

MINUTES
WAR MEMORIAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Thursday, August 10, 2023

The Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco met in regular session on Thursday, August 10, 2023, at 2:00 p.m., in the Trustees' Board Room, War Memorial Opera House, President Horn presiding.

ROLL CALL

Present: President Horn, Vice President Lui, Trustee Gatti, Trustee Muduroglu, Trustee Newstat, and Trustee Rocco, and Trustee Wright (*arrived at 2:10 p.m*)

Absent: Trustee Fisher, Trustee Kopp, Trustee Pelosi, Trustee Wilsey (*appeared on video, not counted towards quorum or voting*)

Staff Present: Kate Sofis, Managing Director; Rob Levin, Assistant Managing Director; Francesca Cicero, Board Secretary

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Horn opened the meeting by welcoming the new Managing Director Kate Sofis to the War Memorial. He encouraged all the Trustees to reach out to her with any questions. He also remarked that the San Francisco Symphony concluded their summer season on August 5, 2023, with two extremely well-attended concerts featuring the symphony and the singer Maxwell. President Horn congratulated the Symphony on an incredible 2022-2023 season and that the Board looks forward to the Symphony's Opening Gala for the 2023-24 season on Friday, September 22, 2023. He then noted that the San Francisco Opera began load-in on July 24, 2023, for their upcoming fall season. He remarked that the San Francisco Opera will open the season with a gala event on Friday, September 8, 2023, and wished them all the best on their upcoming season.

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Managing Director Kate Sofis opened her first Managing Director's Report expressing her deep appreciation for the opportunity to join the Department. She thanked the Assistant Managing Director Rob Levin for his service as Acting Managing Director of the Department for the last seven months. Director Sofis also remarked that Francesca Cicero, with her legal background and attention to detail, has stepped into the role of Board Secretary and had done a great job assisting with the operation of the Board administration, and will continue to refine the admin processes for the Board, including sending out calendar invites to the Board for meetings.

Director Sofis then turned to a brief discussion of the budget and where it currently stands. She first acknowledged the Director of Finance and Administration, Donna D'Cruz, who played a leadership role in the budget process, including presenting the budget to the Board of Supervisors. Director Sofis noted that the War Memorial, as all City departments, has a two-year budget, which has been passed and signed by Mayor Breed. Director Sofis stated that the War Memorial's budget for the 2023-24 Fiscal Year is \$37,741,287 dollars, which is about a million dollars more than the previous year. She remarked that the Department has sustained minimal cuts, while being a City Department and currently operating in a challenging fiscal environment. She stated that the Operating Budget was reduced by \$30,000 dollars and the Facilities and Maintenance Budget remained basically unchanged. Director Sofis also noted that the Department was able to make some cost savings through attrition, which is a way of forecasting how quickly the Department fills vacancies. She also noted that the Department negotiated an increase from the General Fund for interdepartmental services, to cover increased expenditures from the Public

Utilities Commission. She stated there was also a reduction in the budget for capital projects, of about \$100,000 dollars. She thanked Donna D’Cruz again for her work in negotiating and advocating for the Department’s needs. Director Sofis reported that the Department did receive \$7 million dollars for capital projects, which allow the Department to move forward on the mansard roof project. She also noted that the Department received another \$1.3 million to support the modernization of one of the Opera House elevators, noting that as each elevator is modernized, there are fewer repair costs in the long run. President Horn also thanked Vice President Lui for her tireless work on the mansard roof project.

Director Sofis thanked the employees on the team and noted that she feels encouraged to build upon that moving forward. She stated that she looks forward to supporting the resident companies and activate the buildings even further.

ASSISTANT MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Approval of Consent Agenda: Assistant Managing Director Levin stated that items submitted on the Consent Agenda included: the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting July 13, 2023; Rental Requests for August 10, 2023; and the Revenue, Appropriations and Housekeeping Expenditures reports for July 2023.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 23-21

RESOLVED, By the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting July 13, 2023; Rental Requests for August 10, 2023; and the Revenue, Appropriations and Housekeeping Expenditures reports for July 2023 are hereby approved.

Director Levin also updated the Board about the Kelsey Center at Van Ness and Grove, a disability forward housing project with community center, that will be under construction over the next year. He noted that the Department is working with the Kelsey Center on minimizing impact as they continue to build over the next year. Director Levin also reported that the City announced the first Civic Center Carnival from August 24-27, 2023. He remarked it is expected to bring a lot of people to the neighborhood with more positive activations in Civic Center planned in the future. Trustee Wright questioned whether the resident companies were involved in the Carnival. Director Sofis noted that she has been nominated to represent the interests of the Department on the Civic Center Community Benefit District Board, who are involved in supporting the activations in Civic Center. She proposed that it would be a good opportunity to learn about these activations earlier and help shape them moving forward. Director Sofis noted that this event is a Rec & Park event, to go along with some of the other Civic Center activations like the skate park slated for UN Plaza. Trustee Wright reiterated that any time there is an event like this, the arts should be included otherwise a huge opportunity is missed. Trustee Gatti also pointed out that these types of activations could be expensive for the resident companies. Trustee Wright noted that these are opportunities to get in front of new audiences. Trustee Muduroglu stated that it is important for children at an early age to be exposed to these types of art forms, which can then lead to more engagement later in life. Trustee Gatti mentioned the Black & White Ball, that used to be held, which activated Civic Center with the resident companies’ participation.

Director Levin noted that the Department has been working with a private film production, tangentially related to the San Francisco Ballet, which is both filming on the campus and has rented production space in the building, bringing some unanticipated rental revenue to the Department. He thanked the staff for their hard work in anticipation of the upcoming seasons.

Vice President Lui inquired about the rental activity for The Green Room. Director Levin explained that there is a challenging landscape right now, with organizations hesitant to make commitments right now. He noted that he and Director Sofis are looking at the pricing and rules associated with renting The Green Room and whether these are inhibiting rentals. Director Levin noted that inquiries and rentals are both down from previous years. Trustee

Wright stated that the Department should ask licensees who inquire, but do not rent, why they made that decision. Director Levin also noted that weddings in The Green Room are restricted to the months of July and August, due to noise-bleed in the buildings that interfere with activity in the Herbst Theatre. President Horn reiterated that we are a performing arts center first, and that in July and August there is not a conflict with performances in the theatre. Trustee Wright questioned whether they should be looking at doing things differently in these changed times. Trustee Gatti asked why there is an issue with weddings, since other events go on in The Green Room year-round. Director Levin noted that weddings are typically the loudest events, whereas for events at other times of the year, The Green Room has restrictions on noise levels, depending on any concurrent activity in the Herbst Theatre. Trustees agreed that looking for more revenue opportunities would be beneficial. Director Sofis discussed putting together a cross-department deep dive on each of the venues and would hope to have any Trustees that are interested to have the opportunity to engage on this issue. Trustee Rocco noted that in his experience with the Marines Memorial, both rental inquiries and room rentals are down, not due to price but due to the size of the room and the size of the party. He remarked that with regards to weddings, people want smaller groups in larger rooms, due to after-effects of COVID. Trustee Gatti asked about the marketing of the spaces. Director Sofis observed that these are beautiful spaces that people may not know about and to look at how to engage groups that typically have not been in these buildings previously. Trustee Gatti asked about what happened when City Arts and Lectures left the Herbst, what happened to that revenue. Director Levin noted that many of the licensees who use the Herbst, like SF Performances and smaller classical groups, expanded their offerings with more dates.

COMMITTEE REPORT

Building Committee Report: President Horn stated that the agenda item under consideration by the Building Committee on Tuesday was the review, consideration, and adoption of a recommendation to the Board regarding the San Francisco Opera's request to commission a bas relief sculpture commemorating former General Director David Gockley, to be installed in the Opera House main lobby. He noted that if approved by the Board of Trustees, the San Francisco Opera will work with War Memorial staff and Trustees to ensure that the final bas relief is of an appropriate design.

President Horn stated that Trustees previously received a letter from Matthew Shilvock outlining the request, including photos of previous works created by the Opera's proposed sculptor, and a diagram depicting the Opera's preferred location in which to install the bas relief. He noted that there also are photos of the preliminary design of the bas relief, which is currently being finalized with the artist.

President Horn reported that the Building Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the full Board 1) approval of the bas relief project moving forward and 2) the proposed location on the south side of the Opera House lobby. He elaborated that the Opera will return to the Building Committee once the bas relief design is finalized with the artist and Mr. Gockley, for further recommendation to the full Board. Trustee Gatti summarized the discussion of the Building Committee that they thought Mr. Gockley's face could be bigger and the sculpture could include less of the chandelier. Tom Mulder, of the San Francisco Opera, noted that the Opera will return to the Building Committee after taking the feedback back to the artist.

Following discussion, on motion of Trustee Muduroglu, seconded by Vice President Lui, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

RESOLUTION NO. 23-22

RESOLVED, By the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco the commission of the bas relief sculpture commemorating David Gockley, San Francisco Opera's Sixth General Director, and the proposed location in the Opera House lobby are hereby approved.

REGULAR ITEMS

Global Gourmet Catering Request to Extend Contract: President Horn stated that the Board received a letter and request from the concessionaire, Global Gourmet Catering, regarding their intent to extend their contract for

another five-year period. He invited James Kim, Vice President of Operations for Global Gourmet Catering, to address the Board. Mr. Kim thanked the Board for the opportunity to extend their contract and that Global Gourmet Catering looks forward to exceeding the goals of the War Memorial and its partners, while making visits to the campus memorable for all patrons. Mr. Kim updated the Board on the progress of Café Valor, that after three months, is at the break-even point. President Horn encouraged everyone to visit the café, which is open Tuesday through Thursday 8:30am-2:30pm while they ramp up operations. Director Sofis also brought Katy Tang, Executive Director of the Office of Small Business, to the café for her input on marketing to City Hall and others in the neighborhood. Trustee Wright asked whether Global Gourmet is the concessionaire for all the venues and whether they could change the items offered at performances. Gina Robak, Global Gourmet Catering General Manager, said that now that Café Valor is up-and-running, they would be making some of those items available at the other venues to save costs. She noted that because of union contracts, employees who serve cocktails are not permitted to sell food, which is why it somewhat complicates where food and drink are offered. Trustee Wright said that perhaps there needs to be better signage to that effect.

President Horn referred the matter to the Presentors Liaison Committee so that the request and negotiations surrounding their contract may be entered into and considered by this Board and requested that the Committee meet as required to review and consider Global Gourmet Catering's request.

GOOD AND WELFARE

Trustee Muduroglu welcomed Managing Director Sofis to the 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, Chair Horn adjourned the meeting at 2:55 p.m.



Francesca Cicero
Board Secretary