

Keefe Auditorium Commission

Friday, September 18, 2026

City Hall, Room 208

The Keefe Auditorium Commission met on the above date in Room 208 of City Hall, called to order by Chairman Dennis Schneider at 4:34pm. In attendance were Shawn Smith, Dennis Schneider, Carl Dubois, and Daniel O'Donnell. Also in attendance was Megan Caron.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

Approval of Meeting Minutes of August 6, 2026. Motion by Carl Dubois, seconded by Shawn Smith to accept minutes. So Voted 4-0.

MEETING OVERVIEW

Chairman Schneider started the meeting by updating the commission on recent meetings with the mayor's office, Alderman Dowd, Alderman Clemons and Tim Cummings. Based on these discussions and past work by the Auditorium Commission, he prepared a power point presentation for the Aldermanic meeting scheduled for Tuesday, September 22, 2026. See attached document entitled "Ensuing the Future of the Edmund Keefe Auditorium".

Funding Strategy and Financial Planning

The main funding approach relies on leveraging proceeds from the Lake Street housing development project without additional city bonding or capital.

- \$18 million estimated renovation support from proceeds with no new city bonding.
 - Mayor and administration back using property development value to fund renovation.
 - No assumption of developer selection or finalized deal terms yet; figures remain preliminary.
 - Additional fundraising needed to cover gap between \$18 million and \$29–34 million renovation cost estimates.
 - Operating expenses exceeding revenue will also require separate fundraising efforts.
- TIF revenue expected to fund long-term debt service starting around October 2030.
 - Bonding will be based on TIF revenue; no funds until tax increment revenue begins.
 - TIF funds will cover debt service over an extended period, not just initial years.

- Timing and amounts remain uncertain pending developer agreements and city negotiations.
- Operating model options under consideration with preference toward an independent nonprofit.
 - For-profit operation run by Spectacle versus nonprofit theaters in the region discussed with city officials.
 - Mayor met with theater experts, leading to support for the nonprofit model.
 - This model aims for break-even operation and sustainable utilization post-renovation.
- Fundraising strategy to include hiring professional capital campaign experts
 - Commission recognizes need for professional fundraisers to meet \$15 million+ target.
 - Long timeline of 6+ years allows phased fundraising efforts.
 - Succession planning discussed given long project horizon and team member ages.

Project Timeline and Development Phasing

The project timeline spans from initial planning to reopening in 2032–2033, with phased construction aligned to developer progress.

- Renovation start projected for October 2030 with reopening by October 2032–33
 - Timeline assumes waiting for TIF revenue and proceeds before renovation begins.
 - Earlier start possible if alternate funds become available.
 - Building mothballed and unusable for transition period starting around 2028.
- Developer selection and detailed design phase expected to complete by 2028
 - Negotiations and housing agreement expected to take about 4 months after contract award.
 - Detailed design phase projected 12–16 months post-agreement, making project shovel-ready by late 2028.
 - Stabilization work on the existing building to occur during this period.
- Phased construction approach encouraged to manage costs and fundraising
 - Options 2, 2a, and 2b from ICON are preferred; Option 1 considered insufficient.
 - Phasing could enable earlier partial opening with subsequent expansions.
 - Phased plan expected to reduce upfront fundraising pressure and attract incremental funding.
- Transition period plan needed to support users during building closure from ~2028 to 2032
 - Planning for community and performance groups' relocation during unusable period is critical.

- Potential to use classrooms and portable buildings as temporary operational spaces during construction.
- User outreach and involvement recommended to maintain engagement through transition.

Architectural and Construction Considerations

Design focus is on achieving a viable lobby addition and functional renovation while preserving operational flexibility.

- Lobby addition on south side prioritized to improve facility functionality.
 - Current ICON plans lack a south lobby; work needed to create phased designs including this feature.
 - Classrooms at the back and other spaces could be repurposed during construction.
 - Cost implications of phasing acknowledged but considered acceptable for long-term benefit.
- Utilities and structural planning linked to developer's infrastructure work
 - Utility connections likely to come from Lake Street side; coordination critical to avoid duplication.
 - Potential synergy if utility conduits serve both housing and auditorium projects.
 - Construction sequencing to include building firewalls and sound walls for separation.
- Mothballing costs include sprinkler system and heating per fire department requirements.
 - Early proceeds could fund installing essential safety systems to reduce mothballing expenses.
 - Sprinklers and electrical upgrades needed to keep building safe during dormancy.
 - Use of building during partial construction possible if safety needs met.
- Salvage and asset recovery during demolition discussed as fundraising opportunity.
 - Some auditorium items (plaques, doors) reserved; other building materials may be sold.
 - City's Amy DeRoche manages disposition of surplus items; coordination needed to maximize returns.
 - Prior examples show potential to raise funds from reusable assets.

Governance, Stakeholder Engagement, and Organizational Planning

Clear communication, leadership continuity, and stakeholder involvement are essential for project success.

- Commission seeks definitive guidance from aldermen and city administration.
 - Presentation planned to clarify options, costs, and timeline for aldermen to avoid premature objections.
 - Emphasis on transparency and managing expectations around bonding and tax impact.
 - Opportunity for commissioners to provide feedback before formalizing plans.
- Succession and capacity planning critical due to long project duration.
 - Commission members acknowledge likelihood of turnover before project completion.
 - Need to recruit and engage new talent to support fundraising and project management.
 - Current members willing to lead fundraising but require broader team involvement.
- User engagement and expert advisory panels recommended.
 - Theater experts involved in utilization planning to ensure sustainable operations.
 - Involving current user groups in maintenance and programming during transition.
 - Regular communication to maintain community support and involvement.
- City administration actively supports and coordinates with external stakeholders.
 - Mayor and administration backing critical to advancing legislation and developer selection.
 - Ongoing dialogue with aldermen to build consensus and address concerns.
 - Public meetings planned to keep transparency and update community.

Motion by Daniel O'Donnell, seconded by Carl Dubois, to accept the plan as presented (see attachment). So voted 4-0.

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 1, 2026 at 4:30pm in room 208 of City Hall.

Motion to adjourn by Shawn Smith, seconded by Daniel O'Donnell. Meeting adjourned at 5:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Shawn M. Smith, Auditorium Commission Secretary

Attachments

- (1) Powerpoint Presentation for Planned Aldermanic Meeting of September 22, 2026, "Ensuring the Future of the Edmund Keefe Auditorium"