

**MINUTES**  
**WAR MEMORIAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**MARKETING & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE / SPECIAL MEETING**

**Thursday, April 9, 2026**

The Budget and Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco met in-person at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 9, 2026, in the Trustees' Board Room, War Memorial Opera House, Chair Wright presiding.

**ROLL CALL**

Committee Members Present: Chair Wright, Vice President Horn, Trustee Gatti (*arrived 1:46pm*), Trustee Lam, and Trustee Newstat

Committee Members Absent: President Wilsey and Trustee Muduroglu

Staff Present: Kate Sofis, Managing Director; Rob Levin, Assistant Managing Director; Francesca Cicero, Board Secretary

**Performing Arts Center Brand Identity and Strategy.**

Chair Wright opened the meeting by noting that the Committee has been discussing branding and naming considerations for some time and that the topic has become increasingly important in light of current budget pressures, reductions in philanthropy, and the need to grow earned revenue through expanded presenting activity across the Performing Arts Center. She highlighted that outside presenters and the general public often do not clearly understand which venues belong to the War Memorial campus.

Managing Director Sofis provided context on the City's financial outlook and the shifting philanthropic landscape, including reduced giving to arts organizations and greater donor focus on social service priorities. She observed that increased revenue from outside rentals is critical to the Department's long-term stability and that clearer branding is needed to improve the campus's visibility and competitiveness. She noted frequent public confusion about whether Davies Symphony Hall is part of the campus and referenced opportunities for growth at venues such as Herbst Theatre, the Atrium, and the Green Room.

Consultant Maureen Futtner presented background research on the origins and evolution of the War Memorial name, including history from the 1920s through the 1970s, and instances of past discussions about identity and letterhead usage. She outlined comparable institutions—such as Lincoln Center, The Music Center (Los Angeles), Denver Center for the Performing Arts, and Ensemble Arts Philly—and noted that many multi-venue performing arts campuses use naming conventions that provide clearer public understanding. She emphasized that the initial phase of the branding work focuses on identity and naming clarity, not a full rebrand or changes to mission or vision.

Committee members discussed challenges associated with the current name, including common misconceptions that the War Memorial refers only to the Opera House, or that the facilities are intended solely for veterans or military-related activities. Trustees observed that this confusion can deter potential renters or presenters and may limit opportunities to expand diverse programming. They also discussed the importance of maintaining the memorial function and ensuring veteran stakeholders are included in any future decision-making. Trustees Rocco and Kopp were identified as essential voices for this purpose.

Trustees agreed that further work is needed to examine the legal and historical dimensions of the War Memorial Trust and directed staff to prepare a Trust Agreement presentation for the Committee's next meeting. They also discussed the importance of a structured stakeholder engagement process, including outreach to veterans' groups,

resident companies, long-standing licensees, occasional presenters, and philanthropic partners, to gather perspectives on how best to communicate the identity of the Performing Arts Center while respecting its heritage. Committee members emphasized that the discussion does not propose changing the name of the War Memorial, nor removing references to veterans, and that any branding exploration must preserve the historic and memorial identity of the institution.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Public comment is an opportunity for members of the public to directly address the Committee on items within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Marketing and Community Engagement Committee, but not on the agenda.

There being no public comment, Chair Wright closed public comment.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Wright adjourned the meeting at 1:53 p.m.

Francesca Cicero  
Board Secretary

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