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Subject: Sunrise Theatre's Future

Mayor, Commissioners and Mr. Mimms:

First off – I want to thank you all for appointing me to serve on the Sunrise Theatre Advisory Board. As a nearly 20-year resident of Fort Pierce and someone who has worked for six years at Riverside Theatre in Vero Beach – I understand how vital the Sunrise is to the quality of life and the economic development of not just Fort Pierce, but St. Lucie County as a whole.

Secondly – I want commend the City for hosting last week's open house on the future of the Sunrise Theatre. You and City staff showed great interest and a commitment toward listening to the suggestions and criticisms from our residents. While I was in attendance at the meeting, I did not get up to speak. As an Advisory Board member, I wanted to listen to the suggestions before sharing my input.

So here are my suggestions on the future of the Sunrise:

- Find an Executive Director/Manager with not just theatre experience, but someone who also understands marketing and professional development/fundraising. It would help if they knew and understood the community. But most of all – they need to be focused on customer service. As Mr. Westbury wrote in his column, it is extremely disappointing to hear potential rental customers say that emails/phone calls weren't returned and they choose to use venues outside of our county. I think it would be helpful if the City utilized the expertise on the Advisory Board to help review resumes and even take part in the interview process. I personally would be honored to participate in the selection process.
- Focus on development. The Advisory Board recently discussed the fact that typically ticket sales only cover 60 percent of a theater's operations. The other 40 percent comes from grants, sponsorships and fundraising. In reading the minutes of the advisory board before I was appointed – there were discussions about hiring a Development Director. I understand that seems counter productive: Adding additional staff and costs to a budget that is already in the red. But maybe this is could be a contracted position that works on commission only. They secure a \$10,000 sponsor; then they earn 20 percent of that revenue. This same concept could be applied to an Events Manager/Sales Rep. They only earn money – once they secure rentals that create revenue. I also feel the Membership benefits could be expanded. Right now - there is an option for Sunrise Members to receive discounts at downtown restaurants - but that could be expanded to include places like Sailfish and the Pierced

Cider. Maybe even offer Sunrise Members a free round of golf a Indian Hills or discounts at other city facilities such as events at the Riverwalk or Manatee Center.

Update/Improve the theatre's equipment and infrastructure. I know the City is currently contracting the County's Legislative Affairs Manager to help with lobbying efforts. Make it a priority for her to seek State funding for capital projects and equipment. Another source of revenue could be the Tourists Development Tax (the .33 percent of 1 percent for capital projects north of Midway Road). These are the same funds used in recent years for the Backus expansion and the new signs for the Hurston Trail. A final option might be to look at the Florida Arts Licenses Plates. A portion of every one of those plates sold in St. Lucie County is supposed to go back to that county for the arts.

Offer More Diverse Programming. As stated multiple times, the Sunrise staff should look at a more diverse lineup of events and artists. Look to partner with existing groups such as the new St. Lucie Cultural Alliance. During the summer, partner with Summer Crush Winery, Sailfish or the others on the Treasure Coast Wine & Ale Trail to host a Sunday afternoon Rock Doc Series; where the various breweries & winery serve their products and the theatre shows classic music movies like The Last Waltz, Pink Floyd's The Wall or Prince's Purple Rain. There could even be a series of surfing/skateboarding documents with a tie to local surf shops. Personally – I've driven down to Miami; Fort Lauderdale; Orlando and Tampa to see artists such as Jason Isbell, Ryan Adams, Wilco and others in venues comparable to the Sunrises such as the Parker Playhouse and the Plaza.

Marketing: Again it was stated that the Sunrise needs to diversify its marketing efforts. One issue I see – is that the emails the Sunrise sends out always end up in my spam filter (both at home and at work). More promotion can also be done on FPTV for the Sunrise. Most of the artists that play the Sunrise would provide staff with free promotion videos that can be easily edited by staff to add graphics over the video, stating the date and times the artist is performing at the Sunrise with a phone number for tickets. These could be shared not just on FPTV but other local government channels and social media. Furthermore – if you are booking an up-and-coming artist – why not look into spending marketing dollars on social media to target fans of that area in Florida. Or consider advertising on music services such as Pandora or Spotify. If people are using those apps to create a playlist for an artist coming to the Sunrise – ads could alert them. Also reach out to free mobile apps like Bands in Town to make sure all Sunrise events are listed and promote to its subscribers.

I know this a lot of information. But I feel strongly about keeping the Sunrise Theatre up and running. If you have any additional questions or follow, please feel free to reach out to me.

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