

Theater Project Asks for County Contribution

Written by Steve Frank
Thursday, 08 May 2014 06:22

The Watauga County Commission was asked last night for funds to help the Appalachian Theater get up and running, that as the fundraising for the project is reaching the conclusion of its 'silent' phase, reaching out to large donors. The theater organization is seeking some \$6 million to renovate the 600 to 700 seat theater on King Street, Jonathan Allen there last night seeking a grant of \$50,000 for each of the next five years—\$250,000 total. But commissioners were skeptical after watching the Hayes Performing Arts Theater fail in Blowing Rock, and commission chair Nathan Miller gave his own advice, "If you're trying to rely on the Watauga County population to support the theater it will die. So you will need to draw people in from other counties—so it's a tourism-related event. So my advice is run it through the TDA and utilize their money." Commissioner Perry Yates questioned the parking for events at the theater, while commissioner Billy Kennedy defended the project and its positive impact on the community.

In the end, the commissioners promised to look at the request in their budget work sessions—one of those schedule for today—and Allen gave his reaction to their decision, saying about the project, "I feel very good about it. I think it is a project that is going to be worthwhile for this community not only for the arts but for business and for the local population."

That budget meeting begins at 4 this afternoon and will continue late.

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