

**The Sheldon Theatre Board of Directors
Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
January 20, 2026**

Members Present: Board President Chap Achen; Board Members Laurie Bell (Virtual), Meridith Wardle, Susan Christenson, Art Kenyon, Dennis Brennan, and Maria Haley

Members Absent: All members in attendance

Others Present: Shantel Dow, Executive Director; Beth Snyder, Council Liaison

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 Bell, Wardle, Christenson, Kenyon, Brennan, and Haley were in attendance.

4. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Member Brennan, seconded by Member Wardle, to approve the agenda as drafted. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 7:0.

5. Oath of Office

A. Swearing In

1. Maria Haley for her first term on the Sheldon Theatre Board, expiring December 31, 2029.
2. Dennis Brennan for his first full term on the Sheldon Theatre Board, expiring December 31, 2029.

Council Liaison Beth Snyder stated that the Mayor could not be present for the swearing-in, and she is doing it for him.

6. Public Comment

President Achen reviewed the public comment procedure.

No one wished to address the Board.

7. Consent Agenda

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

President Achen stated that there was an error in item F of last month's minutes. The name Maria should replace the name Tim.

A motion was made by Member Christenson, seconded by Member Kenyon, to approve the minutes as amended. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 7:0.

8. Motions & General Business

There were no motions or general business.

9. Communication Items

A. Director's Report.

Director Dow provided updates and highlighted information from her report:

- Director Dow reported that Interviews have been completed for the Sheldon Youth Theatre Director position, and the Associate Director of Production position listing will close on February 13, 2026.
- It was noted that March 1, 2026, is the deadline to complete the bookings for the 26-27 season. The Season Announcement event will be held on June 4, 2026.
- Director Dow stated that Arts Advocacy Day at the Minnesota State Capitol will take place on March 3, 2026. Director Dow will be attending that event in person and will speak with the local and regional legislators to help promote the arts and the Sheldon Theatre.
- Director Dow reported that there was a good turnout for Missoula Children's Theatre.
- Director Dow reported that 2025 had twelve more performances for schools/students to attend than the year before. There were six performances for the Phoenix Summer Musical. There were seven additional movies shown as part of the Late-Night Thursdays. Not including rentals, 20,535 tickets were sold in 2025 vs 12,981 tickets sold in 2024.
- Director Dow reported that Missoula Children's Theatre presented an assembly on fables to over 500 students at Burnside Elementary School.
- Director Dow reported that from February 26 through March 1, 2025, Magician Kevin Spencer will be in residency. He will do workshops with speech, occupational, and physical therapists at Mayo Clinic Health System, work with adults with disabilities through Community Education's Aim to Achieve Program, and he will spend time in Red Wing Public School's special education classrooms. The public is invited to see the culmination of this project on Sunday, March 1, 2026, at 1:00 p.m., when Spencer presents a free, sensory-inclusive performance entitled "The Magic of Kevin Spencer – Magic for Everyone."
- Director Dow stated that summer field trips will return with the commitment of Kids Junction, Kenny Ahern, and George Mauer. Each will present a mainstage program that will be promoted to additional childcare centers and the public.
- Director Dow was pleased to report that the Minnesota State Arts Board awarded the Sheldon a \$35,000 grant from the highly competitive Arts Experiences program to support the continuation of programming for older

- adults through the Sheldon's matinee series. January grant submissions include the MSAB General Operating Program and a Letter of Inquiry for the St. Paul, Minnesota Foundation's Arts & Culture Grant Program.
- Director Dow stated that the volunteers reported that "Who Brought the Humbug" was one of the best holiday shows they'd ever seen.
 - Director Dow stated that "The New Standards" gave the new ticketing system's automated waitlist feature a real workout. There were ninety-eight names on the waitlist for the show.
 - Director Dow reported that there is an additional beer and wine vendor on board for the Sheldon.
 - Director Dow stated that, due to reports of ICE presence in town, as a precaution, a review of rights and responsibilities when dealing with ICE agents was necessary. The library director issued some general guidelines for his staff, and we adapted those for the Sheldon.
 - Director Dow reported that January is student month at the Sheldon. Missoula Children's Theater moved in for the first week of January, with two performances of "The Jungle Book" on Saturday, January 10, 2026. Sixty-eight students auditioned, and fifty-eight students were cast. Now the high school moves in for final rehearsals of "Once Upon a Mattress."

A. Finance Report.

Member Wardle stated that the City Financials are present; however, adjustments are made well into the New Year. There will be a preliminary report to review next month. After the official audit, we will likely make the final approval in June or July of 2026.

Member Bell asked where most of the adjustments have been made in the past. Member Wardle stated that many of the changes occurred during the month of January on both the revenue and expense sides of the budget.

Member Wardle stated that Director Dow's team has provided a December snapshot.

Director Dow stated that the Main Stage Ticket Revenue exceeded the budget. Phoenix Ticket Revenue exceeded the budget. Education and Field Trip Revenue exceeded the budget. Rental Revenue is very close to the budget. Grants and Donations Revenue is a significant number. The Friends of the Sheldon skyrocketed in 2025. The Endowment Interest came in a little bit under budget. Artist Fees are considerably higher than anticipated.

Member Wardle asked if Director Dow anticipated the Artist Fees to continue climbing. Director Dow stated that the Artist Fees that she is encountering now seem to be in the same range as last year's Artist Fees. Director Dow also stated that there are a couple of stellar performers who charge higher fees. Some of the grant money can offset some of the higher Artist Fees.

Member Wardle asked if Director Dow has considered any changes to the pricing for next year. Director Dow stated that the Historic Preservation Fee was increased by \$1 across the board. Overall, the determination was made that some of the shows can be priced slightly higher, while trying to keep the “family shows” more affordable and accessible.

C. Board Chair’s Report.

President Achen updated the Board on the Strategic Plan. The first draft should come before the Board at the February Meeting. President Achen is not expecting approval at that Meeting. There will likely be some discussion at the February Meeting and hopefully an approval at the March Meeting.

D. Government Relations Report.

Council Liaison Snyder stated that the City Council had their first Meeting of the year, which included voting on officers for the City Council.

Liaison Snyder stated that the Water Treatment Plant will be moving forward. The first Public Hearing was held at the beginning of January. This is a huge project for the City, and it is expected to cost about \$30 million.

Liaison Snyder stated that there is still work going on with the Law Enforcement Center because the City of Red Wing has outgrown its current facility.

Member Kenyon asked what the timeline is for the Water Treatment Plant. Liaison Snyder stated that the project should be completed around 2030.

F. Board Member Comments.

Director Dow stated that there are Board and Commission Resources on the City’s website. Staff is requesting that every Board Member go online, review the resources, and watch the accompanying videos.

Director Dow also had a quick reference guide that highlighted some of the unusual terminology that will be used.

Director Dow asked if it would be possible to reschedule the April Meeting. A special performance has recently been added that is on the tenth anniversary of Prince’s death, and it falls on a Meeting.

President Achen suggested that he would communicate via email once they were able to confirm the availability of the meeting space.

Member Brennan requested guidance on what to do if ICE came into the Theatre. Director Dow explained that a ticketed event is considered a private event, which means that ICE cannot legally enter. Additionally, all the offices and volunteer areas are labeled private, and ICE cannot enter private areas without a search warrant.

10. Adjournment

President Achen adjourned the meeting at 5:53 p.m.