

**The Sheldon Theatre Board of Directors
Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
February 24, 2026**

Members Present: Board President Chap Achen, Vice President Dennis Brennan, Treasurer Meridith Wardle and Board Members Laurie Bell, Susan Christenson, Art Kenyon and Maria Haley

Members Absent: All members in attendance

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.

President Achen stated that Council Liaison Snyder was not present.

Director Dow stated that the City Council took a vote and decided that there would be no more Council Liaisons.

3. Roll Call

Roll call was not conducted. President Achen and Board Members Bell, Wardle, Christenson, Kenyo, Haley and Brennan were in attendance.

4. Approval of Agenda

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

5. Annual Business

A. 2026 Election of Officers.

President Achen stated that, according to the Bylaws, a Nominating Committee brings forward a slate of Officers for consideration, and a vote will be taken for each Officer.

Member Bell stated that the Nominating Committee wishes to nominate President Chap Achen for President again, Vice President Brennan for Vice President, and Treasurer Wardle for Treasurer.

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

6. Public Comment

There was no one present for public comment.

7. Consent Agenda

A. Motion to Approve December 10, 2025, Workshop Meeting Minutes.

B. Motion to Approve January 20, 2026, Minutes.

Member Bell stated that in the January Minutes, it stated that Witham was in attendance, and she doesn't recall him being present. President Achen requested that the amendment be made.

A motion was made by Member Bell, seconded by Member Brennan, 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

President Achen stated that there are no motions or general business to discuss. The Strategic Plan will be discussed as part of President Achen's Board Chair Report.

9. Communication Items

A. Director's Report.

Director Dow provided updates and highlighted information from her report:

- Director Dow reported that she has been spending a lot of time with community members.
- Director Dow noted just how generous the Red Wing community is.
- Director Dow stated that there is an offer on the table for the Youth Theatre position. The first offer was denied, and the offer was extended to our second choice. An answer is expected by Friday.
- Director Dow gave a big thank you to Brian Metling, who is the Assistant Chief of Police with the Red Wing Police Department, for his helpfulness in coordinating resource officers when there is a fieldtrip present at the Sheldon. The police presence makes everyone feel better.
- Director Dow stated that the 2026-2027 Season announcement will take place at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 4, 2026, at the Sheldon. Video clips of all the scheduled shows will be shown at that time.
- Director Dow stated that Russell's retirement party is scheduled for Monday, June 15, 2026, from 5:30 until 8:00 p.m. at the Elks Club. Additional information will be forthcoming.
- Director Dow stated that there are thirty-four applications for the Associate Director of Production position from all over the country. The first round of interviews will be the week of March 9, 2026. There will be seven people interviewed through a Zoom call, and the second round of interviews will be in person.

- Director Dow stated that many venues in the Twin Cities suffered from low ticket sales over the past six weeks due to the unrest and the presence of ICE. To date, things have not picked up for others, but the Sheldon is experiencing several sold-out shows.
- Director Dow stated that the Minnesota Arts Advocacy Day will take place on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, at the State Capitol. This is a huge event in which people involved with the arts attend to speak with the legislators.
- Director Dow drew the Members' attention to the handout that was in everyone's packet. The handout was a Quick Reference Guide for Boards & Commissions for the annual training series.
- Vice President Brennan stated that the videos are well done and well worth the fifteen minutes to watch them.
- Director Dow stated that the new piano stool was delivered.
- Director Dow stated that the Missoula and Red Wing High School productions went well, with a lot of young people involved.
- Director Dow stated that with the tenth anniversary of Prince's death on April 21, 2026, a Prince Tribute Show has been added to the calendar. Ticket sales are going quite well.
- Director Dow attended the Red Wing Chamber's Annual meeting, and the Sheldon Theatre won the 2025 Tourism Business of the Year.
- Director Dow stated that Kevin Spencer will be in residency and doing workshops with speech, occupational, and physical therapists at the Mayo Clinic Health System. He will also work with adults with disabilities through Community Education's Aim to Achieve program and spend time in Red Wing Public School's special education classrooms. The Sheldon Theatre Board is invited to observe on Thursday, February 26, 2026, at Aim to Achieve. The public is invited to an event on Sunday, March 1, 2026, at 1:00 p.m., when Spencer presents a free, sensory-inclusive performance titled "The Magic of Kevin Spencer – Magic for Everyone." Because the Sheldon is not making any money on this project, a lot of grant money was provided.
- Director Dow stated that Water Street Dance will present Community Outreach on March 4, 2026, at Twin Bluff Middle School and with Fusion Dance students.
- Director Dow asked if any Board members would be willing to assist with Show Sponsorship Recruitment in March. It requires a willingness to reach out to businesses and request them to sponsor shows.
- Director Dow stated that a grant proposal was submitted to the Wings Foundation for \$10,000 for support for the 2026-2027 season, and the funds were granted. This is an increase from last year's grant of \$3,000. The Wings Foundation has been very supportive of the Sheldon.
- Director Dow stated that a grant proposal was submitted to the Red Wing Shoe Foundation for \$217,500 over the next three years for General Operating Support.
- Director Dow stated that additional grant submissions in February include the Xcel Energy Foundation, the Red Wing Area Fund, and the St. Paul, Minnesota Foundation's Arts & Culture Grant Program.

- Director Dow stated that the “Once Upon A Mattress” four-show run sold 810 adult tickets and 270 student tickets. The high school made \$13,050 in revenue, and the Sheldon earned \$6,600 in rental revenue and generated \$1,864 in order processing fees from the event. The processing fees go towards funding the ticketing system, which costs about \$20,000 per year.
- Director Dow stated that a music performance titled “Janis, Stevie, Dolly & Me” was held at the end of January, followed by “Okee Dokee Brothers,” which sells a lot of merchandise.
- Director Dow stated that “Joe Pulice & the Buddy Rich Big Band,” “The Peking Acrobats,” and “Frederick Douglass: In the Shadow of Slavery” all had respectable sales and commitment to the Sheldon’s mission.
- Director Dow stated that enhancement requests continue to be submitted to Thunder Tix with positive reporting that they’ve implemented some of the Sheldon’s suggestions.
- Director Dow stated that the Beverage Storeroom has been restocked in anticipation of Big Turn. At a typical Big Turn, the Sheldon generally generates over \$4,000 in bar sales for the two nights. Last year, there was one less performance, but this year, there will be the three-show format again.
- Director Dow stated that planning has begun for the Volunteer Appreciation Event to be held on Thursday, April 23, 2026, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. If Board Members would like to say a few words to thank the volunteers, please arrive just before 5:30 p.m. at the studio.

A. Finance Report.

Treasurer Wardle stated that the official financials from the City have not yet been provided to the Finance Committee.

Treasurer Wardle stated that one show brought in almost \$9,000. There is no revenue from the Phoenix Theatre. The Education/Field Trip Ticket Revenue totaled \$3,639 from “The Jungle Book.” The Rental Revenue totaled \$8,524 from “High School Musical.” The Retail Sales totaled just under \$3,000. Grants and Donations came to just under \$50,000. The total revenue is just about \$73,000 for the month of January.

C. Board Chair’s Report.

President Achen stated that the Board will go through the goals of the Five-Year Plan for the Sheldon.

President Achen stated that the Board met twice to identify the four strategic goals. The first goal is regional prominence. The second goal is a state-of-the-art venue. The third goal is local performers. The fourth goal is administrative support.

President Achen stated that Jim Pence met with the staff, and the staff came up with some goals. The Board received a draft, reviewed it, and gave Director Dow some feedback.

President Achen requested feedback on where specificity is lacking, where the goals lack aggressiveness, or show too much aggressiveness.

President Achen questioned if year one is a little too ambitious.

Treasurer Wardle stated that there is a lot to take on for year one, and she asked Director Dow for the Staff's perspective.

Director Dow stated that Staff had input and agreed. Many of the line items are already in progress.

Member Bell stated that some of the items are tactics, and she noted that it is important to understand why people came to the Sheldon once and didn't return.

Director Dow stated that the follow-through is always such a big load because there are so many things happening on a day-to-day basis.

Director Dow stated that the ticketing software will help to identify subgroups.

President Achen asked Member Bell what a good goal would be.

Member Bell stated that she would be willing to meet with Staff and look at the raw data to determine how to put the data together in a way that will drive some decision-making.

President Achen stated that even though this is a five-year plan, it will be updated every year. Goals will be added as appropriate.

Vice President Brennan stated that at some point, we need to simply move forward. The goals are not etched in stone, and they can be amended over time. The first year is going to be experimental learning, and then it will become more concise over time. Vice President Brennan further stated that he'd like to see it get approved and move on.

Member Bell concurred with Vice President Brennan.

Director Dow stated that she believed Staff was onboard with the plan.

Vice President Brennan stated that his experience with other boards, staff members were rarely included, and his opinion is that this was a mistake. Having Staff involved from day one is a positive thing.

Member Haley expressed excitement in having the opportunity to be part of a first for the Sheldon Theatre Board. Member Haley further stated that she believes the goals are obtainable and may well be surpassed in time.

Member Haley was impressed with the idea of sending return coupons.

Member Kenyon stated that the key is to jump-start.

A motion was made by Vice President Brennan, seconded by Member Bell, to approve the Sheldon 2026-2030 Strategic Plan. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 7:0.

Member Kenyon stated that some of the Members have worked with Strategic Plans over the years, and he finds it amazing that the accomplishment of completing this task in only three meetings and reaching consensus that quickly.

President Achen stated that he wanted it to be on the record that the Sheldon Theatre Board publicly thanked Jim Pence for his efforts.

Member Wardle also thanked Director Dow and Staff.

D. Committee Report.

No report was given.

E. Government Relations Report.

No report was given.

F. Board Member Comments.

Member Kenyon stated that he is going to have to drop off the Board due to some personal issues that he needs to deal with. Member Kenyon stated that he has served for eight years, and it was a positive experience for him.

Member Kenyon stated that he started when the reconstruction began. Member Kenyon touted the fact that the Sheldon survived COVID, when many businesses did not.

Member Kenyon sang the praises of Director Dow for knowing the business so well and her ability to handle an incredible Staff.

President Achen stated that Member Kenyon has an amazing influence and impact within the Red Wing Community.

Member Christenson stated that she would miss Member Kenyon.

Member Wardle asked Member Kenyon if this would be his last meeting, and he answered in the affirmative.

President Achen stated that with Member Kenyon's departure, the Sheldon now has an open Board seat. President Achen asked the Members to bring any suggestions

of individuals who may fill Member Kenyon's seat to him. The Mayor ultimately makes the selection, but the Board will certainly have input.

Vice President Brennan added that it would be good to find someone with a bit of an accounting background.

10. Adjournment

President Achen adjourned the meeting at 6:07 p.m.