



## Town of Chapel Hill VARSITY THEATRE TASK FORCE

Monday, March 18, 2019 at 8:30am  
Chapel Hill Public Library  
100 Library Dr., Chapel Hill, NC 27514

### Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Council Member Michael Parker (Co-Chair), Council Member Rachel Schaevitz (Co-Chair), Gerald Bolas, Hardy Butler, Dan Cefalo, Matt Gladdek, Emily Kass, Greg Overbeck, Paul Shareshian, Justin Simmons, Don Tise, Marlon Torres, Xilong Zhao

**Members Not Present:** Kathy Atwater, Mandey Brown, Justin Haslett, Sharon Rothwell, Kameron Southerland, Kaze Thomas, Brenda Womble

**Staff Present:** Jim Huegerich, Katie Murray, Sarah Poulton, Ross Tompkins

**Others Present:** None

#### I. Opening

Jim Huegerich

##### a. Approval of February 18, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Meeting began at 8:38am. February 18, 2019 meeting minutes were approved.

##### b. Approval of Agenda

March 18, 2019 meeting agenda was approved.

##### c. Public Comment

None.

#### II. Business

##### a. February 18, 2019 Meeting Follow up

Background: This meeting item was not discussed due to time.

Action taken: Move to April 15, 2019 meeting.

##### b. Review Proposed Responses to Bullets 1 and 2 (attached)

Background: Council Member Schaevitz presented a draft of responses to Bullets 1 and 2 for consideration.

Action taken: Edits were made to this language and a final version is included below.

##### c. Varsity Theatre Space Exercise

Background: Potential uses and adjustments to the structure of the Varsity Theatre space were discussed.

Action taken: Katie Murray will bring a list of performing arts spaces and the audiences they serve to the April 15, 2019 meeting.

**d. Finish discussion around Bullet #2**

Background: This meeting item was not discussed due to time.

Action taken: Move to April 15, 2019 meeting.

**III. Open Forum**

**Jim Huegerich**

**IV. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:59am.

**Meeting Materials:**

- Bullets 1 and 2 Summary (attached below)

**Next Meeting:** April 15, 2019 at 8:30am Library Room A

**Public Charge:** Consider the possible use of the Varsity Theatre at 123 East Franklin Street as a community performing arts center.

**Specific Charge:** Determine the following:

1. What would be the vision for such a venue? What types of programming would be appropriate and desired by our community?
2. How would such a venue meet community needs, reflect community values, and attract a wide range of individuals to the Downtown and what would be the economic impact on the Downtown?
3. What would be the costs of this conversion for both acquisition and necessary refurbishment – and how long would it require? How would these costs be paid for and what kinds of partnership(s) might be feasible?
4. What would be the business model of the new entity in terms of ownership, ongoing management, and ability to be financially secure and self-sustaining?

## Draft Responses to Council Charge

### Question 1:

- a. **Question:** What would be the vision for such a venue?

**Response:** The vision for this venue is that it would be a vibrant, lively place where folks go to meet and engage with the arts, that it reflects the community's values, and that it is accessible and appealing to a broad cross-section of community members and visitors of all ages.

- b. **Question:** What types of programming would be appropriate and desired by our community?

**Response:** Appropriate and desirable programming for our community includes all of the traditional performing arts, such as theatre, live music, comedy, film, dance and spoken word, as well as other public performance, especially those that feature local talent or educational opportunities. [Note: We will work on honing what is possible in the Varsity space at the April 15 meeting.]

### Question 2:

- a. **Question:** How would such a venue meet community needs?

**Response:** The Orange County Arts Commission and the Chapel Hill Cultural Arts Commission, among others, have shown that there is a significant gap between the number of local artists and the number of accessible performing arts spaces in our area. This venue would feature a business model that contributes to bridging that gap. The Orange County Arts Commission Report ("Setting the Stage") and the International Downtown Association (IDA) report, among others, have shown that performing arts venues generate revenue ~~both through~~ such as ticket sales, concessions, rentals, grants, fundraising, and tuition ~~as well as~~ while also producing an economic impact from hotel stays, food and beverage, and parking. By attracting visitors to Downtown, this venue would contribute to the overall economy of Downtown, Chapel Hill and Orange County.

- b. **Question:** How would such a venue reflect community values?

**Response:** This venue would reflect and address several key community values and goals, including:

- **A Place for Everyone** - by developing a family-friendly, vibrantly creative environment, with a special emphasis on the arts and reaching producers and patrons that are historically underrepresented in the arts community.
- **Community Prosperity and Engagement** - by supporting existing and new local businesses and generating increased economic development Downtown.
- **Good Places, New Spaces** - by investing in Downtown and by balancing respect for the old with the prospect of the new.

- c. **Question:** How would such a venue attract a wide range of individuals to Downtown?

**Response:** By specifically investing in and creating accessible space to local artists, this venue would tap into networks all across our community who may not otherwise have a reason to come Downtown. Ideally, with spaces like this one, and others already in existence Downtown, and with the help of the Downtown Partnership and the Visitors' Bureau, we can market Downtown as a community crossroads where there is always something fun happening. Attributes of a successful space include accessibility for patrons regardless of physical ability and ability to pay, safety, and flexibility to support a range of artistic activities. While it should be principally available for revenue-generating performances and possibly private rentals, it is just as important for community groups to be able to affordably reserve the space ~~at no cost~~ for homegrown performances.

- d. **Question:** What would be the economic impact on the Downtown?  
**Response:** We will work on this at the **April 15** meeting.