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CITY OF FT. PIERCE  
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

Dear City Manager Mimms, Mayor Hudson, and All Fort Pierce Commissioners,

Thank you for giving the community the opportunity to hear about the Sunrise Theater's financial issues and the public's support and suggestions for improvement. It was very enlightening.

We came away realizing that there are people in this community and area who have the expertise to help us reach our goal of a viable, self-sustaining theater district. I use the word district, because the one thing that was missing from the discussion, which may not have been appropriate at the time, but needs to be realized is that we have the potential to be a mega theater entertainment area. We not only have the Sunrise Theater which is up and running, we have the Lincoln Park Theater which is under renovations and the non-profit, wonderful Pineapple Playhouse. The expertise needed for one can be feed, transferred over to the others, thus will build up all.

Three things I noticed at last night's meeting:

1. Unresponsive communication from the Sunrise staff. This has been true for a long time — going back to 2009. I thought it was me they didn't want to talk to. It was clear we have an administrative issue. All communication must be logged and responded to in a timely manner otherwise the business fails. This can be remedied by having volunteers answer phones. Return calls — at least acknowledge they were received and prioritized issues.
2. Lack of the public relations. We use to get emails, but they seems to have stopped. There are high school and college students who need experience & credit for community involvement. Interns are one of the best ways to get the tech knowledge, excite future generations, and include our youth. With the right administration this would work well for all.
3. Business acumen: Last night we heard from experts in the business. I totally understand the need for the right people in the right position. In my business career I worked documenting procedures for a friend whose company manufactured diamond-plated metal plates (running boards for trucks is one example of the items on the production line). The company began to experience issues (one pay period from closing) because he had the wrong person running the place while he took family time. He was smart enough to hire a consulting company who not only saved the company in a short time, but increase revenue tremendously because it was hired to make the business work. They got rid of the "deadwood" that we knew internally needed to go because their territorial demeanors were sabotaging the business but we were too afraid to get rid of them. It was a real lesson in right people, right

job - and document, document, document. The consulting company was under contract for approximately a year (it might have been less), but they were experts in the field. This approach might be the right option for the city. Because they are not "connected" or "partial" to anything other than the contract, they can establish the right people from the community in right job to success. Mark's business is in the small town of East Stroudsburg, PA - a seasonal town in the Poconos.

You are correct that governments are not often in the theater business but they benefit from them if done correctly. Look at other cities. Put together a group of volunteers to explore other successfully cities and report back to you.

One more suggestion: The St. Lucie Chamber of Commerce is setting up to take reservations for boat cruises and other activities. Why not allow them to sell tickets to visitors out of the Seven Gables House. Do like they do in New York — offer discount tickets on the day of the event that isn't sold out. This is where experts in the entertainment business — consultants who get paid to be successful can help us.

All of these suggestions require setting in place clear, crystal clear instructions — documented, bound, and delivered — so that everyone knows what to do and how to processes everything: contracts, sales and receipts, to answering the phone. It may already exist and just needs to dusted off.

As a sideline: My husband and I were on our way back from the Midwest one year when we stopped for gas in the middle of the night in Vicksburg, Mississippi. My husband got talking with an individual about the town. The gentleman (African American) offered to show us the downtown area. We followed him into town. It reminded us of Fort Pierce. It has a river and we stopped at the theater which was supported by Morgan Freeman. While it was late and the town was closed, we could feel the pride in his voice as he explain how important the theater was to the community which featured current and future actors, artists, and musicians. We left feeling the same about our town... We can do this....We're the same. One day we'll have our own Morgan Freeman.

Thanks again for the wonderful time last night. We are so proud of our city officials and our fellow residents. Keep up the good work.

Best wishes always,



Buster & Jeanne Johansen