



SUSPENSION

June 15, 2011

Christopher Collins
County Executive
95 Franklin St – 16 Floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

Re: Request for funding towards capital improvements

Dear Mr. Collins:

Enclosed please find:

1. A one-page request from our Board Chair and Executive/Artistic Director seeking funding for specific necessary upgrades to our stage and sound and lighting operations.
2. A color schematic of our Vision Plan.
3. A Budget Worksheet, the cost estimates of which will help inform a future Master Plan.
4. A three-page Proposal which situates our funding request within the larger context of our Vision and anticipated Master Plans.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Nell J. Mohn
Development Coordinator

Cc (electronically): Kathy Konst and Darren Kempner



County Executive Chris Collins
95 Franklin St – 16th Floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

June 14, 2011

Re: County Funding of Capital Improvements

Dear Mr. Collins:

For 36 years, Shakespeare in Delaware Park ("SDP") has brought free live outdoor theater to Delaware Park for the enjoyment of tens of thousands of Western New Yorkers *each year*. In order to preserve the character and condition of the historic Buffalo Olmsted Park System, we have been using a temporary facility which is constructed and removed each year. Decades of building and tearing down the stage structures has taken its toll on the steel framework. In fact, the stage decking is at the point of requiring total replacement. Each year we spend more time and money building the stage than the previous year due to deterioration of the stage components. These same levels of deterioration and operational inefficiencies are intrinsic to the stage sound systems and the lighting towers and lights.

For nearly ten years, it has been the goal of the SDP Board of Directors and Staff to improve and to increase the efficiencies of the stage, its related structures and the Hill. Moreover, SDP is committed to supporting the goals of the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy's Master Plan, published in January, 2008 ("Master Plan"). The Master Plan recommends redesigning SDP's stage so that it better fits the context of its location (p. 47). Accordingly, significant progress has been made by SDP personnel, with the help of various community partners, toward creating a Vision Plan for achieving these goals.

The Vision Plan will form the basis of a future Master Plan, execution of which will occur over the course of several years and in phases. (See enclosed copy of Vision Plan, proposed Master Plan Budget Worksheet and more detailed Proposal for Funding.) It is anticipated that Phase I of the Plan will be implemented in 2012 and 2013 and will call for certain initial upgrades to seven different "zones" of our operations on the Hill: stage, backstage, seating, top of hill, approach, pavilion and restrooms. The total anticipated cost of capital improvements to all seven zones in Phase I is \$105,000.

We are seeking immediate County funding for - at the very least - the following Phase I capital improvements:

- Stage – Rebuild all decking panels, both surface and facade: \$ 10,200.00
 - Sound Console – Replace/upgrade the sound board: \$ 30,000.00
 - Lighting – Replace/enhance all lighting: \$ 25,000.00
- TOTAL REQUEST: \$65,200.00

SDP is dedicated to matching this request and already has pledges of financial and in-kind support from the City of Buffalo, the George G. and Elizabeth G. Smith Foundation, Ferguson Electric and the Weissman Family Foundation. We will continue to secure additional funds and donations of in-kind goods and services from other sources for Phase I of the project.

We are very appreciative of the opportunity to apply for funding from Erie County for these much-needed capital improvements and look forward to your response.

Very truly yours,

Saul Elkin, Artistic/Executive Director

Ellen Weissman, President of Board of Directors

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS **PROPOSAL FOR FUNDING**

Preface

Shakespeare in Delaware Park ("SDP") has operated effectively and successfully in our original location on the Hill in Delaware Park for 36 years. However, because the Park enjoys certain protections based on its historic status as a Frederick Law Olmsted Park, SDP's facilities and operations in this setting have been circumscribed. For several years, it has been the goal of the SDP Board and Staff to seek modification of these restrictions so that necessary improvements can be made to our physical structures in the Park, the configuration of our operations and the overall audience experience.

To this end, SDP personnel, architects and construction experts, and community stakeholders have worked hard to create a Vision Plan for Shakespeare in Delaware Park. In order to move this Plan forward, we will next meet with representatives of the City of Buffalo and the Olmsted Parks Conservancy to reach consensus on the kind of enhancements that can be undertaken on the Hill. We will also generate a multiple phase Master Plan for the implementation of the envisioned improvements, which Master Plan would then form the basis of a major Capital Campaign.

Vision Plan

SDP's Vision Plan identifies seven key development zones in our space on and around the Hill in Delaware Park. (Please see the enclosed Vision Plan graphic.) The issues or challenges associated with each zone, plus the recommended improvements and upgrades are detailed below. At present, we are also working with a draft Budget Worksheet (enclosed) for a future Master Plan that will implement the Vision Plan in three phases. Costs associated with each of these phases are included in the Budget Worksheet.

Because we are seeking County support *for a portion of Phase I improvements only*, these upgrades will be treated in more detail than the others. The specific items for which we are seeking funding are in bold face.

1. THE STAGE: The stage is 18 years old, technologically and artistically limited and in a state of disrepair. Moreover, it is not a permanent structure in the Park, but has to be erected, taken down and stored each year. The substructure is constructed of heavy steel and is overbuilt, making it cumbersome and dangerous to work with. The inherent design limitations of the stage and superstructure curtail the flexible movement of actors along x, y and z axes, reduce the number of allowable trap door entrances, and severely limit set design versatility in the absence of ceiling space capability. Over 60% of the deck panels have started to flake, allowing for moisture to set in and cause unevenness and buckling of the floor surface, which jeopardizes the safety of cast, crew and student interns. The façade or vertical panels on the stage are also in similar disrepair, their surfaces peeling like potato chips and making their disguise or decoration pursuant to the design of any particular show's set difficult, if not impossible.

In addition to the stage, there are other production related structures in major need of improvement. For example, our lighting and sound towers also have to be put up and taken down each summer costing SDP valuable time and money. Moreover, as currently constructed, they do not allow for optimal quality lighting or sound production. Finally, they obstruct audience sight lines and limit the seating capacity on the hill. Therefore, a new comprehensive facilities plan that encompasses not just the stage, but related structures like the towers, would (a) alleviate many of the labor-intensive demands placed on SDP staff by these problematic structures; (b) increase the scope and quality of our sound and lighting capabilities, thus enhancing artistic production; and (c) enlarge the seating area and improve lines of vision, thus addressing the need of our patrons for a quality experience on the Hill and addressing the organization's need to grow our audience.

The long-term solution to these problems is the entire redesign and replacement of the stage, the relocation of the utility towers and comprehensive replacement of both the sound and lighting systems. **The short term remedy for the stage (for which we are seeking funding) would entail the rebuilding of all the surface decking and the façade panels (\$10,200).**

With respect to our lighting and sound systems, certain critical enhancements are necessary now and could be undertaken in the short term. **For instance, our sound console, which is 12 years old, needs to be replaced (\$30,000).** Because it is used outdoors, it has been susceptible to moisture and a variety of inclement conditions, causing deterioration of many component parts which are increasingly difficult to replace.

Similarly, our lights are outdated and deteriorating. **New lights are needed, plus a lighting console, multiple cables, and related equipment and apparatus (\$25,000).**

2. **BACKSTAGE:** Our backstage operations are also fraught with challenges. Drainage problems in this area of the park cause water to collect around the actors' trailer and the stage which muddies costumes, compromises the integrity of the trailer and creates potentially unsafe conditions. The area is also overcrowded and poorly secured. SDP's Master Plan would fix the site drainage, construct a new and enlarged actors' trailer, expand storage space, create a courtyard area for better traffic flow, and add lighting and security cameras.

3. **SEATING:** Although we have periodically contemplated the installation of actual fixed seating, we have shied away from such because it would entirely change the character of the viewing space. In the absence of permanent seats in rows, stairs, tiers, landings, railings, etc, the people gathered on the Hill are able to move around freely, to mingle, to set themselves up in ways comfortable to them, in groups of any size. Our audiences have always been comfortable bringing chairs or sitting on blankets on the ground and we see no reason to change this. However, because of wear and tear on the Hill, plus Buffalo winters, it is in need of repairs and reseeding. Plus, because our electrical hook-up is underground, this, too, would need to be addressed and reworked along with upgrades to the Hill terrain itself as part of the Master Plan.

4. **TOP OF HILL:** Our current merchandise and technical booths (or trailers) are small and difficult for staff to navigate. Our Master Plan would upgrade and expand both of these functional spaces. In addition, we would investigate the feasibility of more food for sale being available at the top of the Hill.

Shakespeare in Delaware Park

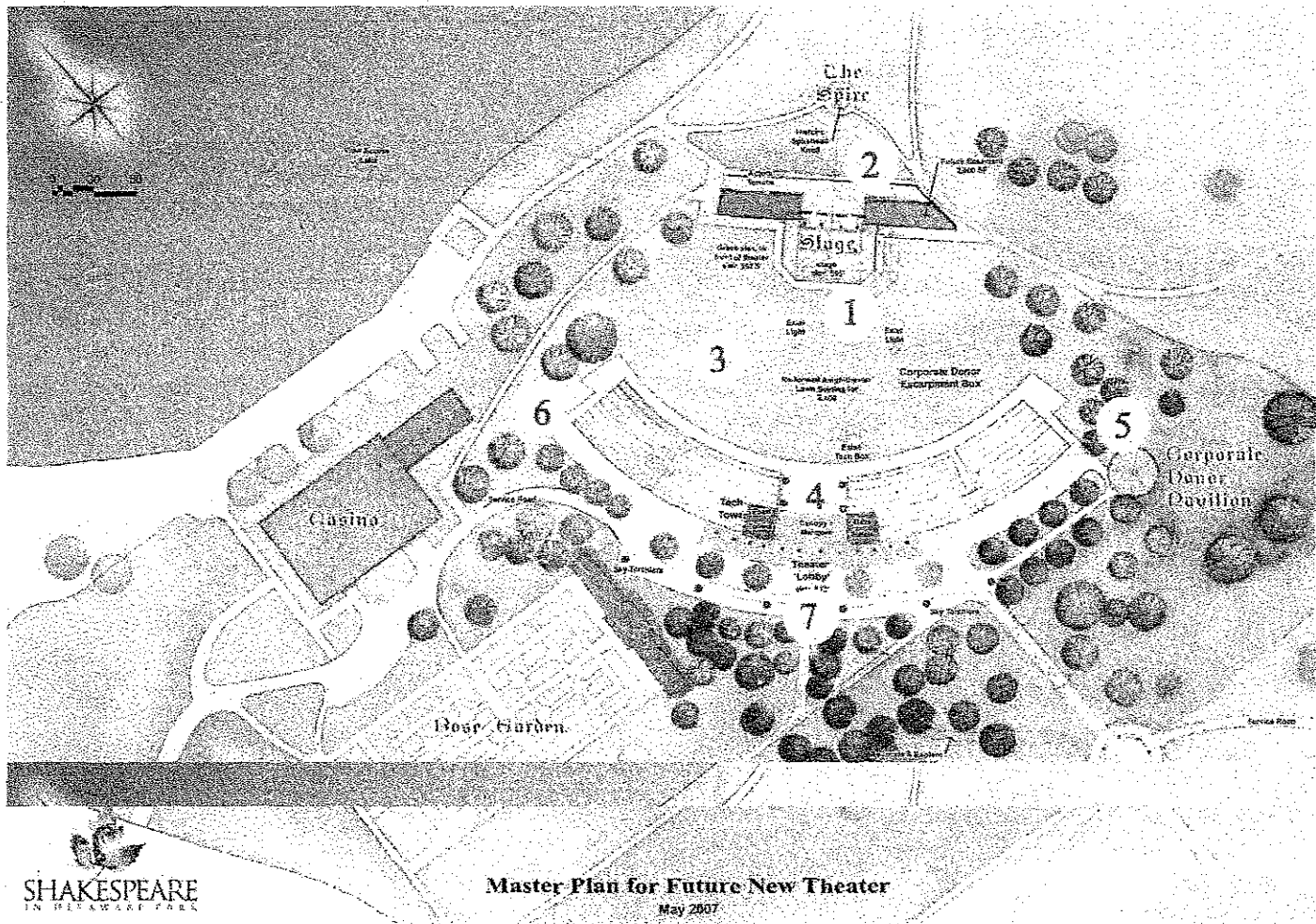
5. PAVILION: Our existing deck or pavilion is small and has poor sightlines. Currently, it is available for disabled people and for groups wishing to pay for preferred seating. With an enlarged and improved Pavilion, we can increase our ability to use this feature as a special events platform that will provide us with a dedicated source of rental and corporate sponsorship revenue.

6. RESTROOMS: Currently we rent 10 porta-potties and several outdoor, stand alone sinks to handle restroom needs throughout our summer season. As frequently as we deal with Modern Disposal and as often as they faithfully clean and stock the facilities, there is room for improvement to better enhance the audience's experience. Our Master Plan will involve an upgrade from porta-potties to men's and women's restroom trailers with indoor sinks to make for a cleaner, more secure environment.

7. APPROACH: At present, the approach to the Hill during our performance season is quite wide open, simple and casual. Audience members approach the top of the Hill from all directions, collect a playbill from an actor or intern, and then make their way to their own preferred viewing spot. In the absence of anything more programmatic or formal in the approach area, we are losing good opportunity for additional activities. Our Master Plan would involve landscaping of this area, the construction of a flag colonnade, additional vendor operations, and the creation of a space for pre-show or intermission activities.

SDP is excited to be moving along in its planning for much needed, enhanced production facilities, operations and visitor experience on the Hill in Delaware Park. We know we will need community support to realize our vision and intend to make any supporter's investment worth their while.

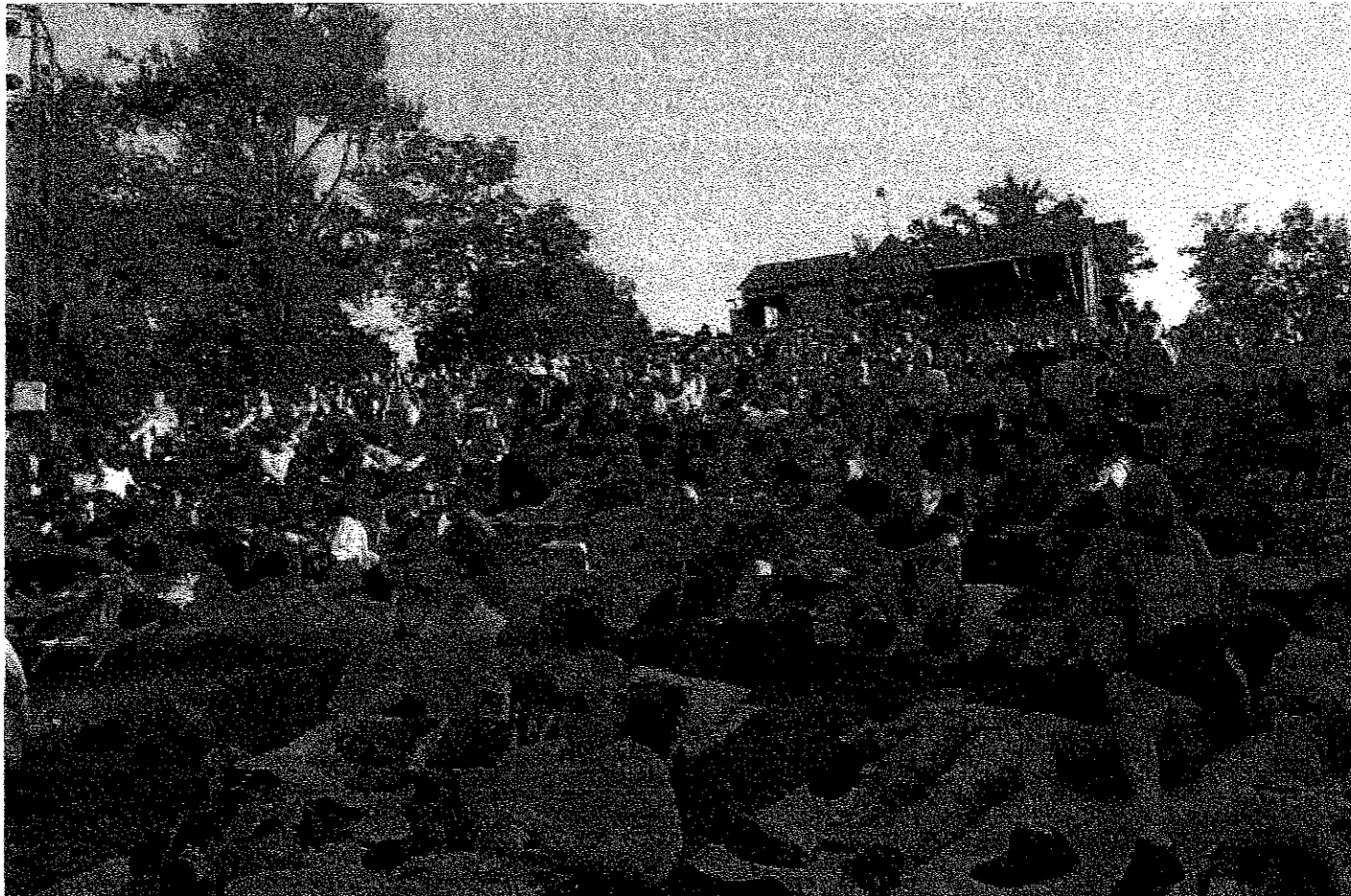
VISION PLAN FOR THE SHAKESPEARE HILL



SEVEN KEY DEVELOPMENT ZONES IN THE PLAN

ZONE	ISSUES	RECOMMENDATIONS
1 THE STAGE	Complex, expensive to build, maintain and strike	Long Term: Stage Replacement Short Term: Rebuild the Deck
2 BACKSTAGE	Overcrowded, Security, Spring Drainage Issues	New Backstage Facilities w/ new stage
3 SEATING	Hill surface is uneven, Light towers block key views	Re grade the Hill to accommodate sightlines, relocate the light towers
4 TOP OF THE HILL	Support tech booth and merchandise small and Security and weather issues	Rebuild the booths as an arrival "Gateway to the Festival."
5 APPROACH "LOBBY"	Create space for pre-show, intermission activities	Landscape, add lighting and flags to create an outdoor lobby
6 SPECIAL EVENTS PAVILION	Existing deck is small w poor sightlines	Build a new "Special Events" Pavilion
7 RESTROOM FACILITIES	Portable toilet facilities need upgrading	Integrate toilets in the top of the hill facilities

VISION PLAN FOR THE SHAKESPEARE HILL



SEVEN KEY DEVELOPMENT ZONES IN THE PLAN

ZONE	RECOMMENDATIONS	COST PROJECTIONS
THE STAGE	Long Term: Stage Replacement Short Term: Rebuild the Deck	\$1-2,000,000 Full Replacement \$50,000 Deck Replacement + Equipment
BACKSTAGE	New Backstage Facilities w/ new stage	\$100,000- 200,000 Based on Scope
SEATING	Re- grade the Hill to accommodate sightlines, relocate the light towers	\$50-80,000 based on scope
TOP OF THE HILL	Rebuild the booths as an arrival "Gateway" to the Festival.	\$300,000 Replacement of Booths
APPROACH "LOBBY"	Landscape, add lighting and flags to create an outdoor lobby	\$20-40,000 for Upgrades
SPECIAL EVENTS PAVILION	Build a new "Special Events" Pavilion	\$50-80,000 for seating 50 people with food prep area
RESTROOM FACILITIES	Integrate toilets in the top of the hill facilities	Trailer Facility for the season (Ongoing Expense)

