive installation will be a community altar, displayed prior to every performance. He explained that the Opera has been working closely with War Memorial staff to adhere

to all safety and security precautions for all activations. He then described the second type of activation, of having post-show talkbacks in the lower lounge, a new type of event for San Francisco Opera. He noted that cast members and creatives will be invited to connect with patrons in an informal Q&A experience. Mr. Marchand described the third type of activation as lobby installations. He noted that the first of these installations will be an app-based digital installation, cued by strategically placed posters in the Opera House. He also reported that this installation will include another partnership with San Quentin, where inmates will be creating an origami installation to adorn these posters. He concluded the presentation by saying these activations are designed to create resonance and affinity around the buildings and the resident companies, and to make the Opera House a destination sought out by audiences for an engaging artistic experience. Trustee Gatti requested to see the proposed designs for the installations.

Following discussion, on motion of Trustee Newstat, seconded by Trustee Wilsey, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

RESOLUTION NO. 23-16

RESOLVED, By the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco approves the request from the San Francisco Opera to activate the Memorial Court in both summer and fall 2023, and summer 2025, plus the additional activities of Post-Show Talkbacks in the Lower Lounge for *Frida y Diego* and a Lobby Installation for *Madame Butterfly* for summer 2023.

GOOD AND WELFARE

Trustee Fisher congratulated the Opera on having already booked the upcoming production of *Omar*, showing the great foresight to have that already in the pipeline, especially now with the recent Pulitzer Prize award. She also expressed excitement about the upcoming activations described by the Diversity, Equity & Community department. There being no further good and welfare, President Horn closed good and welfare.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There being no public comment, President Horn closed public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, President Horn adjourned the meeting at 2:53 p.m.



Rob Levin
Executive Secretary