

Keefe Auditorium Commission
Thursday, November 6, 2025
City Hall, Room 208
4:30 PM

The Keefe Auditorium Commission met on the above date, called to order by Vice Chairman Alicia Gregg at 4:35pm. In attendance were Alicia Gregg, Shawn Smith, Joseph Olefirowicz and Daniel O'Donnell. Also in attendance were Megan Caron, Liz Hannum, Amy DeRoche and Peter Ramsey. Tim Cummings was on remote access.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

Approval of Meeting Minutes of October 9, 2025. Motion by Daniel O'Donnell, seconded by Joseph Olefirowicz, to accept minutes. So Voted. There were no minutes for the October 23, 2025 meeting as there was not a quorum.

Meeting Overview

Daniel O'Donnell provided an overview of the Keefe: About 1500 total seats, of which 1000 are orchestra seating and 500 in the balcony. There is a full modern counterweight batten system which is 48 feet tall with a loading rail. Local groups such as the Actor Singers and Symphony NH use the facility 8-9 times per year. Keefe was recently part of a high/middle school and lacks air conditioning, adequate bathrooms, has a very small lobby and backstage, and lacks dedicated green rooms.

Peter Ramsey was invited by Chairman Schneider to provide his thoughts on future use of the Keefe Auditorium. Peter has been with the Palace Theater for 27 years and currently is the President and CEO. The Palace has 800 seats and has a neighboring property, "The Rex", which seats 300. He provided his view of the Keefe Auditorium, saying it is a hard place to set up a show due to lack of production space to stage sets offstage. He also noted there is a lack of dedicated parking, and the space should be made "warmer" through the use of carpeting and wall murals. Seat width is an issue along with leg room. He noted 1500 seats is a great size for a number of entertainers, e.g., Jackson Brown, and sees the potential for youth programs to be held. Bus and truck touring shows could be attracted to a renovated Keefe.

The Palace is run as a non-profit and has a Board of Directors. Approximately 80% of operating costs are earned through ticket sales. The rest is by donations and capital campaigns. Their budget is about \$7 million. About \$1.5 million were received via donations last year. Aside from scheduled shows they also rent the Palace (but not on weekends). Last year they have about 600 events scheduled. They have six rehearsal rooms. The key to sustainability is revenue from various sources and community engagement.

Peter suggested a capital campaign to raise funds for Keefe would be a good way to provide revenue. It could be run by a sub-committee. The Palace Theater runs a capital campaign every 3 years. Funds could also be raised by naming opportunities, seat sponsorships, private donors, bond funding.

The committee discussed three general models: commercial operator, nonprofit operator and a hybrid city owned with a lease to an operator. Peter noted if the City expects the Keefe to make money, it will fail.

Tim Cummings noted the limited design services contract (from the RFP solicitation) for Keefe Auditorium was awarded to Icon Architecture

Action Items

Alicia Gregg will send out survey monkey to identify a regular monthly meeting day for the Keefe Commission. The committee will meet with Icon Architecture. At some point in the future, conduct a site-walk with Peter Ramsey and Palace Theater staff.

Next Commission Meeting(s)

Tentatively a special meeting is scheduled for November 13th at 4:30 PM.

Adjournment

Daniel O'Donnell motioned, seconded by Joseph Olefirowicz, to adjourn the meeting. So voted at 5:32pm.

Respectfully submitted – Shawn M. Smith, Commission Secretary