

**MINUTES**  
**WAR MEMORIAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**  
**Thursday, September 14, 2023**

The Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco met in regular session on Thursday, September 14, 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 Kopp, Trustee Muduroglu, Trustee Pelosi (*arrived 2:05*), Trustee Wilsey, and Trustee Wright (*arrived at 2:10 p.m*)

Absent: Trustee Fisher, Trustee Newstat, and Trustee Rocco

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

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

President Horn stated that the San Francisco Opera opened its 101st season with an Opening Night Concert, on September 8, 2023 featuring tenor Roberto Alagna and Soprano Aleksandra Kurzak with the San Francisco Opera Chorus and Orchestra, conducted by Music Director Eun Sun Kim. He noted that following the concert, there was also a lively after-party held at City Hall. He wished the Opera all the best as they begin their 101st season on behalf of the Trustees. President Horn also noted that the Symphony will open their season on Friday, September 22, 2023, as Esa-Pekka Salonen will lead the San Francisco Symphony in an Opening Night Gala program. President Horn wished the Symphony all the best as they also begin their new season.

**MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Managing Director Kate Sofis noted that Francesca Cicero, the Board's Secretary, will now sit at the main table to manage administration of the Board meetings more effectively. Director Sofis remarked that the Ethics Commission has certified a ballot measure for the March 2024 primary election, related to changes in conflict-of-interest laws, and that any changes that will impact the War Memorial will be analyzed and brought to the Board. She also reminded Trustees that there are two annual trainings for Trustees to complete by the end of the year, Bystander Intervention and Transgender 101.

**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 Building Committee Meeting of August 8, 2023; the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of August 10, 2023; Rental Requests for September 14, 2023; and the Revenue, Appropriations and Housekeeping Expenditures reports for August 2023.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 23-23

RESOLVED, By the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco the minutes of the Building Committee meeting of August 8, 2023; the Regular Board Meeting of August 10, 2023; Rental Requests for September 14, 2023; and the Revenue, Appropriations and Housekeeping Expenditures reports for August 2023 are hereby approved.

Director Levin announced that the house electrician for Davies Symphony Hall for the last 32 years, Jim Jacobs, will be retiring at the end of October. Director Levin noted that staff are working with Mr. Jacobs on a transition plan.

**BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**San Francisco Opera's Proposed Bas Relief Commemorating David Gockley (SF Opera's Sixth General Director)**: President Horn noted that there were two items on the agenda at the Building Committee meeting on September 12, 2023, and invited Chair Pelosi to address the Board. Chair Pelosi stated that the Building Committee received a brief update from the San Francisco Opera on the bas relief sculpture commemorating David Gockley, San Francisco Opera's Sixth General Director.

Chair Pelosi noted the sculpture's original design was updated based on feedback the Opera received from the Committee and Board. He stated the sculpture has been reduced in size a few inches to accommodate the wall space in the lobby. He said the sculptor will be creating a new clay piece with the final design to bring back to the Committee for final approval in the upcoming months.

**Request from San Francisco Symphony to begin entitlement process for possible future improvements to Davies Symphony Hall**: Chair Pelosi stated the Building Committee also considered a request from the San Francisco Symphony for approval to begin the entitlement process with the City for potential modifications to Davies Symphony Hall. He noted that the Symphony is looking to redesign the lobby and public spaces, the auditorium, backstage and support spaces, to create more connection with the artists and provide a flexible, open, welcoming and accessible space for the community-at-large. Chair Pelosi emphasized that the Symphony's request put forth at the Committee focused only on obtaining approval from the Board to begin the entitlement process with the Planning Commission, which could take up to two years.

He reported that the Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the request by the San Francisco Symphony to begin the entitlement process with the City. President Horn recognized Dan Zimardi, Senior Operations Manager for the San Francisco Symphony, and invited him to address the Board. Mr. Zimardi stated that the Symphony was looking forward to getting this project started and any questions the Board may have can be directed to Matt Spivey, CEO of the Symphony. President Horn emphasized that this vote is a procedural step required to allow the Symphony to begin the entitlement process.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 23-24

RESOLVED, By the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco to adopt the Building Committee's recommendation and the request from the San Francisco Symphony to begin the entitlement process with the City and County of San Francisco is hereby approved.

## REGULAR ITEMS

**Consideration of request from San Francisco Fleet Week Board for a rental fee waiver for use of the Herbst Theatre to present its “Honor the Fallen” concert on October 5, 2023:** President Horn stated that prior to the meeting, Trustees received a letter from the Chair of the San Francisco Fleet Week Association, J. Michael Myatt, requesting the Board waive the Herbst Theatre rental fee for their “Honor the Fallen Concert” which will take place during Fleet Week, on October 5, 2023. He noted that the annual concert, a part of San Francisco’s citywide Fleet Week tradition, honors those brave people who gave the ultimate sacrifice in service to our nation. He stated the concert is consistent with the purposes and mission of the San Francisco War Memorial and part of a long-standing civic celebration in the City. President Horn noted that the concert will feature performances by the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Band and the San Francisco Boys Chorus. He pointed out that attendees are admitted free of charge and include a cross-section of visiting sailors and Marines, as well as members of the public. President Horn emphasized that the Board has agreed to waive the fee for this Fleet Week concert in the past.

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

### RESOLUTION NO. 23-25

RESOLVED, By the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco the request from San Francisco Fleet Week to waive rental fees for its “Honor the Fallen” concert in the Herbst Theatre on October 5, 2023, is hereby approved.

**Consideration of request for adjustments to The Green Room rental rate pricing structures:** President Horn reminded the Board that at the most recent meeting, there was a robust discussion about The Green Room and the potential reasons for the decline in wedding bookings in the venue this past summer. He noted that after the Board meeting, staff met to analyze and discuss possible explanations for the decline, and to propose some potential solutions. President Horn stated that Trustees received a chart outlining historic, current, and proposed rental rates for booking weddings and corporate events in The Green Room, and invited the Assistant Managing Director, Rob Levin, to present the proposal to the Trustees.

Director Levin noted that the task force looked at The Green Room pricing history over time to determine when the dip in bookings happened. He explained that it was partially due to the COVID pandemic, but they also identified the pricing increases to rent The Green Room may be contributing to this decrease as well. He noted that in 2018-2019, the rate increased about 5%, which is a typical increase that covers increases in cost. He then stated that in 2020-2021, the rate increased about three-fold. He also noted that at this time, in order to rent The Green Room for a wedding, a person would have to book a full wedding package, and a precipitous drop in the number of weddings booked occurred after this change. He noted that staff recommends moving back to the 3-5% increases each year and eliminate the requirement of booking a full wedding package to rent The Green Room. He noted that The Green Room does allow for individual choice regarding catering vendors and is not governed by the exclusive license that Global Gourmet Catering has with regard to the Veterans Building.

Director Levin emphasized the time-sensitivity around wedding-bookings for summer 2024, as well as the interest in getting other Green Room bookings back on track during this fiscal year, which is why staff is requesting the item be considered for approval by the full Board at this time. He noted that pricing will also be adjusted for any licensees who have already paid the increased prices. Trustee Wright asked about marketing of the space and Director Levin noted that in the past they have not had to market the space. Director Sofis noted that she is looking at how to better market the venues and events that have been booked in the facilities to amplify those events and get the word out through social media. Trustee Wright recommended reaching out to anyone who has inquired in the past about the space to help get the word out, especially to non-profits who may be more price-sensitive. Director Levin noted that the current rental fee includes rental for an 8-hour window and if people are interested in a cocktail reception outside of The Green Room, the Veterans Building lobby is possible, but would require keeping the Herbst Theatre dark, which adds to the cost.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 23-26

RESOLVED, By the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco the adjustments to The Green Room rental rate pricing structures are hereby approved.

**Consideration of request to expand the current policy allowing beverages in the auditoriums, to include the**

**Herbst Theatre:** President Horn stated that in 2010, the Board approved a request for a pilot program to allow beverages to be brought into the auditoriums of Davies Symphony Hall and the Opera House. He noted that the policy had been successfully running since that pilot program and has since returned after the pandemic pause. President Horn stated that based on feedback the War Memorial has received from patrons, the Board is considering a request to extend these same privileges of allowing beverages in the auditorium of the Herbst Theatre, to create consistency in the patron experience across all War Memorial venues. He invited the Managing Director, Kate Sofis, to present the request to the Board.

Director Sofis stated that this proposal is designed to create a unified patron experience across all the War Memorial venues. She explained that staff will work with Global Gourmet Catering, the liquor license holder, to ensure that the license covers the entire first floor of the Veterans Building. She also noted that the Thomas E. Horn Lounge would be separate from this liquor license. Trustee Gatti and Trustee Kopp expressed their personal opposition to drinks being brought into auditoriums as a general practice but expressed that they understand that times have changed. Trustee Wright stated that in looking to attract younger people they must move with the tide, and it also allows concessionaires to increase their sales.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 23-27

RESOLVED, By the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco that the expansion of the current policy to allow beverages in the Herbst Theatre is hereby approved.

**Update on APEC and consideration of request by the APEC Host Committee to create and hang seven banners outside the Opera House during the APEC Conference scheduled for November 10-17, 2023:**

President Horn stated that San Francisco will be the host of the upcoming APEC Conference, November 14-16, 2023, at the Moscone Center West. He noted the Summit will bring CEOs, entrepreneurs, thought leaders and other stakeholders together with the most senior political leaders from the Asia-Pacific region for two days of robust dialogue on global opportunities and challenges that are shaping economic, environmental, and societal trends in the region.

President Horn invited the Mayor's Chief of Protocol, Trustee Muduroglu, to present to the Board an update on the APEC Conference and present a request for banners commemorating APEC to be permitted to hang outside the Opera House during the conference. Trustee Muduroglu noted that the APEC Committee is working directly with the State Department and the White House, the Mayor's team, and others to bring this conference to San Francisco for the 30<sup>th</sup> iteration of the event. She stated that the Summit program focus of 'Creating Economic Opportunity,' will feature a lineup of dynamic and diverse speakers who will highlight the potential of collaboration and fresh thinking to build the future through a focus on sustainability, inclusion, resilience, and innovation. She noted that APEC is expected to generate approximately \$50 million in local revenue, with 24 member economies participating in the conference, of about 30,000 delegates. She explained that they have started the APEC marketing with bus shelters to welcome conference-goers and excite locals, highlighting the beauty and importance of San Francisco to Asian-Pacific economies. Trustee Muduroglu stated that they would like to have similar signage on hanging banners in front of the Opera House to welcome these attendees and highlight the arts and culture of San Francisco. Vice President Lui thanked Trustee Muduroglu for all her work on this program. Trustee

Muduroglu also noted that although the recent Dreamforce Conference was larger, the APEC Conference will include 24 heads-of-state, which brings additional security and logistical challenges.

Trustee Wright questioned why the banners were only in English, and whether it would be beneficial to have the banners in additional languages, since it is an international conference. Trustee Muduroglu noted that there will be QR codes that direct folks to a multilingual website. Trustee Muduroglu agreed that it would be good to have a banner with multiple languages. Trustee Gatti asked about whether any of the events would be held in the War Memorial buildings. Trustee Muduroglu responded that there is nothing planned for the buildings, due to capacity and security reasons.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 23-28

RESOLVED, By the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco the request by the APEC Host Committee to create and hang seven banners outside the Opera House during the APEC Conference, from November 9-19, 2023, is hereby approved.

**MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE**

The Board received an email on August 30, 2023, which was circulated to all the Trustees from someone identifying themselves as a member of Arts Against Aggression Group. He noted the email expressed an opinion on announced mezzo-soprano Ekaterina Semenchuk's performance at War Memorial Opera House. President Horn noted that casting decisions are made by the resident companies and not by the War Memorial. Trustee Wright questioned whether the Board needed to respond. President Horn noted that the opening performance already came and went without incident, and security was increased that evening.

**GOOD AND WELFARE**

Vice President Lui encouraged everyone to visit the Asian Art Museum's exhibit, *Takashi Murakami: Unfamiliar People – Swelling of Monsterized Human Ego*, that runs through February 2024. 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 3:05 p.m.



Francesca Cicero  
Board Secretary