

**Minutes of the General Meeting
of the New Jersey Theater League
03/27/04**

The meeting was called to order by the President, Nikki Adams, at 12:10 PM.

Attending were: Timothy DiVito, Mark Haltzman, Pete LaBriola, Rose Lindley, Bill Fikaris, Suzie Pisaniello, Andrew Flothmeier, James Curran, Maureen Broadbent, Robert Broadbent, Lynn Johnson, Patti Billow, and Nikki Adams. Nikki thanked Tim for arranging for the hosting of this meeting.

Copies of the minutes were passed out and read by all. A **Motion** was made to accept the minutes of the last meeting as read, by Andrew Flothmeier, and seconded by Patti Billow. After a call for discussion and corrections, the **motion was passed** unanimously, with no abstentions.

The President opened the floor for committee reports, beginning with Patti Billow with the Treasurer's Report, the covered period is from 11/26/03 – 3/15/04. The checking account balance is \$2,619.08; the Delaware Investment Funds statement balance was \$1,829.35, and the total NJTL financial assets are: \$4,448.43. The report has been filed for audit and can be found in one of the documents associated with these minutes.

Lynn Johnson had no report for the Children's Theater committee, but offers a recap: there will be a festival of children's theater shows at Smithville Mansion on September 18, from 11:00 to 5:00 PM, consisting of 4 or 5 shows (4 have signed on, and one more may do so soon). The Friends of Smithville or the Burlington County Cultural Alliance is a \$1,500.00 sponsor, so there will be money available to reimburse companies wishing to participate. There will be fund raisers at the festival, possibly pictures with costumes, flower sales, birthday gram and others. Lynn asked for volunteers for the day.

Andrew Flothmeier reported on the technical committee: Andrew had cards to fill out to sign up for the mailing list that will be distributed to member companies. There are currently 200 members on the list. The website can now be used to share files, and each person interested must sign up for authorization to share files. Andrew asked if there would be anyone who objected to Andrew creating a list of membership in total in order to facilitate sending an email to the board. None were noted.

VP Reports: Bill Fikaris had no report, but noted that there is some resistance to signing up with NJTL because of the "South" connotation that plagues the League, but that better and easier communications may help. Pete LaBriola had no report, but shared that he is still working on a few companies.

Old Business

Earlier in the month Nikki asked the membership for an email vote to provide the ESTA entrants \$50.00 for the ESTA registration fee and \$150.00 to defray expenses of the festival. An email vote was then taken, and the expenditure was approved and the monies disbursed to the Bridge Players. Sherman Ward sent in questions and concerns via email, regarding the correctness of the vote, and validity of the expense money, while agreeing that we have always paid the ESTA fees for the festival entry from New Jersey. His objections follow:

“Sherman Ward, Past President, votes nay to the NJTL proposal to grant NJTL's representative to the ESTA Festival 2004 the sum of \$50. to cover the ESTA registration fee and an additional sum of \$150 to help defray their expenses to the Festival. It has been the NJTL policy to pay the ESTA Festival registration fee to the Company representing NJTL. Any additional monies would be establishing a precedent which appears to be open ended for the future. In addition NJTL has not been able to show a fiscally positive future to support a change in policy. An examination of the NJTL financial history will bear this out. Ann Ward votes Yes to the \$50 registration fee and No to the additional monies. See above reasons.”

And, in a separate email:

- “1. I should like to have a roll call vote of the member Community Theatres and which ones have sanctioned this expenditure.*
- 2. It seems this is a matter for the NJTL Board to propose and discuss before action.*
- 3. I suggest this proposal be put on the agenda for the next NJTL Board meeting.*
- 4. It appears NJTL is made up more of individual members than Community Theatres*
- 5. I request the objections I voiced in my e-mail vote become part of the minutes of the next NJTL meeting.*

Sherman

To the Board FYI. I voted No on the proposal because it has been the NJTL policy to pay the ESTA Festival registration fee to the Company representing NJTL. But any additional monies would be establishing a precedent which appears to be open ended for the future. In addition NJTL has not been able to show a fiscally positive future to support a change in policy. An examination of the NJTL financial history will bear this out.”

At this point, Nikki issued NJTL a check from her personal funds to reimburse NJTL for the money incorrectly issued, in the amount of \$200.00 to the Treasurer, based on Andrew's Parliamentary finding that the email vote was not in order.

A **Motion** to issue a check to Bridgeplayers for \$50.00 for the ESTA entrance fee, and \$150.00 for the expenses of going to the ESTA festival was made by Pete LaBriola and seconded by Suzie Ramsdell. Discussion followed.

Patti reports that she has examined the treasurer's reports that she has, and agrees that there is no precedent for awarding expense monies to a company for non-national year festivals, and that in those years, only when the New Jersey entrant was going to nationals. And all NJ winners have had the ESTA registration fee paid. There was also mention of the need for a yearly budget, which will be discussed later, but that there would be enough funds for such a yearly contribution, based upon successful festivals and memberships.

Lynn Johnson supports the expense as ongoing.

Suzie Ramsdell adds that since the winning company is representing NJTL, we should help to support them where they need it the most.

There were more general comments about the availability of funds, and the establishment of a precedent, which led to the further discussion of a yearly budget.

At this point, no further discussion was requested, and a vote was taken. All those present voted Aye, with no abstentions. There were 7 (seven) proxy votes: 4 (four) proxies voting aye, and 3 (three) proxies to abstain. The **motion carried** and Nikki's check was returned.

Nikki then asked that those present be made aware of, for the record, the last email received Sherman Ward. The discussion is summarized under each point, marked with an asterisk (*).

"Nikki, I have no problem with the voting or the method of voting. My concern is the methods used to arrive at the request to vote. I don't see how a proposal can be discussed via e-mail with various points of view floating around. It seems unmanageable.

* This item was dispensed with via the discussion and vote as outlined above.

In regard to the \$200 donation possible discussion points are:

1. Should this have been two motions since the monies are for two different reasons?, the first being to pay the ESTA registration fee which has been a long established NJTL action and the second being a precedent setting NJTL action.

* The motion made was one motion, as decided by Pete Labriola in the formation of the motion.

2. How was the \$150 donation established? What other amounts were considered?

* The amount was put forward as a part of this motion, with no specific reason given as to the amount in the formation of the motion.

3. How did this idea meld with our current budget?

* There was a brief discussion as to whether this amount was reasonable based on our current financial situation.

4. How is it proposed to make up this proposed expenditure?

* As there was no formal budget at the time of the motion, this was not made part of the discussion on the motion.

5. Was the NJTL financial history considered?

* Those present felt that this motion was germane to NJTL's purpose.

6. How much money does NJTL propose to give next year?

* This question was not germane to the motion.

7. What determines the amount of money to be given?

* It was discussed that future budgets will set the amount to be given to winning companies.

8. *History shows NJTL has not been successful enough over the years to give a free pass to a festival participant.*

* It was discussed that the amount of \$150.00 does not constitute a “free pass”.

9. *History shows an ESTA festival monetary loss in 2003 hosted by NJTL.*

* This is patently untrue. While the way that ESTA asked that the numbers be crunched for their budgetary report made it appear as though there was a loss, our Treasurer’s Report shows a small profit.

I’m sorry I won’t be able to be at the meeting, but I surely look forward to:

1. *Reviewing the year budget*

* As you will see in reading further, NJTL passed it’s first ever approved budget at this meeting.

2. *The financial report which looks at the income and expenditures of the League under the current board and the past board and the forecast of future income.*

* The Treasurer conducted an exhaustive research of the League’s financial history which is made part of these minutes.

3. *Receiving a copy of League minutes whether or not I attend the meetings in order to think about issues etc., preferably prior to forthcoming meetings. This should be important to all participants of NJTL.*

* There has never been a time under this Board that every member did not receive a copy of the League’s minutes.

*Thank you.
Sherman”*

The next old business was concerning the ESTA representatives from NJTL. The current listed representatives are Maureen Broadbent, Ken Van Dyke, and Robert Broadbent. It was reported to Nikki that John C. Lefton was still attending ESTA meetings as a NJ representative. A **Motion** was made by Patti Billow to object formally to ESTA that John C. Lefton is recognized as a NJTL representative, and that he be asked to step down, and the motion was seconded by Maureen Broadbent. Discussion centered on the fact that Mr. Lefton is not currently, nor has been for at least two years, a member of the NJTL, and is therefore unqualified to represent NJ to ESTA. A vote was taken and the **Motion carried**, unanimously, with no exceptions. The ESTA reps are asked to attend the ESTA meeting at Festival and share this motion with the ESTA board so that the matter can be laid to rest.

New Business

Patti Billow researched all financial records of the League as provided by the past Treasurer. Her findings show that there has not been a proposed budget for any year prior to the present. Andrew pointed out that there is no provision in the League’s by-laws for a budget. In order to chart the financial history of the NJTL, Patti has studied where the money has come from and on which it has been spent. The historical budget report can be found in one of the documents associated with these

minutes. Patti has proposed a yearly budget for the 2004-2005 fiscal year. A copy of the budget can be found in one of the documents associated with these minutes.

A **Motion** was made to adopt the proposed budget by Andrew Flothmeier, and seconded by Pete LaBriola. The discussion that followed indicated that the idea of a budget is long overdue, and that we as representatives of and assistants to community theatre companies must spend money to enhance our own capability to make money to continue our mission. A vote was taken, and all present voted aye, with no abstentions. The **Motion carried**.

Pete LaBriola reports that there is a possibility that New Jersey Arts may accept a grant proposal from the NJTL for grant money from the State. Pete will follow up on this possibility.

Next under New Business:

Annual Meeting

Nikki reports that there is a possibility that Jeremy Whelan, a writer for actors and directors, may be willing to present a three hour workshop for the annual meeting. Nikki asked if there would be any interest in this and there was a general agreement that this should be pursued. The discussion followed into a call to plan the Festival earlier next year, and that other events and all meetings must be scheduled. This should allow for the maximum number to attend, and should generate the most attention and interest. The Annual Meeting must be held before Memorial Day, and should have four workshops running 2 at a time concurrently for 1 ½ hours, in addition to the 3 hour workshop by Jeremy Whelan. Possibilities include workshops on makeup, tech, children's theatre and improv. Various members made commitments to ask people identified as possible workshop leaders in a quick time frame. Box lunches can be provided at a low cost to the attendees.

After checking the calendar, it was decided that the Annual Meeting will be held on May 15th at the Livingston Student Center, with registration from 10am to 4pm and a box lunch will be provided at a nominal fee. We will need to provide a body count to Tim DeVito by April 24th, so the organization of the meeting needs to take place quickly.

Next under New Business was the Parliamentary Report created by Andrew Flothmeier. This report contains several bylaws that will be formally proposed in a separate email. The full report can be found in one of the documents associated with these minutes.

Those present were encouraged to read the report thoroughly before the next meeting. Nikki suggested that one additional bylaw be added: to make the Bylaws Committee's Standing Committee of the League. All of the proposed bylaws should be reviewed by the membership so that they can be discussed during the business meeting at the Annual Meeting.

Bill Fikaris will be looking at the availability of theaters in Central region for use in Festival next year, and report back. Tim pointed out that the next festival will be the 55th anniversary of the League, and that may generate publicity. Pete Labriola found that the Kelsey is available on a limited (but free) basis for a Festival slot next year, but the League would have no access for the Friday. This requires more discussion.

From Burlington County Footlighters, a **Motion** for NJTL to sponsor Dean Walton's upcoming charity cabaret in order to afford the event with insurance coverage was made by Lynn Johnson, and seconded by Tim DiVito. The discussion explained that the event has been held yearly at HP&P, but could not be held there this year. The problem is that the cabaret features a wine and cheese segment prior to the performance, and there may be a question of liability. Since the organization hosting the cabaret is a newly formed non-profit, they do not yet have insurance of their own, and the theater is hesitant to allow wine to be served at the event without insurance coverage. Since NJTL maintains insurance, and the insurance would and could cover this event if we sponsor it, there was a thought that we could then attach ourselves to the cabaret for publicity and to attract new members. A vote was taken and all present voted aye, with one abstention. The **Motion carried**.

Tim DiVito has asked about the NJTL logo, and if we can use the logo for programs, etc. Patti replied that the current logo is an old and unattractive one, and that the new logo has not been finalized or approved. Tim mentioned that he could enlist the aid of graphic students to clean up and finish the logo that Patti has begun. Tim also passed around a logo that the students made for the Livingston center, but wasn't used. Patti will talk to Tim about the logo over the next few months.

Patti also passed out copies of the ST-5 tax exemption form for the NJTL for anything that we purchase for the use of the League.

Nikki asked that a list be made of everyone's email:

Patti Billow	Treasurer	trishgwtw2000@yahoo.com – treasurer@njtl.net
Lynn Johnson	Children's Theater	lynnandcarl@comcast.net
Maureen Broadbent	Ind. Member	mbroadbent08107@yahoo.com
James Curran	Ind. Member	james@njtheater.com
Suzie Ramsdell	Ind. Member	piscosubito@yahoo.com
Bill Fikaris	V.P. North	bfikaris@topcon.com – vpn@njtl.net direct15@optonline.net
Rose Lindley	Ind. Member	roroller@aol.com
Pete LaBriola	V.P. Central Pierrot Productions	petelabriola@aol.com – vpc@njtl.net
Mark Hartzman	Triple Threat Productions	thehaltz@aol.com
Tim DiVito	The Livingston Theatre Company	tim@rultc.org
Robert Broadbent	Secretary	rbroadbent0318@comcast.net – secretary@njtl.net
Nikki Adams	President/BCF Rep	nikki@neverdream.com – president@njtl.net

Note that the officers of the NJTL can also be reached via the League website. Andrew will work on a variety of other email lists to facilitate communication. Members not present are asked to send their email addresses to Andrew Flothmeier at aflothmeier@comcast.net.

Nikki asked that a nominating committee be formed to nominate candidates for the office of the President and Treasurer. Nikki asks that anyone wishing to be considered for election to the above named offices send their name to the Chairman of the nominating committee. Nikki called for volunteers to man the committee, and Andrew Flothmeier was appointed Chair (aflothmeier@comcast.net), with Maureen Broadbent and Suzie Ramsdell appointed as members. The elections will be held in May.

A **Motion** to adjourn was made by Andrew Flothmeier, and seconded by Maureen Broadbent. After discussion, the vote was taken, and the **motion carried** unanimously, with no abstentions. Meeting adjourned at 2:57 PM.