

Thomaston Opera House Commission
Minutes of Regular Meeting – September 18, 2025



Attendees: Commissioners Michael Burr, Richard Chandon, David Colavecchio, Mark Foster, Claire Greene, Joseph Hartz, Rebecca Skinner, Nancy Stancavage, David Verdosci

Also in attendance: Jeff Dunn, Landmark Community Theatre; Gary Kingsbury, chair, Landmark Community Theatre Board; Roy Bouffard, Friends of the Opera House; members of the public.

Chairman M. Burr called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Minutes of the previous meeting: On a motion by D. Colavecchio, seconded by M. Foster, the minutes of the July 17, 2025, meeting of the Opera House Commission were approved (9-0).

Correspondence: M. Burr read an email from G. Kingsbury concerning the Commission's decision to reinstate full rental charges for LCT in April. The email referred to a March 16th letter asking the Commission to reconsider its decision and requested both documents be included in the minutes. M. Burr then read the March 16 letter, which is filed with these minutes.

UPDATES AND REPORTS

Restoration: M. Burr reported that progress continues. The completion date is now mid-September but probably will need a few weeks further extension. Before *Fiddler on the Roof*, increased access to costume areas and a grant of Temporary Occupancy from the Building Inspector are needed. The elevator is almost finished except for masonry work in the shaft. M. Burr anticipates that within 2 weeks or so, Landmark will have full access to costume areas but not the elevator. M. Burr spoke highly of the Building Committee.

Landmark Community Theatre: Regarding the decision to reinstate rental charges, M. Burr commented that he receives feedback from residents concerned that LCT, which is not a town entity, is not paying rent. G. Kingsbury said LCT does not agree with the reinstatement of the quarterly payment before they have full access. M. Foster and D. Colavecchio commented that they think LCT is getting a good deal and are in support of the resumption of the quarterly fee. C. Greene said she thinks more consideration should be given to the access issues. Her concerns about the late fee were addressed by M. Foster and D. Colavecchio who explained how low the fee is. After some further discussion, there was general agreement to move on with the agenda.

TLC Committee: D. Verdosci reported that the committee was able to clean up the attic. He said that he was unable to repair the wallpaper in one of the rest rooms.

Friends of the Opera House: R. Skinner read a letter from the Friends stating their position on the swastika symbols in the restored Opera House ceiling: "Altering or omitting problematic historic imagery is justified when it serves to make everyone in the community, including visitors, performers, and audiences, feel comfortable, valued, and respected." Discussion followed, mainly concerning the history and prevalence of the swastika symbol and the effect keeping the symbols may have on patrons.

OLD BUSINESS

D. Colavecchio moved, seconded by M. Foster, that the ceiling be left as is. After much discussion, the motion passed 7-2.

M. Burr encouraged Commissioners to support the Opera House by buying tickets to their shows.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Discussion of the swastika symbol issue continued including the history of its adoption by the Nazis; possible impact of keeping the symbols on LCT's finances and the reputation of the town; consideration of the fact other changes have been made since the Opera House was built including the organ, heat and air conditioning, electricity, curtains, etc; possible effect on grant money if we did remove them.

D. Colavecchio moved and J. Hartz seconded that the meeting be adjourned to a site walk of areas under restoration at 8:00 pm; motion passed 9-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Skinner,

Secretary, Opera House Commission

March 16, 2025

Subject: Request for Reconsideration of Rental Charges

Dear Thomaston Opera House Commission,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to respectfully request that the Commission reconsider its decision to reinstate full rental charges for the Landmark Community Theatre, Inc. starting in April. I would like to highlight several important considerations for your attention.

First, while Landmark appreciates the Commission's decision regarding our reopening, we currently do not have full access to the facilities specified in our rental agreement, such as the green room, dressing rooms, restrooms for actors, and makeup areas. Moreover, due to safety regulations imposed by the fire marshal, our productions are unable to utilize haze or fog effects, which limits the quality of our performances scheduled from now until August.

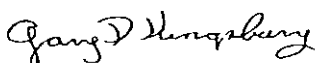
Secondly, the costs associated with reopening the venue are significant. Landmark must reinstall the sound system, modify the acoustic environment, and retrieve authorized items from storage, among other vital preparations. These expenses are essential for ensuring a successful return to the stage. The speakers from the center sound array alone suffered over \$2,000 in damage from the fall. Routine maintenance and reinstallation of this speaker array will incur an additional \$2,500.

Thirdly, Landmark alone bore the expenses of closing, clearing out, and now reopening the facility. This includes materials and equipment dating back to the 1970s, 1980s, and earlier. We have been forced to utilize all of Landmark's off-site storage facilities and lease an additional 2,400-square-foot storage facility to house all equipment and resources.

Fourth, we have incurred significant expenses that exceed our budget due to the constantly changing schedules of contractors and architects. We were notified to prepare for a closure lasting six to nine months, starting in January or February 2024. This timeline has now been pushed back to June 2024 and extended through December 2024. While we acknowledge that this situation is not the fault of the Commission or Building Committee, it has led to the rescheduling and/or relocation of our fall and holiday shows, resulting in a 65% reduction in box office sales alongside ongoing expenses related to these changes. "Fiddler on the Roof," which was expected to be our highest-grossing show of the year, is particularly affected by ticket exchanges and complimentary tickets issued to appease disappointed patrons.

Lastly, Landmark has been a committed partner in raising funds for the renovations. Roy, Jeff, Courtney, and I comprise the four Capital Campaign Committee members. Together, we raised over \$350,000, which has been essential for completing the projects.

In conclusion, the decision to impose rental fees beginning in April does not adequately consider our ongoing financial contributions to the project or the current restrictions on access to and use of the space. We sincerely hope the Commission will consider these factors and arrive at a fair resolution. Warm regards,



Gary Kingsbury

Chair, Landmark Community Theatre, Inc.

Cathy Dupont

From: rebecca skinner <rskinner357@snet.net>
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2025 8:40 AM
To: Cathy Dupont
Subject: Fw: LCT Payment overdue Sent to Thomaston Opera House Commission
Attachments: Reconsideration of Rental Charges.docx; TOH Commission minutes regular mtg 18SEP2025.docx

Good morning, Cathy,

In the forwarded email, Gary Kingsbury requests that the contents of the email and the attached letter be read into the Opera House Commission minutes. They were read at our meeting on September 18, and I am forwarding them to you to include with the minutes when you post them. The minutes are also attached. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Becky

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Gary Kingsbury <garyking27@gmail.com>
To: Mike Burr <meburr@optonline.net>
Cc: Gary D Kingsbury <garyking27@gmail.com>; Richard Chandon <r_chandon@hotmail.com>; Mark Foster <fostermark83@yahoo.com>; Claire Greene <clairejanegreene13@gmail.com>; Joe Hartz <jhartz123@aol.com>; Rebecca Skinner <rskinner357@snet.net>; Nancy Stancavage <beedleo@aol.com>; Dave Verdosci <davidvrdsco@yahoo.com>; Tracy Decker <tdecker@thomastonct.org>
Sent: Sunday, September 14, 2025 at 12:46:51 PM EDT
Subject: Re: LCT Payment overdue Sent to Thomaston Opera House Commission

Hi Mike and the Thomaston Opera House Commission,

I wrote a letter to the commission on March 16th respectfully requesting that the Commission reconsider its decision to reinstate full rental charges for the Landmark Community Theatre, Inc. starting in April. The full text of the letter is included. I did not receive a response to this letter although I was able to find a rejection of this request in the Thomaston Opera House Commission minutes recently. I would hope that the Commission respond to each part of the letter as it raises several valid points that deserve more than just a blanket "No".

Landmark feels strongly that the full per ticket payment should be waived for all the reasons stated in the letter and requests that the letter and content of this email be read into the minutes. In the contract it says that in return for the perperson fee, Landmark Community Theatre will have **"Full and exclusive use of...the dressing rooms, costume room, and work rooms, lavatory and shower on level 4 (Old Firehouse)."**

Landmark understands that this is not the fault of the Commission or the building committee. However, it is not the fault of Landmark either and lacking these facilities has had an impact on the quality of our shows and our ability to attract actors and production staff. We ask that you all please read the enclosed letter and reconsider your position.

Gary

Gary Kingsbury
Chair, Landmark Community Theatre Board of Directors

On Sep 12, 2025, at 9:02 AM, MB <meburr@optonline.net> wrote:

Gary,

As you are aware, the TOH Commission restarted payments due beginning the second quarter on April 1. According to the contract:

"Payment terms: The appropriate per ticket payment for the previous quarter shall be paid quarterly. If payment is not received by the end of the month following the quarter, a late fee of 3% will be charged."

I forwarded the financial report that LCT gave to the commission to Tracy. In the future please ensure that Tracy is provided with a copy of the LCT quarterly report.

While I understand that the backstage area is currently not available, the TOH and the TOHBC allowed LCT to operate in the theater as soon as was practically feasible. I have impressed upon BCC the need to expand the use of the backstage FH spaces as soon as practically possible. As you are aware from the TOHBC email to BCC President, I have requested use of the dressing room areas ASAP for the upcoming production on the first weekend of October. I'm awaiting a response.

Please remit the appropriate fees ASAP.

Once Phase 1 is completed, we intend to reopen the contract per Section 20 of the agreement. The TOH Commission will formally codify our request at the next meeting.

Thanks,
Mike