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NEW PRAGUE POPS POST

December 2022 -- Volume 1 -- Number 1

"It's Time!"

Editor's Note: "It's Time!" Is a monthly column by Den Gardner, chair of the Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS) Committee of the New Prague Area Arts Council. If you can read, we ask you to read it at your leisure! If you missed reading class in elementary school, an audio version may be available in the next three years. OK, just kidding.

Back in my early days of community journalism, at the New Ulm Dairy Journal in the early 1970s, I wrote a sports column called "A Dime's Worth!" I gave the column that name because of a joke going around at that time that went something like this: "Got a dime? Call somebody who cares!"

Since I wasn't sure if anyone would care about my column or not, I thought the name appropriate. For those of you who don't remember, there used to be something called phone booths. Yep, a phone in a booth. You'd put a dime in the phone inside the booth and you could make a local call.

Really.

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It's hard to put a value anymore (10 cents as one example) on the written word – with all the social media platforms creating thousands of "so-called writers" who love to educate and inform (or in many cases today mis-educate and mis-inform) its loyal readers. Some of that is, frankly worth a dime or less! But that's another story at another time. We're going to be all about the facts and the truth here.

My goal with this column is simply this: Update you on all things POPS! And in this opening gambit, I'll provide a quick re-cap of what we're trying to build in this historic effort in New Prague. Simply, an outdoor performance facility – something this community doesn't have at this time. What we have is a tent! Seriously?

So, for those who have lived in a cave for the past year, or on an isolated island off the coast of Italy (Malta would be my favorite), or don't watch what's happening in our community, or don't have a cell phone, here's the scoop on our project as we end 2022 and excitedly look forward to 2023!

The tent now serves as our outdoor performance facility because New Prague doesn't have a permanent structure. It was what we used for Music at the Broz, the summer concert series over six weeks started last summer by the arts council on the grassy area at the historic Hotel Broz downtown. Six great concerts, attended by 300-400 people each week. What a shame the six great bands had to perform under a tent/canopy.

But that's going to change. A POPS Committee, made up of 20+ community/civic, arts, business, and service organization leaders, has been meeting for a year behind the scenes. The official fundraising kick-off was at the Giesenbrau in late October.

Den Gardner, Chair
Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS)

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POPS Commitee

The POPS Committee is made up of six subcommittees:

- Fundraising
- Financial/Legal
- Location Feasibility/Design
- Marketing & Communications
- City/School/Community Organization Collaborations
- Grants/Public-Private Funding

Fundraising SubCommittee Update

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The POPS Fundr ginning its personal visits to oject. This effort is being undertaken mostly by Shannon Brusseau and Den Gardner, co-chairs of the subcommittee. Other active members of the subcommittee are Dan Bishop, Dr. Jon Colling, Lisa Brusseau, and Andy Beckius.

Some highlights in the past month:
Phone calls have been made to two dozen prospects.
Personal visits have been made to about a dozen prospects (businesses and individuals).
The fundraising proposal and PowerPoint presentations have been revised to include updates of the subcommittee's efforts.

Pledge results thus far:

- $100,000 (Den/Sandy Gardner – Gardner & Gardner Communications
- $75,000 (MinnWest Bank/New Prague)
- $75,000 (Dr. Mike and Kay Wilcox)
- $15,000 (Bevcomm)
- $5,000 (New Prague City Park Board)
- Commitments from 20+ other companies/individuals, with amounts TBD)

The end result: Pledged thus far = $270,000. We have exceeded our 2023 goal of $250,000!

Personal visits and phone solicitations will continue in December. Major presentations and results of those presentations are expected in early 2023 with the New Prague Chamber of Commerce and New Prague Rotary.

Feasibility & Design SubCommittee

This subcommittee is made up of Steve Frost, chair; plus committee members Pat Sullivan, Karen Steinhoff, Joe Barten, Stef Tupy, Larry Pint, Kay Wilcox and Den Gardner.

Working cooperatively with The New Prague Area Arts Council, The POPS Committee, New Prague City staff, and New Prague Park Board, and New Prague City Council, here's a rundown of our progress so far:

- **Early last summer:** After scanning the New Prague area, our committee assembled a list of ten private and city-owned properties for consideration. Evaluation and discussion of each site were conducted.
- **In mid-summer, the** Park Board requested details on three sites for its review. Using criteria

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developed b ites: Ease of access, aco with adjacent properties.

- **In August,** the City formally approved a contribution of $5,000 toward the Outdoor Performance Facility feasibility study.
- **As the summer continued,** the subcommittee reported to the POPS Committee. The following items were discussed: soil suitability, support utilities, infrastructure, parking, sidewalks and trails to get to the site, maintenance and cost of utilities, and design criteria. The committee created a preliminary needs assessment for interested individuals and groups.
- **In early fall,** the subcommittee assisted with the development of RFPs which were sent to seven architectural and engineering firms.
- **On Dec. 14,** subcommittee members, city hall staff and other interested POPS Committee members listened to face-to-face presentations from two architectural firms. One of those firms will be selected to work with the POPS Committee and the city to analyze the three site locations and make recommendations regarding a preference. That decision will be made by early 2023.

Marketing Communications SubCommittee

The Marketing Communications Sub-Committee is composed of Julie Schmitz, chair; plus Larry Pint, Jenny Schmitz, Karen Steinhoff and Den Gardner. Its goal is to educate and inform the New Prague area public about the POPS project through traditional media (radio, print, outdoor billboard, etc.), social media, website and much more. Its activity this fall has concentrated on:

- Developing a three-year media plan with KCHK Radio, to include interviews, radio spots and much more.
- Developing a three-year media plan with the New Prague Times, to include monthly ads and news articles of importance regarding POPS.
- Continually updating the website to be current with information regarding POPS from fundraising to special events and more.
- Creating interaction and positive messaging through digital/social platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to engage the community.
- Creating a monthly e-newsletter to inform the community about activities of the POPS Committee on a regular basis. A printed version of the newsletter will also be mailed to some residents in the New Prague area.
- Updating one-page handouts for distribution at meetings and general gatherings to inform the public about POPS.
- Creating large outdoor signs for placement downtown New Prague and the east end of town.

This will be

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- Producing o
- Creating/Producing a one-page ad to be part of the Playbill passed out each performance at Daleko Arts. This will begin in February.

The subcommittee was also active this fall in promoting the POPS Project Beers and Bars kick-off event at the Giesenbrau Bier Co.

City/School/Community Organization Collaborations SubCommitee

The City, School, Community Organization Collaborations SubCommittee is composed of Tony Buthe, Chair plus Gary Pikal, Dan Bishop and Ben Hilding. We are more than happy to accept any other person who may be interested in supporting this group.

The City, School, Community Organization Collaborations committee is in the process of finalizing volunteers to kick off its work in early 2023. Our committee will be scouring the communities for organizations who need to be contacted in support of the POPS. As a committee, we have met and created a list of organizations that we will be working on contacting at the first of the year. If you know of a group or organization that you believe we should contact, please let one of our committee members know, we are more than happy to reach out to them. Organization name, persons name and contact information included in your email or phone call will be helpful.

Grant/Public Private Funding SubCommittee

Kyra Chapman, New Prague city planner, and Sandi Loxton, New Prague school district community services director met on November 10, 2022. Kyra will be looking for leads on grants that become available for infrastructure, parks, and amenities that are connected to the city. Sandi's grant access will probably be more directed toward programming and educational opportunities. There aren't many open grants at this time, but are expecting that more will open up after the first of the year. As grants become available, the committee will collaborate on preparing them.

Our Goal

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ext three years.

-- $250,000 in 2023
-- $500,000 in 2024
-- $250,000 in 2025

We are excited to note that we have reached $250,000 goal for 2023 already and the new year is still a few weeks away. We hope to exceed our 2022 by a lot during 2023 with many donor calls on the docket.

We interviewed two architectural/engineering firms Dec. 14 in our site selection process. One will likely be hired. We are working closely with the city. The city has agreed to donate the land for the POPS project.

The three locations being investigated are:

City Center
West end of downtown; old Mill Pond/Creamery site.

Sliding Hill Skate Park
Across from New Prague High School.

Memorial Park Area

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These three area ecision on location coming by the end of the first quarter of 2023. We have already received inquiries from one New Prague contractor who wants to bid on the project and serve as general contractor. Our goal is to give as much contracting business for this project to New Prague and area companies.

Sub-committees are hard at work in each of their areas. See list of sub-committees above. A report on each of these groups can be found elsewhere in our e-newsletter.

Large fund-raising thermometer signs will be going up after the first of the year downtown and on the east side of town. Details to come.

Media plans with the NP Times and KCHK Radio are in development and should be ready to announce before the end of the year. And we continue to have dynamic social media activity.

Do You Want To Get Involved?

If so, whether it be through serving on one of our sub-committees, contributing as a donor, offering your services to us on a pro bono basis, or any other form of volunteerism, please contact me and get involved.

As we visit with potential donors, we constantly get asked: “When will construction begin?” Our optimistic answer is as soon as we have pledges for $1 million. And the vast majority will be raised with private funds as noted. We believe that’s three years of work ahead of us – with a goal to begin construction in early 2025. Sooner if we raise the money earlier than planned.

We’re seeking three-year pledges, with donation levels starting at $1,000 and reaching $100,000. We have a proposal we’d be glad to share with you. And your donation can be made to a 501c3 non-profit organization – in this case the New Prague Rotary Foundation – which is holding donations for POPS for up to two years while we apply for our own foundation – The Forward New Prague Foundation. That takes nine to 12 months for approval.

Yes folks, "It's Time!"

Time for this vibrant community of 8,100 residents to create a facility that can celebrate the arts in New Prague for residents of all ages. Our mission statement is succinct and clear:

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"To bu cility to celebr s from music to theatre to dance to visual arts and much more."

It's time for you to get involved. Our POPS officer team of myself, Karen Steinhoff, Bruce Wolf and Sandi Loxton are using our POPS formula – Diligence, Persistence, Passion and Dedication (DPPD) – as our guiding light to steer us to completion of this project.

Get Connected!

Praha Outdoor Performance Stage Website

Click here to visit our website at www.nppops.org.

Check Us Out!

Like Us!
@newpraguepops

Follow Us!
@newpraguepops

Follow Us!
@newpraguepops

Feel free to check out our website and or email us at newpraguepops@gmail.com
If you are interested in being involved in the POPS Committee, contact Den Gardner at dengardner@gandgcomm.com, cell phone 612-325-3981; or Karen Steinhoff at hellokstein@gmail.com, cell phone 952-457-0634.

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Den Gardner, Chair
Karen (Stein) Steinhoff, Vice-Chair
Sandi Loxton, Secretary
Bruce Wolf, Treasurer
Andy Beckius
Jon Colling
Steve Frost
Joe Barten

Lisa Brusseau
Shannon Brusseau
Brooke Sticha
Tony Buthe
Julie Schmitz
Larry Pint
Ben Hilding

Praha Outdoor Performance Stage
https://www.nppops.org/home

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