



Minutes of the OTTA Members' Annual Meeting January 25, 2024

President Ray S. Clark called the meeting to order at 7 pm. Ray mentioned the Special Board Meeting on January 9, 2024. Beth Burk made a motion to approve the minutes from that meeting (which largely dealt with two resolutions, the pivotal one dealing with the Strategic Plan's final approval). Motion was seconded and motion passed with the quorum of the Board.

Ray introduced the guests attending the meeting: Sara Feigenholtz, IL State Senator; Margaret Croke, IL State Representative; and Bridget Degnen, Cook County Commissioner, plus staff members from other offices.

Agenda Items:

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Brad Neuman was unable to attend the meeting, so Ray presented our financial report. The December 2023 Cash Balance was \$586,891. Ray emphasized that OTTA is financially sound, with no debt or mortgage. Target reserves are \$600,000, which implicitly would cover the financial budget for two years in lieu of Art Fair income. OTTA's overall objective is to spend wisely on the Community's behalf.

Strategic Plan: Ray reminded us that the Strategic Planning idea was suggested two years ago at the January 2022 Annual Meeting. Brad served as Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, which worked diligently for the entire two years, with assistance from John Engman, a planning consultant. There were four subcommittees (Governance, Community Development, Stakeholders, Finance/Operations). Four workgroups morphed from the subcommittees: Engagement (led by Dee Decarlo); Collaboration & Caring (Phil Graf); Governance (Ray); and Finance/Operations (Diane Fitzgerald). The first milestone occurred in March 2023, when the mission statement, vision & values were drafted. The actual Strategic Plan is only six pages long and is posted on the website. There are two documents: The Plan, plus a separate report & appendix, which will serve as the tool kit for the Board, and includes, goals, key measures, etc.

1. Committee Reports:

a. Art Fair Report by Chris Nelson

Chris noted that the June 8-9th event has received 826 artist applications for 220 spots, so the Exhibitor Committee will be busy, evaluating the applications. Forty artists from 2023 have been asked back with 34 accepting the invitation. Chris unveiled the 2024 round poster, conceived by Clifton Henry, a Chicago artist. Chris also noted that the OTTA website has been refreshed, more user-friendly, more drop-down menus.

b. Events Report by Aneta Tomaszewicz

Aneta is the incoming Events Chair, and she noted that OTTA is hosting a Cello Evening with Ian Maksin, February 18, 4-7 pm,. Aneta acknowledged Marya's successful efforts as last year's Events Chair.

c. Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) Report by Ray

Ray mentioned another topic from the January 9 Special Meeting: Transferring the SPC governance workgroup to a Standing Committee that will continue with governance issues and make recommendations to the Board for things like the new member orientation package, leadership development plan, job descriptions, etc. Some of these will require changes to the bylaws, with 2024 being in the three-year bylaw cycle. There is also hope to develop an OTTA Policy, Procedures and Practices manual.

d. HD/PZ Report by Beth Burk

Beth said it is worthy to note that 2023 was the first year that Old Town didn't have a single major project (residential or commercial) needing a permit. This speaks to the level of maturity of the neighborhood, but Beth said it changes the nature of the Committee's focus. Instead, the group has utilized their historic & cultural passions and led several walking/museum/history tours. They hope to do more in 2024. The Committee has eight long-term residents and members who are happy to help with questions. Beth hopes to post more materials about permitting process, historic district attributes, etc., on the updated OTTA website.

2. \$150,000 State Grant: Ray updated us on the State Grant received in May 2023, which is designated specifically for capital improvements to the "Art Center", aka, it must be spent on the physical space. OTTA immediately formed an Ad Hoc Committee in June (Art Center Ad Hoc Committee/ACAHC). The ACAHC sent out a request for interest and five firms responded with the Committee interviewing four firms. All proposals were evaluated and one firm was recommended to the Board, Via Chicago, a small firm of 11, with a portfolio consisting of projects similar to OTTA. The ACAHC has transitioned to the Capital Development Committee for 2024, a standing committee. A design workshop convened on January 23. The spaces included in the renovation are the Operations Office, Community Room, basement, restroom upgrades, hallway, and South Room, kitchen, exterior door replacements, and other potential improvements. There is an open workshop on January 30 to garner public input and suggestions. We hope to commence the design process in early February and be prepared to pre-qualify general contractors for project pricing. A schedule will be needed to try to break down the project into pieces so the Art Center can remain open during the renovation.

3. Year in Review by Ray: Highlights of 2023 included: Exciting events (BINGO, Wine Tasting, Oktoberfest, Halloween Parade); Ella Jenkins 99th Birthday Celebration, 2023 Earth Day Activities; First of four Little Free Libraries installed; Elinda Xiao joined the OTTA Staff; and we engaged more than 100 neighbors in community service programs benefiting our local Police & Fire Departments, veterans, migrants and others in need.

4. Election of 2024 Board Members: Marya Lucas, Secretary, shared the 2024 Board Slate and introduced the said individuals. A voice vote was taken to confirm the election of the following 2024 Board Members: Ray Clark (President), Drew Roesch (Treasurer), Anne Giffels (1st Vice President), Jane Bachmann (Secretary), Lotika Pai (Director), & Aneta Tomaszewicz (Director). (Please note: The following individuals continue as Board Members: Beth Burk, Elaine Frei, Alan Lougee, & Dave Montgomery. Chris Nelson is the Art Fair Chair and 2nd Vice President.)

5. Recognition of Retiring Directors: Dorothy DeCarlo acknowledged outgoing Board members for their hard work: Brad Neuman (Treasurer), Secretary (Marya Lucas), and Directors Zac Bleicher and Carly Jenkins.

6. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Jane Bachmann, 2024 OTTA Secretary