

**CITIZEN EMAILS TO THE MADISON ARTS COMMISSION  
PRIOR TO 11/08/2010 MAC MTG. & DISCUSSION OF  
THE FINAL REPORT OF THE OVERTURE AD HOC COMMITTEE**

As an artist and art enthusiast, I am writing in support of the Overture Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations to the city in terms of Overture's next steps and operational structure. I hope that the City will vote in favor of this wonderful opportunity. While much has been made of the Overture's difficulties, the building and its programming are something that makes me proud to live in Madison. The center is:

- A beacon for the creative class. As an art enthusiast, I not only visit the center regularly, I also make it a must-see for any visitors I have. As an artist, I have had the good fortune of exhibiting art regularly in the Center's art galleries. My arts group, artsTRIBE has had the opportunity to mount three professional exhibitions in Overture's galleries. The galleries remain one the premier spots for local artists wishing to exhibit new work.
- The Overture's galleries have been critical in the success of over 400 local artists through Open Art Studios, one of the City's major arts events. Free to the public, this exhibition offers the public the chance to see over 100 artists work every fall – more local fine artists in one location than any other City arts offering.
- An example of the kind of philanthropy that makes Dane County unique. To embrace the Overture, and learn from the mistakes made in its first five years, is also to learn how to better work with private/public partnerships. Madison should embrace and encourage local philanthropists to help us, through thoughtful investment, build the best city we can. This is our opportunity to make the right choice and indicate to philanthropists that Madison is a place where they can invest their funds for community good.
- An extraordinary art center and resource for local, regional and national performers. We continue to attract world-class art and performance, from the much-touted Broadway shows (sell-outs) to the art exhibitions of Chuck Close.
- A financial opportunity. Marketed properly, Overture will become a regional arts center that garners national press and attracts hundreds of thousands of City visitors (and their pocketbooks).
- A host for many free and accessible events for all ages, from the museum and community art galleries (which are always free), to Kids in the Rotunda and the Overture Presents series, to the thousands of free tickets that are distributed each year to community centers, schools and boys and girls clubs

To walk down State Street in the evening and see the building lit up – people streaming in and out of the majestic space for art, theater, music and other entertainment, is to see State Street at its best. It is to see how vibrant and family-friendly our downtown really is. I urge you to support the City's investment in what surely is a Madison gem – a building that for generations to come will return on its investment in both financial and creative ways. The City and the County should embrace this opportunity.

Tom Linfield  
7009 Harvest Hill Rd.  
Madison, WI 53717

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Here is a brief message on behalf of FTC regarding Overture Center:

As a new professional arts organization formed in part to fill a void in Overture Center's programming, we would like to publicly state our support for the leaders who are working to create a new operating structure for Overture Center and to resolve the Center's outstanding debt. The Overture Center is an outstanding venue for the performing arts and we have been unbelievably proud as artists and as Madisonians to call the center home.

The thirst for local professional arts (both visual and performing) is profound, as we have experienced firsthand in the 19 months since our founding. We have been able to bring literally thousands of theater-goers to downtown Madison for our shows and have employed many dozens of local artists and technicians.

Clearly there are many complicated issues involved in determining Overture's future, and I know our civic leaders are all acting in good faith on behalf of the greater community. I urge you to keep Overture's tenant organizations in mind throughout this process. The building is a treasure, but it is brought to life by the arts organizations and their thousands of patrons.

Thank you.  
Jennifer Uphoff Gray

I'm writing a brief note to all of you to be shared at the MAC meeting as stated in this e-mail:

If you are unable to attend this special MAC meeting but wish to express your opinion to the commissioners regarding the Ad Hoc Report (including the proposed model in which a private non-profit operates Overture with public ownership of the facility) please email [kwolf@cityofmadison.com](mailto:kwolf@cityofmadison.com) before 3PM on Monday, November 8 and your comments will be shared and added to the minutes.

Upon reading and considering the final report, I have just a few concerns and questions to bring to light.

- Recommendation: That the City of Madison hire an independent consultant to examine the financial assumptions in the proposed operating model (Focus Model) to determine their accuracy and achievability. (Motion made by Paul Soglin, seconded by Ald. Mike Verveer. Approved unanimously) \*I strongly agree with this, and would like to point out that the first area of concern in non-profit structure is often the administration at the higher levels. It is vital that these roles be filled efficiently and ALWAYS with the mission of the organization held first and foremost.\*
- Recommendation: That the City of Madison engage a qualified consultant to create financial and program standards, including community and educational outreach standards, that would be negotiated and achieved between the City of Madison and the operator. (Motion made by Paul Soglin, seconded by Ald. Tim Bruer. Approved unanimously) Community arts education is very important. \*I am concerned that as financial strains become more severe, public/free/low cost arts education programming will be the first to go. Kids in the Rotunda and other youth and community oriented free events have already been reduced. It is important to think outside the box and find new solutions to continue funding these events that keep our arts community accessible.\*
- Recommendation: That negotiations include opportunities for maximum transparency of operations and reporting. (Motion made by Ald. Lauren Cnare, seconded by Warren Onken. Approved unanimously) \*My greatest concern, however, is that transparency be honored. I have found it maddening at times to decipher the proposals and public information about this plan. Prior to this committee report, I seem to have read many peoples' opinions and assumptions (including the FOCUS model outline) and seem to have learned nothing. Transparency in running a community arts center is vital for community engagement and involvement. Please, Common Council, consider this as one of the most important aspects of having a publicly owned, privately operated non-profit. Financial, Board, and operational information should be available to all community members and stakeholders, as is the case with most private non-profits. (ie 990 reports, Board meeting minutes, etc).\*

Thank you for your kind attention to my e-mail, and I am sorry not to be attending the meeting this evening.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kjerstie Johanson  
(a tax payer residing in District 11 and working in District 4)

Kjerstie Johanson  
Artistic Director  
MadCAP

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My name is Davin Pickell, and I am an Art Lover. When I was younger, my Wisconsin License plates read "ART LVR."

The additional expense for expressing my love of art, via vanity plates issued by the DMV has increased at a greater rate than my ability and inclination to pay for the advertising. I do think, though, that this Overture Privatization Proposal has put a great deal of life and art in better perspective, so I might just fork out the change if that particular text is still available.

I'm hoping that one of you can please read this e-mail on my behalf this evening, as I won't be able to attend, due to my work requirements at Overture Center for the Arts, where I proudly work. I started at the Madison Civic Center in 2000, and I haven't looked back since. I often tell people that I'm the luckiest guy in the world, because I was recruited by my boss, who knew of my skills, and work ethic, and the job offer at the time was so unpalatable to other qualified people that I was the only applicant. I have low standards, I guess, in terms of what I need for myself, but very high expectations in terms of what I deliver.

As a single solitary citizen of the City of Madison, but perhaps as one who knows the details of this AMS Focus Model better than some of you, I would like to recommend that the Madison Arts Commission refer the Final Report of the Overture Ad Hoc Committee back to the Overture Ad Hoc Committee so that they may finish their work.

To the best of my knowledge, there are potentially five O.A.H.C meetings with minutes that haven't been approved. I don't know what the legal ramifications of that are, but it strikes me as that it could possibly be a violation of the Madison General Ordinances 33.01 (9) (b) qualifying the requirements in 33.01 (9) (a).

The very first of the O.A.H.C. meetings did not have an opportunity for public discussion, apparently in violation of Madison General Ordinances. I was denied the opportunity to speak at that meeting, again, in violation of M.G.O. 33.01 (9) (e).

Chairman Mark Bugher participated in various votes at various meetings, apparently in violation of M.G.O. 33.01 (9) (c).

O.A.H.C. member Deirdre Garton's participation in any vote of the O.A.H.C. might have been a violation of the City Code of Ethics, including one or more of the following:

M.G.O. 3.35 (4),  
M.G.O. 3.35 (5) (a) 1,  
M.G.O. 3.35 (5) (a) 2,  
M.G.O. 3.35 (5) (a) 3 a,  
M.G.O. 3.35 (5) (a) 3 b,  
M.G.O. 3.35 (5) (d),  
M.G.O. 3.35 (5) (f) 2,  
M.G.O. 3.35 (5) (f) 3,  
M.G.O. 3.35 (5) (h),  
M.G.O. 3.35 (8) (a) 4, or  
M.G.O. 3.35 (8) (b) among others.

I could go on for a while, but I think I only get thee minutes.

I could be wrong, but I also believe that any affirmative vote by you, as a member of the M.A.C., of the incomplete "Report" of the O.A.H.C. could also possibly be interpreted as a violation of the Code of Ethics Sec. 3.35 (5) (a) 2, per an interpretation of the Board of Ethics at their 8/31/10 meeting, as it would constitute a potential tangential solicitation (or endorsement thereof) of a financial donation from one private entity to another private entity.

The ethics board is scheduled to meet again in February, 2011, but I understand they will likely be scheduling a meeting sooner than that, due to the receipt of an Ethics Code Violation Complaint submitted last week. I don't know if referring the Report to them is an option, or if attending their meeting and inquiring would be prudent.

I don't know the answers to these legal questions, because I'm not a lawyer. I'd suggest you use your best judgment, but that's not legal advice.

Thanks for your time.

I forgot, my address is 17 Merrill Crest Dr., Madison, WI 53705.

Thanks!

Davin Pickell

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I am unable to attend tonight, but my remarks are as follows:

As the manager of communications and community outreach for Madison Opera, I second the Overture Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations to the Common Council and Mayor. My reasons are tri-fold: First, as an administrator for the Overture Center's resident opera company, I can flatly state that we would be without a home should the Center's doors close. Overture Hall regularly impresses our international singers, and it is simply the only space in the city large enough for our productions. Second, as an educator for Madison Opera, I can say that many of our current initiatives would not be possible without the Overture Center, which has provided invaluable funding and inroads to work with the Madison Metropolitan School District. In short, it is my belief that the Overture Center has become the

soul of arts education in Madison. Lastly, as a transplant from New York, I can honestly say that I would not be in Madison were it not for the Overture Center. When my partner was seeking out graduate school programs, Madison was a feasible option for both of us only because of the Overture Center, which is the backbone of the city's largest arts organizations that were in my field of work. The high quality artistic product the facility encourages, the arts education it supports, and the jobs it creates are my reasons for supporting the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations for moving forward and adapting a new model for the Overture Center for the Arts.

Brian Hinrichs  
Madison Opera  
Manager of Communications and Community Outreach

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Unless the Overture management changes its policies to reflect the audiences towards which events are brought into the center, I would advise letting it sink. There have been many times when I or others have gone to see a show which inspires dancing and was told to sit down or leave. This was most recently the case at the Bob Dylan shows. Additionally, when a performer such as Bo Diddley asks the audience to dance and the security staff says no it is an affront to the performer. Not all shows are Broadway-based, jazz or classical which would lean towards a passive audience. Perhaps taking a lesson from the Barrymore and using volunteers who are more in tune w/ the performance will help. Creating a dancing area would help immediately. However, if they are being draconian, then let it fold.

Sincerely,

Rich Zietko

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To whom it may concern,

I am the manager of Madison's only full power Christian radio station, WNWC FM. We are owned by Northwestern College, a non-denominational liberal arts, fully accredited institution headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota. WNWC has been serving the Madison / South Central and Northern, Illinois region for over 50 years.

WNWC Radio is often looking for venues to hold concerts that bring nationally known singers and bands to Madison. Our concert attendance has ranged from less than 1000 to almost 9,000. The majority of our concerts would average in the 1500 to 2000 range.

I have been manager at WNWC since 1985. In looking for venues to rent for concerts it is a source of constant exasperation to try and find a venue in Madison that is affordable to both the radio station and our clientele. Simply put, Madison does not have an affordable venue that will host concerts in the 1300 to 2200 range. I am forced to either use a small venue and sell less tickets or go to a venue like the Alliant Energy Center that is much too big and expensive for most of our events.

I would love to be able to stage several events at the Overture Center. It is a beautiful facility. Our clientele would love to attend Christian music concerts in the Overture Center. We attract people from all over South Central Wisconsin and Northern, Illinois. But the cost is much too high for me to consider as tickets would be priced out of our clientele's ability to afford.

If I understand what I have read in the proposal before the City Council the plan would raise rental rates by 5%. This is exactly the opposite way to go. The Overture Center needs to be made more affordable for groups like those I represent. The proposal also asks the Overture Center be made available to a wider more diverse base. How can that happen if it is priced out of our ability to make expenses.

As a non-profit WNWC is not out to make huge sums of revenue from our events. However we must be able to meet expenses and also make ticket prices affordable to our clientele.

Let me give you an example; This Friday night we are sponsoring a concert at High Point Church, 7702 Old Sauk Road in Madison (seating @ 1,000). This was the only venue where that we could rent and still afford to keep ticket

prices between \$20 and \$25. Our concert has been sold out for three weeks. It would have been ideal to stage this concert in a venue the size of the Overture Center but the cost of renting the facility would have put ticket prices well out of range for our clientele. This scenario has repeated itself many time over in my 25 years as manager.

I whole heartedly encourage you to find a cost model whereby non-profits can afford to use the Overture Center. I would think having the facility being used by a wider variety of area residents would be a benefit to all parties concerned rather than having Overture Center empty and still costing the Madison taxpayers.

Thank you for receiving my comments.

*Greg Walters*  
*manager*

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I am writing to express my support for the recommendations included in the Overture Ad Hoc Committee report. I agree that the public ownership/private operation model is the correct way to proceed, at least for the foreseeable future. I do think there are concerns regarding tax payer burden relative to future capital improvement and maintenance costs and agree that an endowment is one way to help offset those. I do hope, however, that city and whatever private operating entity assumes management of the center remain open to considering innovative and creative revenue models for the funding Overture operations, in addition to traditional fund-raising and ticket driven earned revenue.

Overture is and will be a great resource for artists, aficionados, and all citizens of Madison. It is in all of our best interests to ensure it's continued existence and viability.

Please note that these comments express my personal position and are not meant to speak for Bricks Creative, LLC, or any of its other members.

Sincerely,

David Pausch, Producer  
Bricks Creative, LLC  
PO Box 1948  
Madison, WI 53701  
[dpausch@thebrickstheatre.com](mailto:dpausch@thebrickstheatre.com)

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Unfortunately I am unable to attend the meeting on Monday, but would like to express my opinion that I think the city should move forward with the "purchase" of Overture and with the establishment of a private non-profit to operate it.

I am not one of the Madison "elite" but very much appreciate having the Overture Center here and available to me. I frequently take my children to Kids in the Rotunda and attend a number of musical and theatre events. I consider the Overture Center a significant asset to Madison, Dane County and the State of Wisconsin.

It is unfortunate that the county will not offer to participate in providing support for the center, but that is no reason for the city to turn its back and leave the future of Overture up in the air. I understand there are some unanswered questions and uncertainties, but I am comfortable as a property owner and taxpayer to accept the plan as it is. As you know, it is important for the city to act soon to take advantage of the additional donations and prevent the matter being turned over to the banks. Please don't play chicken with them, the Overture Center is too important to me, the broader community and the Madison economy. Let's bite the bullet, sign the agreement and hold the non-profit operator accountable.

Beth Canestra  
2114 E. Mifflin