



The Liberty Theatre & Cultural Arts Center
Advisory Board Minutes
March 12, 2026

Columbus Civic Center, Hospitality Suites
400 4th St, Columbus, GA 31901

Board Members Present: Monika Brown, Arreasha “Z” Lawrence, Ku’Wonna Ingram, Arsburn “Oz” Roberts

Board Members Absent: Cletus Richardson, Fernando Verdree, Evelyn “Mimi” Woodson, Dr. Shikha Shah

Present: Civic Center Staff: Kanise Wiggins, Jennifer Babin, Troy Vanerson, Caryn Hammond, Janine Abano

Visitor: Deputy City Manager Pam Hodge

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 pm by Vice Chair Oz Roberts.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from January 8 were presented and reviewed. It was not approved due to lack of quorum. The minutes from January 8 and March 12 need to be reviewed.

3. Budget Request & Strategic Plan

- a. Board submitted budget request to City for \$17,500.
- b. \$10,000 allocated to update strategic plan to add AI and other elements.
- c. \$7,500 allocated for events (Ma Fest, Movie on the Lawn, Jazz Up Your Sundays, and more) to maintain Liberty Theatre visibility to the community.
- d. Budget timeline according to Deputy City Manager Pam Hodge; submission in February, mayor’s recommended budget to council on April 28, review meetings on May 2, May 9, May 17, City Council vote in June.
- e. Liberty closure limits revenue; events funding intended to maintain momentum, reduce staff costs, and pursue donations/sponsorships to offset expenses.

4. Donations & Sponsorship Process

- a. Liberty Theatre is not a 501(c)(3); donations are accepted by the City and segregated in special project accounts.
- b. Donors can claim tax deductions; acceptance is recorded via a City Council Resolution and funds remain separate from the City’s operating budget.

- c. Example of notable donations: \$1.5 million for pickleball/Cooper Creek project; \$20,000 from Lauderbrook Foundation for last April's gala.
- d. Donor proof options: canceled check is typically sufficient; finance can provide a receipt or a letter with the City tax ID on request.
- e. Meeting with DCM Pam Hodge and Fernando Verdree occurred about sponsorships; follow-up required to confirm issuance of specific resolutions/receipts to donors.

5. Liberty Theater Building Status & RFPs

- a. The Board toured Liberty Theater about three weeks ago; roof repaired and mold remediation completed.
- b. Interior is largely down to studs with steel columns exposed and drywall mostly not installed.
- c. HVAC and electrical installations remain incomplete.
- d. The Board will schedule a full-building tour, then meet with Scott Holmes (City Architect) to review community ideas and recommendations.
- e. Ped Burnshaw and Neil Clark produced the master plan and assessment; Neil retired; changing architects requires a full RFP; a separate project up to \$10 million could be bid while current council funds are nearly exhausted.

6. Events, Festivals & Outreach

- a. Attended The Columbus Museum Black History Month event 1-2 weeks ago; event generated strong community traffic.
- b. Received positive feedback; attendees asked how to volunteer and donate; the Columbus Museum expressed interest in collaboration.
- c. The next hosted event was the 2nd annual 5k Run/Walk; distributed t-shirt and medals to participants; they posted photos and reported satisfaction.
- d. Race distance was shortened from 5 miles to 3 miles due to vehicle traffic at a turn; coordination with Columbus Police Department created safety and routing constraints.
- e. Discussed promotion and funding; consider budgeting for Reggie Luther promotion. Pursue corporate sponsorship and account for a platform charge of \$1,000; follow up emails were sent to contacts.

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 4:56 pm by Vice Chair Oz Roberts. The next meeting scheduled is on May 14, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Janine Abano

Janine Abano, Board Secretary