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Members of the LRP board met with Michael Falter, who, along with his wife Susan Tive, owns City Lights Cinemas, about using the stage in the cinemas' Chaplin Theater for a small-scale production.

The movie theater has followed all COVID-19 safety guidelines to reopen, adapting both the interior and its schedule to allow for maximum physical distance between people. Masks must be worn at all times, and capacity was limited depending on the county's COVID-19 risk designation.

"They had already done everything right to promote their movies, so it was a done deal for us," Wellington said. "People were using the theater and comfortable with it. And there was no question City Lights was following all the guidelines."

In addition, renting the space for an event and selling concessions would allow the theater to bring in additional money beyond the films it is showing.

LRP made the decision to perform at City Lights when they realized the community

benefits.

According to LRP founding member Annie Schmidt, "We said, 'We want to support you. We will do anything to help you keep this theater going.' That was when we decided that if we could do a show there, we would."

It was a way to support Falter and Tive, who have used the movie theater to host events for clubs and nonprofits, as well as creating events around films. The pair are also active community members and have volunteered on regional committees.

"Michael and Susan have reached out to this community just left, right and center in every possible way they could," Wellington said. "We didn't expect to make anything off of this, and the movie theater didn't really either. We were doing this to have something for the community."

Schmidt added it was more important for LRP to have a theater performance again than for the theater group to make tons of money. Any money made by LRP

goes to pay for play royalties, props, costumes and event space.

LRP has performed shows at several venues around town, but its largest events are always held at the Florence Events Center. In fact, the event center is consid-

can do this' only to have to cut it again. ... It has been a real exercise in seeing what is possible. We were looking at going from a 40-person musical to a two-person musical, and still needing to have it be something that A) grabs you enough that you want to

most flexibility. But a change in designation would limit the audience capacity too much.

"We didn't mind the 30-member audience; that was fine, that would have worked. But when we get down to a 15-member audience ..." Wellington said. "As an audience member, you want a certain critical mass before you feel comfortable as a group to react and respond and take it all in."

Schmidt continued, "And of course, the actors want that energy even more than the audience."

After more than a year of not being able to perform a stage production, the theater community is ready to come back, once it is safe to do so. The LRP Board of Directors has met throughout the pandemic, including over virtual meeting platforms. Many of the greater LRP community — cast members, stage crew, musicians — are "waiting in the wings" for the next opportunity to come together and create for the stage again.

LRP also stepped in last year to sponsor an event, Schmidt said, since it would be hosted outside, on the streets of Historic Old Town Florence and at the Siuslaw Pioneer Museum. LRP helped with the costumes, banners, sashes and monologues for August's Women's Suffrage Parade.

In addition, the board is preparing to hold auditions for an event scheduled for June at City Lights Cinemas.

Wellington will direct "The Vagina Monologues" for four showings at the cinema — if COVID conditions permit.

"Just the thought of hold-

ing auditions again — I'm jazzed and excited," he said. "We want to do this. But we have to do it safely."

Depending on how auditions go, the cast could include four to ten actors. Blocking on the stage will allow for space between performers.

"There is some group work, but because it is built around monologues, we can still rehearse individually and safely and then bring the group together only when we need to," Wellington said.

"Plus, BOATS is pretty much ready to go," Schmidt added.

The pair hope that by the time June rolls around, events will be possible. Not only will it give residents something to do — it could potentially attract tourists and therefore help businesses around town.

"It really does give you some empathy for all the other business owners around here that have had to be doing this, too," Wellington said.

LRP is also looking at its plans for a fall show, and might shift to holding a winter show, again depending on conditions.

"Like the whole town, we are ready to come roaring back — as soon as roaring back is practical and allowed," Wellington said.

For more information about LRP, visit www.lastresortplayers.com and www.facebook.com/Lastresortplayers.

Editor's Note: *This story is a companion piece to "The Show Must (Not) Go On," which ran in the May 30, 2020, edition of the Siuslaw News. Read the article at thesiuslawnews.com/article/the-show-must-not-go-on.*

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