

A Center for the Arts in Sturgeon Bay

by Hans Christian

1. An idea that is more timely than ever

Sturgeon Bay is at a crossroads. Its rich history in maritime industries and manufacturing is no longer the only ingredient to this wonderful city- numerous arts organizations have been established over the past 25 years and have weathered the inevitable storms that any creative arts efforts will face. We now have at least two organizations, the *Miller Art Museum*, and *Third Avenue Playhouse*, which are contemplating mayor expansions of their facilities. Both entities have grown stronger in their support network, and both entities are facing the next round of challenges: How to provide a suitable facility for their long term existence.

As Door County goes, so does Sturgeon Bay. We are very fortunate to live in an area that has become known for its natural beauty and for a very strong presence of the arts. But one ingredient is missing in the county's only city: A *Center For The Arts* (CFTA), located right on the waters between the two downtown bridges, on the "westside" of town.

2. Preliminary concept

A CFTA could consist of four elements:

- ~ A left wing for the Miller Art Museum ('left wing', as seen from the East)
- ~ A right wing for TAP
- ~ A central space as lobby, suitable for public events, etc
- ~ The historic granary as a three season multi purpose space, attached to the right wing of the building.

3. Location

As the city and the 'Friends' group have agreed on an acceptable Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) and may soon receive an official determination by the DNR, we may soon have a perfect compromise: An OHWM that allows for private development above it and public development below it. A CFTA could perfectly fit the definition of Public Use.

4. Funding

The CFTA could be funded in multiple ways. A major corporate donor (Boldt, Bellin, Ministry Health, Hatco, etc) should be secured for a large portion of the funding in exchange for naming rights, augmented by fundraising efforts that are coordinated by both organizations. Additionally, both parties would consider partnerships with existing, larger organizations; for example, TAP is currently building a strong relationship with the *Milwaukee Rep Theater*, which might have an interest in a presence in Door County.

5. Next Steps

This idea for a CFTA has now been planted with some members of both boards.

- ~ Each board should discuss the benefits of this idea and express its support.
- ~ The boards should establish a joint committee that works together on this idea
- ~ A preliminary floor plan should be determined
- ~ An experienced architect should develop preliminary drawings
- ~ A rough estimate for cost should be established.
- ~ These steps should be completed within the next 12 weeks.

6. Conclusion

If we can create a CFTA in this 'crown jewel' location, we would create a breathtaking destination that Sturgeon Bay and Door County currently is lacking; additionally, it appears that our community is looking for ideas that transcend the political polarization that has occurred. Therefore, the creation of an CFTA could be the perfect solution to move forward.