

Memorial Auditorium Interview Summaries

People Interviewed

Jim Lockridge, Executive Director- Big Heavy World Foundation; Advocate for 242 Main.

Alan Abair, Concert Promoter; Managed Memorial Auditorium under contract with City 1984-1993.

Doreen Kraft, Executive Director, Burlington City Arts (BCA).

Alan Campbell, managed programs and rentals of Memorial Auditorium as well as other events, for BCA and then Parks and Recreation (DPRW), from 1995 – 2013.

Rich Bailey, managed programs and rentals of Memorial Auditorium for DPRW from 2013 – 2016.

Alex Crothers and Alan Newman, event promoters and principals of Higher Ground, in South Burlington.

Didi Harris, Strategic Initiatives Manager for Vermont Birth to Five, and administrator of the City of Burlington's Early Learning Initiative (ELI).

Chris Wagner, Market Manager and Spencer Welton, Steering Committee President, of the Burlington Farmer's Market (BFM).

Senior administration at Champlain College: Sandy Yusen, Director of Communications and External Relations, Lisa Mazzariello, Director of Student Engagement, Katie Hawley, Vice President for People, Strategic Communication and External Affairs, and Katherine Birrow, Chief of Staff, Office of the President.

John Killackey, Executive Director of the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts

Key Points and Themes We Heard

- Memorial's key assets are its scale and its location.
- During the mid-80's and early '90's, two or three large scale events might be held a week. These ranged from concerts to boat, car or r.v. shows, to sporting events.
- While Memorial worked in the past as a childcare location, its challenges to do so again include:
 - Lack of natural light.
 - Lack of outdoor space.
 - Adequate parking for pick-up and drop-off times.
- Memorial in its current configuration and condition has factors that limit its appeal for live performances. Most are solvable or at least manageable:
 - It's expensive to produce a show there. Load-in and load-out are labor intensive (from the front of the building on South Union Street) as is rigging and set-up.
 - Current configuration of seating and stage is awkward and inefficient; 2500 seats may not be the right size for the market.
 - There's a reputation for poor acoustics ("somewhat true, but mostly myth").

- Parking is manageable, especially for evening events.
- 242 Main has potential to once again engage teens and evidence the City's commitment to its youth.
- The Burlington Farmer's Market needs a long-term home for winter and perhaps for a more year-round foot-print as well.

Suggestions for the Future of Memorial Auditorium We Heard

- Saving the building isn't enough. There must be compelling uses of the building to engage the public. Preserve the building and make it a draw into the City.
- Go big, go bold and do something audacious for the future of Burlington that supports the arts and the creative economy.
- Focus on a few uses and be well-suited for them
- A major commitment of public and private funds will be required to save this building. It has so much potential to serve Burlington well.
- If the City invests in the needed repairs, then attract a qualified professional management firm to run it.
- Make Memorial work as a first rate performing arts venue.
 - Build a multi-story addition on the north of Memorial [see link to 2002 study] to provide for an efficient loading dock, elevator tower, storage area and other back of house functions.
 - Invest in the acoustics and infrastructure.
 - A 400-600 seat acoustically tuned black box theater as part of the overall development, perhaps on the ground floor, could fill an important niche.
- Include art-making that the public can see and participate in as part of a re-use strategy.
- Continue to activate ground level with recreation and arts programs and look for collaborations with performing arts event production on the Auditorium level.
- The future of 242 Main can be one in which programmatic partnerships and sharing of resources with complementary entities that operate within a redeveloped Memorial Auditorium are fundamental.
- Consider the lower level as a long-term location for the Burlington Farmers Market and an array of food-related ventures and activities.
 - Year-round retail presence.
 - Cooking classes.
 - Small scale production.
 - Restaurant.
 - Community dinners.
 - Pop-ups
 - Tie in to performing arts venue(s) and potentially share back-of-house/food production capacity.