



# NEW PRAGUE POPS POST

**VOL. 1 -- NUMBER 6**

## **"Celebrate Good Times" -- It's Time!**

*Editor's Note: "It's Time!" is a monthly column by Den Gardner, chair of the Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS) Committee of the Forward New Prague Foundation. If you can read, we ask you to read it at your leisure! If you missed reading class in elementary school, an audio version may be available in the next three years. (OK, just kidding.)*

*By Den Gardner, chair, Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS) Committee*

Who can say it better than Kool and the Gang? "Celebrate Good Times, Come On!" Nobody folks. If you're reading this and don't live in a cave, you know that the Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS) Committee and its Leadership Team are taking a brief moment to "celebrate."

Why?

- We've reached our \$500,000 fundraising goal for 2023. We're halfway to our \$1 million goal by the end of 2025. Thanks to all of you who have donated in ANY way.
- We have a completed site study by Bolton & Menk, looking at the three sites where POPS will be built - Memorial Park, City Center or Sliding Hill Skate Park. Details later in this column.
- On Sept. 12 we'll be meeting with the New Prague Park Board to report on our progress and provide details on the site study. That's our next step on the way to approval by the city council of, we hope, one of the three sites.

- We hope you have Oct. 28 on your calendar for the POPS Gala at the Park Ballroom from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The event is free. For that, you get music by the Eddie Shimota Band and Little Chicago, a chance to win some great silent auction items, and last-minute raffle tickets as we give away our Equinox SUV.
- We're gearing up for Dozinky weekend, where we'll have our Chevy Equinox (have you bought your tickets yet?) in the Car Cruise event and a booth Friday and Saturday by the Hotel Broz to sell tickets and tell everyone about POPS.



*Thank you Palmer and Susan Welcome!*

But let's step back for a minute and review where we've been. Overall, the POPS Committee and Leadership Team have met several times in person or by Zoom in the past 10+ months.

## **SUMMARY OF POPS ORGANIZATION SINCE OCTOBER 2022**

As a quick refresher, the effort to create a committee to build POPS (which will be used for performances of all kinds, movies, community/church gatherings and such) started about 18 months ago through the New Prague Area Arts Council, a non-profit organization designed to promote and support the arts in the area. From this group, the POPS Committee was organized. From that group, a POPS Leadership Team was formed.

The official kick-off was in October of 2022 with a reception for the community at Giesenbrau Bier Co. Since that time, several sub-committees have been at work raising money, working on site selection, informing the community about the project and putting the legal information together to create a non-profit organization to manage the project. The intent of the arts council was to turn over the project to this non-profit organization at the appropriate time.

That non-profit is called the Forward New Prague Foundation, now with IRS authorization as a tax-exempt entity. Money gathered for POPS sits in two banks in the community. Thus far, approximately \$525,000 has been pledged/raised toward its \$1 million goal. The goal is to raise the remaining \$475,000 by the end of 2025. The officers of the Forward New Prague Foundation are:

- Den Gardner, Chair (that's me!)
- Karen Steinhoff, Vice-Chair
- Bruce Wolf, Treasurer

### **Chronological Work by POPS Committee:**

- Kick-off October 2022
- Several meetings by POPS Committee/Leadership Team/POPS Sub-Committees through winter, spring and summer.
- Request for Proposal in early 2023 to select a firm to do an independent site analysis. Bolton & Menk was chosen after presentations by three firms.

- City staff, POPS committee members, Bolton & Menk personnel and others visited the three sites under consideration in April.
- Bolton & Menk completed the site study for approval to POPS group in July.
- The Location Feasibility/Design Sub-Committee voted to approve the Bolton & Menk report and send it to the POPS Leadership Team.
- POPS Committee held a public meeting in late July at Giesenbrau to present and discuss the findings of the report by Bolton & Menk. More than 50 attended the meeting.
- The POPS Leadership Team met and approved the Bolton & Menk report.



Fifty community residents attend the July meeting with Bolton & Menk at Giesenbrau.

## WHAT WE KNOW TODAY

As a reminder, the POPS Committee mission is:

- ***“To build a multi-purpose outdoor performance facility to celebrate the arts and other community gatherings from music to theatre to dance to visual arts and much more.”***

We are aware, and would like to reinforce to our supporters, that:

- ***We are a volunteer, independent group of New Prague citizens interested in building POPS. We know that we are not an official body of the city or any other group. We do not have the authority to select the site. We are presenting the findings of the Bolton & Menk report to city officials, knowing that the city, which is providing the land and will maintain the facility, will have the final say on where the POPS is built.***

## We all want POPS built in New Prague

Please also recall that:

- The POPS Committee paid for an approximately \$20,000 study by Bolton & Menk to do an independent study of the three sites on which the POPS structure could be built - all publicly owned properties of the city - Memorial Park, City Center and the Sliding Hill Skate Park. The Park Board many months ago allocated \$5,000 to assist our volunteer committee with the payment of this study. We thank them for their generosity.
- The POPS Location Feasibility/Design Sub-Committee was the lead group in working with Bolton & Menk on the site study. Members of this sub-committee are:
  - Joe Barten
  - Steve Frost, sub-committee lead
  - Den Gardner
  - Larry Pint
  - Eddie Shimota
  - Karen Steinhoff
  - Pat Sullivan
  - Stef Tupy
  - Kay Wilcox

This sub-committee voted unanimously to approve the report as prepared by Bolton & Menk and send it to the POPS Leadership Team for review.

The 15-person POPS Leadership Team (see members below) voted 12 in favor of the study by Bolton & Menk, two opposed and one abstention. Regarding the site rankings, Memorial Park was the clear number one choice by Bolton & Menk, based on its criteria, with the other two sites pretty much equal in rankings.

### **The POPS Leadership Team consists of:**

- Den Gardner, Chair
- Karen Steinhoff, Vice-Chair
- Bruce, Wolf, Treasurer
- Sandi Loxton, Secretary
- Joe Barten
- Andy Beckius
- Lisa Brusseau
- Shannon Brusseau
- Tony Buthe
- Jon Colling
- Gina Fadden
- Steve Frost
- Pastor Ben Hilding
- Larry Pint
- Brooke Sticha

### **Reasons for the majority favorable vote included:**

- The location is centrally located in an entertainment area already created, with a large playground, golf course, Park Ballroom, etc, in the area. This makes it a family-rich location.
- The area fits nicely for the crowds expected at the facility - 500+. The landscape also works well for people who will be bringing lawn chairs and blankets to events.
- It provides shade from the many trees in the area. (We are aware that some ash trees may be removed in the next couple of years because of disease).
- There is ample street and lot parking in the area, knowing on rare occasions there may be a POPS event, golf tournament and an event in the Park Ballroom at the same time.
- The land is already being utilized as a public place. The other sites, especially City Center, could be areas someday privately owned, with opportunities for taxes to be gathered from the land. That is not the case with Memorial Park.
- The acoustics for performers are expected to meet expectations at this site, although this has yet to be thoroughly researched at this point. But that will happen.

The 12-2-1 favorable vote for the Bolton & Menk study also resulted in several questions about the Memorial Park site. They included:

- The number of potential trees to possibly be lost at Memorial Park. The Leadership Team is aware that some of the ash trees may be removed because they are diseased.
- Is there adequate parking?
- The subjectivity of the criteria used in the Bolton & Menk rankings. There were 11 criteria, ranging from parking to size of the area to nearby park amenities.



- Will the public continue to have feedback through this process (which we believe it will)?
- How the lack of shade at the other two sites will affect attendance and the cost of shade barriers (estimated by Bolton & Menk at \$300-\$500,000).
- What is the city's thought process on the future of the City Center land and timing for development?

## CONCLUSION

One thing that's clear throughout the past 18 months: Wherever POPS is built, people want it and believe, like the POPS theme - "It's Time!" - to have one in New Prague. There are 20+ publicly-provided sports facilities/fields in New Prague. There are zero fine arts facilities.

Our progress has been steady and the reaction of businesses, individuals and community groups has been tremendous. As chair of this group, I am very thankful for the wonderful work of all those who have given their time or talent or treasure to this effort.

We know we have a long way to go to reach our financial goals. But the POPS PDDP Formula - Persistence, Dedication, Diligence and Passion - will carry the day and provide great family entertainment for decades for our residents.

It's okay for us to "Celebrate Good Times, Come On" -- It's Time! But only briefly because our work is far from done. Do you want to help? Email me at [dengardner@gandgcomm.com](mailto:dengardner@gandgcomm.com) or call me at 612/325-3981. Be part of this historic effort.



Thank you Tom Topka for donating space for this sign on the east end of New Prague.

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## Fundraising Raffle Progress Report

Progress remains steady on raffle ticket sales for the SUV that will be raffled off on Oct. 28 at the POPS Park Ballroom Gala. The SUV is being donated by Palmer and Susan Welcome of Palmer Welcome Auto. Ticket sales, which began in June, will continue to be on sale until the drawing in late October. Thus far approximately \$5,000 has been sold in tickets, which are sold for \$20 each or three for \$50. The goal is \$20,000.

The Music at the Broz concerts this summer garnered about 25% of the ticket sales. Other tickets have been sold at various Rotary Club functions, including an appearance of the car at the welcome back School District staff lunch in late August. The club traditionally serves the picnic lunch at Trojan Stadium to the hundreds of district staff returning for duty.

"Many comments were heard thanking both Rotary and the POPS Committee for working on this important project," said Dr. Jon Colling, who's heading up the raffle sales through the New Prague Rotary. Colling also sits on the POPS Leadership Team.

Tickets will be on sale at both Cruise Night and Dozinky Day as well as at a POPS booth, which will be located near the Hotel Broz. If anyone would like to help sell tickets or buy some for themselves, please contact Jon Colling at 952-393-8965 or [drjon@bevcomm.net](mailto:drjon@bevcomm.net).

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# POPS Location/Feasibility and Design Subcommittee Report

As the Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS) Site Feasibility Study by Bolton & Menk moves to the Park Board Sept. 12 for consideration, challenges and opportunities continue for the three city-approved sites for the possible POPS building project.

Comfort for performers and audiences has been an underlying goal for POPS. The Bolton & Menk Study as written was approved by the POPS Leadership Team on Aug. 21. That study, using its criteria in the selection process, selected by a relatively wide margin the Memorial Park site as number one, with the Sliding Hill Skate Park and City Center locations rated approximately the same. The leadership team voted 12 in favor of the study, with two opposed and one person abstaining.

There is a strong community aversion/objection to the removal of trees. This is also the opinion of the leadership team. Preliminary concept models indicate the likelihood of some tree removal from a Memorial Park siting of the POPS. Some trees, predominantly ash trees may be removed regardless in the ensuing months and next year because of disease. The exact trees affected will be known to the public in the near future. At this time, there is no definitive idea of what the exact loss of trees might be. Many factors will be considered in the future by the city.

Even without the anticipated loss of trees due to disease, the placement of the POPS will likely cause change in the tree canopy with loss of shade as well as loss of a picnic shelter or volleyball court. There is research that shows even ground compaction around park trees can lead to the death of trees over a four- to five-year period. It is anticipated that if the building is placed in Memorial Park, the volleyball and/or picnic shelter will be moved.

Costs to provide shade with man-made shade structures could be an expense at any of the sites while waiting for shade trees to fill in and mature. According to preliminary estimates by Bolton & Menk, building shade structures could cost \$300,000+. It is difficult to predict development costs at the City Center site as the city deals with planning in that area for greenspace, the POPS, possible new City Hall, housing, etc., and contribution to the tax base. There will be short-term and long-term costs and benefits as we move forward, trying to find what might be best for New Prague in the long term. Get your crystal balls dusted off.

In the meantime, members of the Location Feasibility/Design Subcommittee will be actively researching features, placements & orientation, concept models, best practices for preserving shade trees in an urban setting, and other considerations that could affect the POPS.

Hurdles exist. Development of design models will hinge on the location recommended by the Park Board and approved by the City Council, and how we choose to protect our parks as we move forward.

Finally, it is important to remember that the POPS Committee is a volunteer organization created to build an outdoor performance structure in New Prague to celebrate the arts. The Bolton & Menk study, including the rankings of the three sites, is a recommendation only. The final decision lies in the hands of the city, which is providing the land for the POPS.

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## POPS Offers New App for Support in Fundraising Efforts

The Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS) Committee is thrilled to announce that a new app will be available soon for area residents to support the effort to build the outdoor venue.

The New Prague POPS App will cost just \$30 per year and provide great discounts and free offers at dozens of local retail establishments in the area. Most importantly, when you purchase the app, \$20 of your purchase price automatically goes as a donation for POPS!

The new POPS App is brought to New Prague residents through South of the River Fundraising, a Prior Lake based company. Mark Braaten, POPS Committee member, and June Phillipp, lead the effort. Braaten also publishes the new magazine - New Prague Neighbors. The second issue has just been published in New Prague.

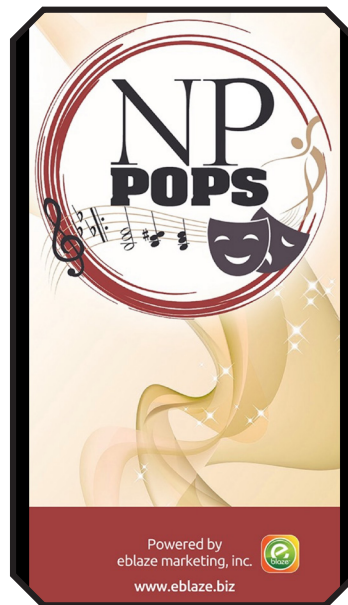
"We are excited that Mark and June are stepping up in yet another way to promote and raise money for POPS," said Den Gardner, chair of the POPS Committee. "His magazine has been great thus far in promoting POPS as well and his service on our fundraising committee has opened up new opportunities for us to raise the \$1 million we believe is needed to build our outdoor venue."

POPS has received pledges of a little over \$500,000 thus far in its 10 months of raising money. The goal is to raise another \$500,000 in 2024 and 2025.

"The POPS App will have many local retail businesses where great deals can be offered, plus it can be used in other communities in Minnesota and other states throughout the country," Gardner said. "From golf course discounts to restaurants and other retail establishments, it's a terrific way to support POPS and get great discounts."

Already these local businesses have announced they will be part of the POPS App:

- New Prague Golf Club
- 1319
- NPower Nutrition
- Sugar Rose Bakeshop
- Corner Bar
- Small Town Girl
- Euroworx/Legacyworx
- Downtown Sound
- ID Threadz
- El Tequilla



If you want more details on the POPS App, visit [www.southoftheriverfundraising.com](http://www.southoftheriverfundraising.com) or email Mark/June at [southoftheriverfundraising@gmail.com](mailto:southoftheriverfundraising@gmail.com).

The POPS Committee says thanks to South of the River Fundraising for supporting POPS!