

**The Sheldon Theatre Board of Directors
Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
November 18, 2025**

Members Present: Board President Chap Achen; Treasurer Meridith Wardle, Member Susan Christenson, Member Art Kenyon, and Vice President Dennis Brennan

Members Absent: Member Laurie Bell (excused absence), Glen Witham (unexcused absence)

Others Present: Shantel Dow, Executive Director

1. Call to Order

Board President Chap Achen called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

President Achen led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted. President Achen and Board Members Wardle, Christenson, Kenyon, and Brennan were in attendance.

Member Bell previously indicated she would be absent.

City Council Liaison Beth Snyder stated that Member Witham sent an email stating that he resigned, effective immediately.

4. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Vice President Brennan, seconded by Member Wardle to approve the agenda as drafted. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5:0.

5. Public Comment

No one wished to address the Board.

6. Consent Agenda

A. Motion to Approve October 16, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes.

A motion was made by Member Kenyon, seconded by Member Christenson to approve the minutes as presented. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5:0.

7. Motions & General Business

There were no motions or general business items to discuss.

8. Communication Items

A. Director's Report.

Director Dow provided updates and highlighted information from her report:

- Director Dow reported that the Sheldon Theatre is well into the holiday season, and things are going well.
- It was noted that Sheldon Gift Certificates are available, and they make excellent Christmas gifts.
- Director Dow stated that every artist sings the praises of the production crew.
- Director stated that the position for the Sheldon Youth Theatre Director is open, and as of the current report, there have been sixteen applicants from eleven different states. As of moments before the meeting, there are twenty-four applicants from twelve states. Director Dow stated that she is in the process of working with others to create the questions for the interview process. The deadline for applications is December 1, 2025.
- President Achen asked if a goal has been set for the first Production for next year. Director Dow stated that the goal is August 2026. The plan is for a smaller show in August and a larger one in December.
- Director Dow informed the Board that a succession plan is being reviewed and moving forward with replacing the Director of Production, who will retire in mid-June 2026. The open position will be announced on January 12, 2026.
- Block booking is underway. There are quite a few shows that have already been secured for the fall of 2026 and a few for the spring of 2027. In January of 2026, the Sheldon Theatre begins to look forward to scheduling in 2027 and 2028.
- Director Dow stated that a lot of shows are coming up, and there are quite a few larger events that will be taking place in December.
- Director Dow stated that at the time of the current report, the CCR (Creedence Clearwater Revival) show was sold out, and there were multiple positive comments from the patrons. A second bar was opened on the second floor, which helped with the flow and kept the lines shorter.
- President Achen stated that the additional bar made a tremendous impact.
- Director Dow stated that there have been discussions about where to put the Christmas tree because of the success of the additional bar. The two sets of doors at the main entrance are never used, so there is consideration for either putting the Christmas tree there or using that space for the additional bar.
- Member Christenson stated that she had positive feedback on the acoustics, and she asked if there were changes for this event.
- Director Dow stated that the band came with "in-ear monitors." Director Dow stated that the drawback to converting to this system is having people share earbuds.
- Vice President Brennan stated that purchasing additional earbuds is not cost-prohibitive.
- President Achen concurred that the acoustics were better than in past shows.
- Director Dow stated that there is a wait list in place right now for The New Standard.

- Director Dow stated that the winter postcards have been mailed, and holiday posters are beginning to go up around the City.
- Director Dow stated that the Sheldon Theatre did indeed receive a Community Outreach Program Grant for \$11,000, despite the stiff competition. This is an increase of \$1,000 from last year.
- Director Dow stated that there is an effort to produce a progress report on the Accessible Grant to the Minnesota State Arts Board.
- Director Dow stated that the Executive Director Reception was held at Jimmy's Pub on November 13, 2025. Donors at the Producer level and above received an invitation. There was a good turnout.
- Member Kenyon commended President Achen for a very good talk that he delivered.
- Director Dow announced that the Friends Holiday Party will be held on Friday, December 12, 2025, before the Mandy Gonzalez concert. Mandy Gonzalez was Elphaba on Broadway in Wicked. She was also in Hamilton. She was the lead last year in Sunset Boulevard on Broadway. She has performed with the Boston Pops, and she has performed at Carnegie Hall.
- Director Dow stated that the Year-End Appeal Letter will be sent to prospects for donor acquisition the week of December 1, 2025.
- Director Dow stated that AAUW rented the theatre for their fundraising film, "Mom & Dad's Nipple Factory," and they had a pre-show reception. The AAUW was pleased with the results and wants to continue the partnership. AAUW plans to come see the "Frederick Douglass and the Shadow of Slavery" production, and they plan to purchase additional tickets to donate to the Black Student Union from Red Wing High School.
- Director Dow reported that Red Wing High School 11th and 12th-grade students, along with Tower View students, attended Shakespeare for a morning matinee of "Twelfth Night" on October 31, 2025. Quite a few veterans and their families participated in the Vet Tix Program that same day.
- Director Dow explained that the Sheldon Theatre has a fun event on the Monday before Thanksgiving that includes decorating inside and out for the Holiday Stroll.

B. Finance Report.

Treasurer Wardle asked Director Dow to give an overview of ticket sales.

Director Dow stated that the revenue per ticket varies depending on the discount packages that are purchased. If a patron purchases eight or more shows, they receive a 25% discount.

Member Kenyon expressed his surprise at such a steep discount.

President Achen suggested that the discount be discussed before publishing the pricing for next year.

Director Dow stated that 12% to 15% is the average discount given by other theaters.

President Achen suggested that the Board examine the third quarter financials.

Treasurer Wardle directed the Commissioners to look at pages 10-12 of their packet.

Treasurer Wardle stated that the first column is the first-year budget, and she explained that there need to be \$1.4 million. On the expense side, there is also about \$1.4 million. The budgeted loss was about \$100,000. Based on the current estimates, it looks like the loss will be much less, and very close to breaking even.

Treasurer Wardle stated that going into Q-4, the Sheldon Theatre is looking very good.

Treasurer Wardle asked Director Dow when the transfer from the General Fund will be. The answer is right after Thanksgiving.

Member Kenyon asked why the transfer from the General Fund is later than last year.

Director Dow stated that no reason was given.

Member Kenyon stated that it would be nice if there were a standard time for the transfer each year.

Director Dow stated that last year, the transfer was split into two.

President Achen stated that the St. Paul Foundation will be present for the December Meeting. That question should be raised then.

Director Dow stated that this is a different thing. This is from the City.

Member Wardle stated that the Sheldon Theatre has assets of \$6.3 million and liabilities of just under \$400,000.

A motion was made by Vice President Brennan, seconded by Member Christenson to conditionally approve Q-3 2025 financials. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5:0.

President Achen asked Director Dow to share the budget, and he further stated that it would be ideal to approve the budget tonight.

President Achen reminded the Sheldon Theatre Board that they are not a non-profit

organization; rather, they are a government organization, and the goal is to break even or generate a small profit.

Director Dow asked the Commissioners to refer to a document that she provided to them and explained that the orange highlights indicate the changes that were made.

Director Dow stated that the State Grants and Aids proposed budget was \$130,000, and it has been increased by \$15,000.

Director Dow stated that she had originally wiped the Gift Shop budget out completely because a Gift Shop is not the focus of the Sheldon Theatre, but she has since been convinced to add it back in with a budget of \$3,000.

Director Dow explained that the Sheldon Theatre receives 15% of anything that an artist sells at their show. This line item was increased by \$557 to balance the budget.

Director Dow stated that the Private Foundation Grants line item has a huge increase (amount not stated). There is a potential of four new granting organizations.

Director Dow believes there is a lot of room for growth in the Friends of the Sheldon line item.

Director Dow stated that the Corporate and Foundation Grants line item is another area that should increase by an additional \$5,000.

Director Dow lowered expenses to \$10,000.

President Achen asked about the increase from the City. Director Dow explained that she has no control over the largest portion of the budget because it comes to her from the City. Treasurer Wardle stated that it appears to be a straight 3% increase across the board.

Treasurer Wardle asked if the Merch Cost of \$12,500 in row 108 lines up with the revenue of \$3,000. Director Dow explained that this line item includes beer, wine, and pop.

President Achen asked if the expenses are in one line and the revenue is rolled into three lines. The answer is yes.

President Achen asked what the revenue is for the concessions. Director Dow stated that the revenue is about double the expenses.

Director Dow explained that there are several licensing companies that the Sheldon Theatre has to pay for music, along with a liquor license. If an artist comes in to do original music, there is no licensing fee.

Council Liaison Snyder asked about the housing allowance. Director Dow explained that when there is a conference out of town, this line item pays for lodging.

President Achen stated that the Main Stage Ticket Sales line item shows that the revenue will be raised by \$100,000 in 2026. The rationale is that there will be more shows, there will be a modest increase in the cost of tickets, the discounts will not be quite as high as they are currently, and the hope of a slight increase in the attendance rate.

President Achen recommended that Director Dow be allowed to complete the budget, and the Executive Committee review the work in a smaller meeting and provide any last guidance to Director Dow.

A motion was made by Member Christenson, seconded by Treasurer Wardle to conditionally approve the 2026 Budget based on Executive Committee final approval. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5:0.

C. Board Chair's Report.

President Achen stated that it is necessary to reschedule the Strategic Planning Meeting. The goal will be for each Board Member to come in with a list of things that appear to be missing from the Plan that need to be discussed or a list of things that are in the Plan but don't actually belong in it.

Council Liaison Snyder asked how long the Strategic Plan would be in place. President Achen stated that it is to be determined. The length will be assigned once it is determined exactly what will be in it.

President Achen stated that there are four different dates during December that are possible dates for the Strategic Planning Meeting, and they are December 8, 10, 15, and 17.

Council Liaison Snyder stated that December 8, 2025, is a City Council Meeting.

Vice President Brennan will be out of town on December 17, 2025.

There was consensus to have the Strategic Planning Meeting on December 10, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.

C. Committee Reports.

There were no committee reports.

D. Government Relations Report.

Council Liaison Snyder stated that the City Council is totally focused on the 2026 Budget, which must be finalized by December 8, 2025. City Council is likely going to

come in between 3% and 3.25% for the levy, which is below the 5% levy that was voted on in August of 2025.

F. Board Member Comments.

There were no Board Member comments.

9. Motion to go into Closed Session

The purpose of the closed session is to evaluate the performance of Executive Director, Shantel Dow. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.05 sub 3(a), the Library Board may go into closed session to evaluate the performance of an individual who is subject to its authority.

A motion was made by Member Kenyon, seconded by Member Christenson to go into closed session. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5:0.

10. Motion to go into Open Session

State Law requires the Sheldon Theatre Board to provide a summary of its conclusions regarding the evaluation at its next open meeting. The City will comply with the State requirement by providing a summary regarding the evaluation of Executive Director, Shantel Dow, at the next Sheldon Theatre Board Meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brennan, seconded by Commissioner Kenyon to go into open session. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5:0.

11. Adjournment

President Achen adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.