



June 13, 2016

Dear Wellesley Players,

On June 8, 2016 some of us attended the Wellesley Players' Annual Meeting. At the meeting, attendees shared food and drink and conducted the typical business associated with the wrap up of the 2015 – 2016 season and operations. This included the voting of a new slate of Board of Directors for the group. I'm pleased to let you know that the 2016-2017 season's Board is comprised of the following people:

Ken Fisher, President
Darlene Howland, Vice President
Jaimee Banks, Secretary
Marlene Mandel, Interim Treasurer
Celia Couture, Play Reading and Director Search
Jean MacFarland, Membership
Susan Rubin, Marketing
Cathy Spear, Nominating

Additionally, we're very lucky to have continued support from: Diane Rothauser as the leader of our Program work; Diana Zito, responsible for Box Office; and Dave Finstein for Technical Direction!

On behalf of the entire Board, I'd like to say that we're honored to take the charge from the attendees to represent the will of the group. We look forward to working even more closely with you—with all of you, in one capacity or another—over the coming seasons.

Before I 'talk' about some important priorities of the coming season(s), I'm also excited to share that the Star Award—which is an award honoring a member[s] who go above-and-beyond in their work to support the group—was given last night to Diane Rothauser and Steven Casolaro! Their tireless efforts in support of the group by filling roles of Producer (both Diane and Steven), Program (Diane), Set Construction (Steven), Makeup (Diane), Alston space support (Steven), and many other examples of volunteerism were extraordinary and the awards were well deserved. We owe so much to this hard working couple!

At the meeting, there were two important points of discussion that I'd like to bring to your attention as acute areas of focus for the upcoming Board: a) the ever-growing financial challenge associated with generating adequate revenue to cover our annual operations and productions costs, and b) the nature of our member engagement. I'd like to share some thoughts I have as the incoming President about these two topics. I also want to take this opportunity to solicit input about your volunteer interests so be sure to read through to the end for that request for a reply!

Financial Challenges

Every group has them. In fact, too many recent examples exist where community theater groups have perished as a result. According to some of our members who are active at regional and national level theater organizations, ten Eastern Massachusetts theater groups have been forced to close because they were unable to sustain both the high costs of production and operational demands. While we are currently solvent (due in



large part to the profit generated by “My Fair Lady”, “The Pied Piper”, and grants) the trend of loss is significant enough that we must be extremely cautious as we approach our coming seasons. Without rigorous controls managing our group’s operating and production expenses, along with realistic forecasts of revenue from ticket sales and other sources of revenue, we will find ourselves in a financially untenable situation. Please understand that the Players’ most recent trend—where our revenue doesn’t consistently cover all of our production and operating expenses—represents a huge risk the organization’s ongoing viability.

Subsequently, one of the highest priorities I intend to promote for our Board’s functioning is the establishment of a comprehensive, detailed operating/production budget where we will:

1. Establish costs at a significant level of specificity and reality, based on actual expense trend
2. Ensure that the “top line” (or forecast for incoming revenue) represents realistic expectations
3. Memorialize this budget as a balanced one (or, in other words, one with a neutral-to-positive “bottom line”)
4. Update a forecast monthly, by updating our “actuals”, and using that information to adjust the projection of future months’ expenses/revenue
5. Have the Board use this information to inform its decisions about spending and the operations of the group which impact its spending

This will be a tremendous amount of work for the Board to establish, initially. In my “other life”, I spend an awful lot of time working with budgets and resetting forecasts. If we establish a good baseline and a consistent practice of monitoring our forecasts, we stand a great chance at ‘weathering the storm’ of the financial challenges we, and so many other Community Theater groups, face.

Be on the lookout for future communications about the status of these efforts and the progress we make in our financial management of the Players.

Member Engagement

The organization doesn’t exist without the support and strength of its membership; I wonder whether we ought to work even harder than we already do to make sure that all of the members know how true this is for us. Members must be engaged, solicited for support, thanked for their efforts, and encouraged to ‘come back for more’. Though we can all point to many ways the group works to engage support and express appreciation, there is always room for improvement. That, for me, is another key priority.

On behalf of the Board, I’d like to commit to establishing new, even more creative ideas for engaging members as active participants in the Wellesley Players (in my professional vernacular, we call that ensuring that members of an organization are “sticky” with the group; as a father of an 8 year old, it conjures unpleasant images so I’ll leave it at the word “engaged”).

We will be working hard to establish more opportunities for the group to come together and to enjoy the experience of being a community of theater people. We will work to coordinate across Membership and Program to achieve that. I look forward to being able to share more throughout the next season about the work the Board and Program Committee will do toward this objective. We welcome your feedback!



To start with, however, it would be helpful to reassess the areas of our members' interests. Along those lines, please follow the link below to identify one or more areas in of our work which you would like to pledge your support, now or in the future. One of our Board Members may contact you to explore further.

[Wellesley Players Member Survey](#)

If, in completing this request for information, you would like to volunteer specifically to support our next production, Shrek, please let us know by contacting one of the show's Producers: Cathy Spear, Diana Zito, and Steven Casolaro. Be on the lookout for more information about our season's productions, the teams supporting those productions, and volunteer opportunities!

In advance of your support, I'd like to express my deepest appreciation for the opportunity to serve the Wellesley Players and to extend my gratitude for the work we will do together to see the group prosper. I'd love to hear from you, so please feel free to drop me a note wpboardofdirectors@gmail.com and share your thoughts!

Sincerely,

Ken Fisher and the Board of Directors