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**Theatre from A1**

everybody in the house can see them," Goes said. "It makes this whole space usable for acting, which it's really not [now]."

Though plans also include taking about four feet off the thrust stage to make room for more seating, the new design will allow for about 12 more feet of space to work with on the back wall.

"Because we're gaining so much playing space, it works out," said Goes.

Final plans estimate the new house audience capacity to be between 195 and 200 people.

The house will also be getting a new acoustic treatment on its walls and speaker system.

Work with an acoustical engineer is expected to yield an enhanced house setup for spoken word.

For the hearing impaired, plans are to install a "hearing loop," which enables people with a "T switch" on their hearing aids to flip the switch and get a direct feed of the theater's performance.

According to Goes, this assistive listening technology will be extended not only to those with hearing aids.

"Even if you don't have a hearing aid that includes that built in feature, which all the modern ones do, you can use headphones with this system," she said. "You can even have an app on an iPhone and literally tap into the sound."

Other upgrades will include retrofitting of a fire sprinkler system, aisle lighting, larger restrooms, and seating which meets Americans with Disabilities Act standards.

In total, the project will see a 2,087-square-foot building expansion from its current square footage of

9,197 to 11,284. This brings the theater a long way from its humble beginnings of performing under an army surplus parachute in 1982.

The theater considers its "ACT I" as occurring in 1998 when its current facility was first built. Next came "ACT II" in 2006, which involved the expansion of its lobby and addition of a rehearsal hall.

In the context of the theater's steady growth, ACT III can be seen as an affirmation of the nonprofit's continued success.

"This is a project that we've really been working on of quite a number of years," Goes said. "It has its roots back in 2011 when we did a huge comprehensive strategic planning process."

In the preceding years, the theater had actually been forced to turn people away as it sold out around half its shows. Despite this, the nonprofit was struggling to keep a balanced budget.

The price of running a volunteer theater includes costs such as costumes, set design and paying royalties to creators of shows — musical royalties alone can range from \$5,000 to \$8,000 per production.

The board of directors in the strategic planning process looked at income sources such as ticket sales, individual donations, show sponsorships and program ads.

With stable participation of advertisers and sponsors each year and the sheer lack of bandwidth to do any more productions, these were determined not to be viable growth areas.

In donations, Goes said the theater has terrific support and receives a reliable increase of three to four percent per year.

This left ticket sales, but there was no interest among

board members in bumping prices.

"We don't want to price ourselves out of the market," said Goes, "We want to be affordable for as many people as possible."

Because revenue streams could not substantially be altered, members started looking at increasing capacity. In 2013 they hired GMA Architects out of Eugene to assess the situation and by 2014 they had chosen a design.

"Then we really spent a couple of years doing our internal homework," said Goes.

Though the summer of 2019 was finally selected as a construction date, constructing costs have not stayed at original estimates. The price has skyrocketed from what was considered a \$1.5 million project a year ago to its current price tag of \$2.5 million.

"So we are scrambling for dollars at this point," Goes said.

To cover the cost, the theater must take out a loan, but is also relying on grant money, \$40,075 of which has already come from the Oregon Cultural Trust. The project is also being lobbied for by the Cultural Advocacy Coalition, a nonprofit advocacy group that advances public investment in art, heritage and humanities.

"We are part of a consortium of six arts construction projects that are lobbying for some lottery bond funding," Goes said.

Being part of the consortium increases the chances of receiving funding as the projects have already been vetted by the commission. Though Cottage Theatre was part of a similar consortium in 2017, it received less than had been asked for, prompting entry into this year's cycle as well.

As the new fiscal year nears, Goes hopes that the Oregon Legislature will find room in the budget for the arts among other contenders such as libraries and city infrastructure projects.

Helping its chances, the theater's construction project has already been recognized as a possible economic stimulant.

"Part of the reason that we got endorsed for this potential lottery bond funding is the potential economic development impact of this project," Goes said. "Last year ... only 25 percent of our audience had an address in the 97424 Cottage Grove ZIP Code. So, 75 percent of our audience is coming from somewhere else."

For a city looking to increase its tourism revenue, Goes believes numbers like these make the theater another oar in the water.

"Lots of people go out to eat before a show and so that affects local restaurants," said Goes. "The folks coming from farther away many times will stay overnight."

Goes added that about 10 percent of the theater's audience travels more than 50 miles, which qualifies them as tourists according to the statewide tourism agency Travel Oregon. Subsequently, the agency has given the theater a \$20,000 grant toward the construction project.

"So right now as an institution, we are a magnet to Cottage Grove," Goes said, "and it's our hope that people, while here, might tour a covered bridge, eat at a restaurant, run across to Walmart to buy something."

With construction set to begin as soon as loans are approved, the theater looks to reopen its doors Oct. 11 with "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged) [Revised]."

**Chorus from A1**

than 100 singers. In its heyday, the division had even taken second place at the society's international competition.

Today, the group has a little more than 30 active members who will take the stage next month in Cottage Grove in a set of performances which will include quartets Social Insecurity and Four C Sons made up mostly of Cascade Chorus members who have refined their own acts.

"The object of barbershop is to do what they call 'ring chords,'" Martindale explained, "which when you hit the chords exactly right to create an overtone, which is the desired effect."

Martindale's quartet, Social Insecurity, blends the barbershop sound with comedic performances and has achieved its own notoriety by routinely placing in the top 10 of regional barbershop competitions.

There are still all those unknowns."

Other potential costs such as staffing and security systems have yet to be explored and will likely continue the need for fundraising and donations of skilled labor.

"We desperately need volunteers," said carousel board member Linda Sexton.

As well as accepting volunteers, the group is encouraging locals to sponsor items such as the horses and chariots on the carousel. Over the next several months, a number of fundraising events are also scheduled to take place.

"We want to have it operating by summer if at all possible," Williams said.

Tickets to the Cascade Chorus performance can be found at the Cottage Grove Sentinel, Book Mine, Cascade Home Center, Chamber of Commerce in CG and Chamber of Commerce and The Creswell Chronicle and Cascade Home Center in Creswell.

Williams said of the carousel project. "When we erect it onto Brad's lot, then we will have vendors that will come in and another generating opportunity for finances," said Friends of the Cottage Grove Carousel Vice President Alice Nowicki, "but

With about \$90,000 remaining to be raised before the carousel can plant itself

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