

MINUTES
WAR MEMORIAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES
VETERANS BUILDING PROJECT COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

The Veterans Building Project Committee of the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco met at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 11, 2011, in Room 110B, Veterans Building, Chair Horn presiding.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Horn, President Shultz, Trustee Bashford, Trustee Davis;
Absent: Trustee Bechtle, Trustee Pelosi;
Nonmembers Present: Trustee Stafford;
Staff Present: Elizabeth Murray, Managing Director
Jennifer Norris, Assistant Managing Director

Herbst Theatre Acoustic Advisory Committee recommendation to the Board of Trustees that the side boxes in the Herbst Theatre auditorium be removed:

Chair Horn stated that in advance of today's meeting, Committee members received a memorandum from the Herbst Theatre Acoustic Advisory Committee recommending that the side boxes in the Herbst Theatre auditorium be removed as part of the Veterans Building Seismic Upgrade and Improvements Project.

Chair Horn stated that the Herbst Theatre Acoustic Advisory Committee is a volunteer committee consisting of Herbst Theatre licensee representatives and arts patrons who are concerned with improving the acoustics of the theatre. The Acoustic Advisory Committee has been meeting with War Memorial staff and has been advised by acoustician Lawrence Kirkegaard and theatre design consultant Leonard Auerbach. The Acoustic Committee reports that Mr. Kirkegaard's evaluation of Herbst Theatre finds that the side boxes, which were added during the 1977 renovation of the Herbst Theatre, have negative impact on the acoustic qualities of the auditorium.

Chair Horn stated that Mr. Kirkegaard's acoustic evaluation of Herbst Theatre also identified other ways the theatre's acoustics could be improved, and that War Memorial staff, working with the Acoustic Advisory Committee, anticipates implementing several of these measures in the coming months. He listed these other recommended improvements as follows:

- Sealing the "acoustolith" side walls on the orchestra level by applying a sealant, which War Memorial staff has scheduled to implement in July and August of this year.
- Adjusting decorative panels on the orchestra level side walls to be perpendicular with the wall, an adjustment that War Memorial staff also plans to implement this summer.
- Enlarging and improving the acoustic shell, which the Acoustic Committee is further exploring with Mr. Kirkegaard.
- Replacing carpet in the dress circle and balcony with marmoleum between rows and unpadded carpet in the aisles, which is scheduled to be done during the Veterans Building Seismic construction.

Chair Horn noted that War Memorial staff sent a memo to all regular Herbst Theatre licensees on April 25, forwarding a copy of the Acoustic Committee's memorandum and advising that this matter would be discussed by the Veterans Building Project Committee today. The American Legion War Memorial Commission was also notified in advance of today's meeting.

The Committee heard from representatives of the Acoustic Advisory Committee including Peter Pastreich, Executive Director of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra; Parker Monroe, Executive Director of New Century Chamber Orchestra, who read a letter from their Music Director and violinist Nadja Salerno Sonnenberg; David Gockley, General Director San Francisco Opera; and Martin Cohn, board member of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and San Francisco Performances. Acoustic Advisory Committee representatives characterized the sound quality in Herbst Theatre as dry and acoustically disappointing. They said that musicians do not enjoy playing at the theatre, despite their fondness for its location, historic importance and beauty, because they feel it does not support the movement of sound into the auditorium for listeners to enjoy. While acknowledging they do not have a funding mechanism in place, Acoustic Advisory Committee representatives urged the Trustees to remove the boxes during the planned Veterans Building Seismic Upgrade and Improvements Project.

Chair Horn stated that Trustees have previously identified a number of improvements, including several Herbst Theatre upgrades, which we would like to implement during the Veterans Building Seismic Upgrade Project, items which are not included in the \$130 million in City project funds. He stated that the Department of Public Works is currently preparing cost estimations for these additional War Memorial improvements. Chair Horn said this Committee will be meeting again during the next two months to review proposed additional War Memorial improvements and their associated costs and will then recommend to the full Board which of the additional improvements to move forward with.

Ms. Tara Lamont, Department of Public Works' Project Manager for the Veterans Building Seismic Upgrade Project, advised the Committee at the request of War Memorial staff, she had a cost consultant prepare a preliminary estimate for removing the Herbst Theatre side boxes, which preliminary estimate is \$400-500,000. She noted that removing the boxes is a complicated undertaking, as the steel that supports the boxes goes into the basement. It is also important that the adjacent murals be protected during any construction. Ms. Lamont stated that if the boxes were removed, a method of reaching the existing theatrical fixtures at the edges of the murals and relocation of the sound and lighting consoles would need to be resolved. She said it is possible there might be some cost savings as a result of the economies of scale of the overall project, but this cannot be determined until the General Contractor comes on board in September.

Ms. Lamont stated that she hopes to have the full scope of the Veterans Building Project—including those War Memorial additional improvements to be included in the Project—determined by July 15, 2011. She noted that because the design phase of the Project is only twelve months, which is a very short design period for a project of this scale, changing the scope after that time will delay the design process.

Ms. Murray stated that Acoustic Advisor Larry Kirkegaard said that if the boxes could not be removed, he thought the box partitions could be modified to make them more reflective of sound and thus achieve some improvement to the acoustic quality of the theatre.

Following further discussion, and on motion of Trustee Davis, seconded by Trustee Bashford, the following recommendation was unanimously adopted:

RECOMMENDED, To the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco that it approve in principle inclusion of the Herbst Theatre Acoustic Advisory Committee's recommended removal of the Herbst Theatre side boxes on the War Memorial's list of desired additional improvements to be implemented during the Veterans Building Seismic Upgrade and Improvements Project, which list will be reviewed during the next two months as to financial feasibility

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Horn adjourned the meeting at 2:40 p.m.

Jennifer E. Norris
Executive Secretary