

Keefe Auditorium Commission

May 7, 2026

4:30 PM

City Hall

Room 208

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Shawn Smith, Dennis Schneider, Carl Dubois, Daniel O'Donnell and Joseph Olefirowicz.

Also in attendance were Tim Cummings, Amy DeRoche, and Mark McKevez (Icon Architects). Joe Mobelia and Ned Collier from the architectural team (Icon) joined the meeting via remote connection.

3. Approval of Minutes

4/9/26 meeting

Approval of Meeting Minutes of April 9, 2026. Motion by Daniel O'Donnell, seconded by Joseph Olefirowicz, to accept minutes. Minutes were corrected to include draft plans submitted by the Architect. So Voted.

4. Update & Review with Icon

Mark McKevez provided construction estimates for four distinct renovation and expansion options for the auditorium, with cost estimates ranging from **\$16 million to \$94 million**, reflecting varying degrees of construction and upgrades. All estimates are based on construction in 2028 (i.e. today's 2026 cost inflated for two years at 4% per annum). They also include a 15% design contingency and a 5% construction contingency. All options include a new roof and ceiling. The estimated design duration is one year.

- **Option One: Minimum Upgrades at \$16,830,615**

- Focuses on essential improvements: new mechanical systems, utility upgrades, new toilets, and code compliance without theatrical enhancements.
- Construction schedule is approximately **12 months**.
- Does not include new seating, sound, or lighting systems; auditorium seating remains unchanged.
- The existing back classrooms are reserved as shell space without fit-out.
- This option yields a usable but minimal facility with air conditioning and basic code compliance.

- **Option Two: Moderate Expansion and Upgrades at \$28,804,088**

- Adds a **6,000 square foot addition**, including about **1,800 square feet for mechanicals**, improving building aesthetics by hiding rooftop units.
- Includes minor theatrical upgrades: limited rigging, lighting controls, and AV enhancements.
- Proposes some new seating in the front rows and reconfigured lobby staircases.
- Adds a wheelchair lift and improves accessibility. Adds additional restrooms.
- Construction duration is about **18 months**.

- Maintains shelled backstage space with limited fit-out, providing potential for future expansion but currently lacking full loading dock improvements
- **Option Three: Touring Level Facility at \$55,743,313**
 - Involves a **21,000 square foot two-story addition** with expanded backstage, loading dock improvements to facilitate touring productions, green rooms, dressing rooms, storage, and full theatrical upgrades, including LED stage lighting, AV systems, and pit lift options.
 - Total building area reaches about **55,000 square feet**.
 - Construction duration extends to approximately **24 months**.
 - Includes comprehensive accessibility upgrades like a **four-stop, two-sided elevator** and reconfigured audience seating for ADA compliance.
 - This is a full-scale renovation targeting touring productions and expanded use, but considered prohibitively expensive by some commissioners.
- **Option Four: New Build Concept at about \$94 Million**
 - A full new construction modeled on comparable international theaters. This option retains the facade (the front of the building) but demolishes and rebuilds the rest of the auditorium. This includes an allowance of \$1 million for parking and about \$5 million for new seating and theatrical upgrades.
 - Considered an unlikely scenario due to its high cost and infrastructure demands.
 - Provides context that even large-scale global theater projects cost in the same range, confirming the realism of other estimates.

5. Discussion

The Aldermen are awaiting the Commission's recommendation for the Auditorium. Of note is that the Architect (Icon) has completed the scope of work envisioned with the issued Request for Proposals, so any additional changes will incur additional costs. The commission debated the viability and strategic merit of each option, focusing on affordability, usability, and future flexibility.

Dennis Schneider motioned to proceed with Option Two while incorporating selected improvements from Option Three. Seconded by Shawn Smith. Motion failed.

Joseph Olefirowicz motioned to present a progress report of Icon's progress to date to the Aldermen, without recommending a particular Option. Seconded by Carl Dubois. Motion approved 3-2.

- **Consensus to Center Recommendation on Option Two**
 - Commissioners agreed that option two strikes the best balance between cost, usability, and future potential.
 - Option three was seen as too costly and unlikely to gain city support, despite its benefits.
 - Option one deemed insufficient to drive meaningful change or increased usage.
 - Option four deemed too expensive to proceed further in Commission discussions.
 - Members discussed refining option two with upgrades such as leveling the band area and adding better AV and lighting. The need to tear out the stepped floor in the band area to enable rolling equipment access to the stage was emphasized as critical for external groups.

- Options one and two include limited ADA seating upgrades focused mainly on the front rows. These would be included in Option 2A.
- **Acknowledgment of Funding and Operational Challenges**
 - Commissioners recognized the city's limited capital expenditure capacity, with indications that city administration is unlikely to support projects above **\$1 million annually** for operating costs.
 - The necessity of future fundraising efforts was acknowledged but considered outside the commission's immediate scope.
 - Discussion highlighted the need for the city to understand the financial realities to avoid pursuing unfeasible options.
- **Plan to Develop a Refined "Option 2A"**
 - Commissioners expressed interest in further refining option two by incorporating cost-effective modifications such as flattening the chorus/band area and including better sound and lighting packages.
 - ICON Services to provide a scope and cost estimate for this refined version to Tim Cummings, with the goal of presenting it at the next meeting.
 - This will help clarify the midpoint between minimal upgrades and full-scale renovations before finalizing recommendations.

6. Timeline, Next Steps, and Governance

The group agreed on a timeline for presenting findings and further refining proposals, emphasizing communication with the Board of Aldermen and fiscal prudence.

- **Target Presentation to Board of Aldermen in June**
 - The commission plans to present the progress report, including all four options, to the board in June. The Aldermen meet on June 9th or June 23rd.
 - This will be an informational update with no binding recommendation yet, allowing aldermen to provide feedback on financial appetite and project scope.
- **Next Commission Meeting Scheduled for June 4th**
 - The commission will reconvene to review refined option 2A and any updated cost estimates.
- **Emphasis on Clear Communication and Managing Expectations**
 - The commission stressed the importance of presenting clear, understandable options to the aldermen, avoiding overwhelming them with technical detail.
 - Recognized that price will be the primary factor driving alderman decisions, so framing options within a realistic cost range is vital.
 - Details can be refined once funding and scope are confirmed.

Action Items

Tim

- Coordinate securing additional limited funds to develop Option 2A design upgrades, including construction estimates.

Mark

- Send the presentation materials discussed in the meeting to all commission members for their review and context.

- Prepare and scope an updated Option 2A design focusing on leveling the choral floor for stage access and incorporating audiovisual upgrades within the budget constraints

7. Other Business: None

8. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Shawn Smith. Meeting adjourned at 6:15 pm.

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

Respectfully submitted, Shawn M. Smith, Auditorium Commission Secretary