

Theater Moves Forward, Legion On Hold

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Moving ahead and putting on the brakes, the Blowing Rock Town Council last night approved moving forward with a lease of the old Blowing Rock Fire station for new life as the Firehouse Theater, but just across the parking lot, the brakes were put on plans for the renovation of the American Legion building. The formal lease was approved by the council for Ensemble Stage pending approval of the plans for the building, with that to be formalized over the next month or two, a final vote leading to fund-raising and renovation of the building into a new theater.

But bids for the American Legion renovation come in \$200,000 above the projections and hopes of the town council, leading the board to reject all eight bids. But now seeing that the price range for the renovations—over \$500,000—the board took another direction, and is launching their own community fund-raising, seeking to bring in \$200,000 in donations to fill the gap. The grant on the project will remain in place as long as things are underway by the end of September of 2015, according to Blowing Rock Town Manager Scott Fogleman, who said donations will be placed in a special account and used only for that project—and returned if the project does not go forward.

The council also voted to put \$150,000 toward water and sewer for the new post acute care facility proposed by Appalachian Regional Healthcare. The board placed caveats that, should the project not go forward, that money would be reimbursed, along with \$118,000 in other costs borne by the town for the healthcare facility project to this point.