

**THEATRE** *from A1*

To make room for 50 more audience members, the theater will “re-rake” the auditorium by adding concrete on top of the existing levels to make a steeper slope as more rows are added to the center three sections.

The new arrangement will allow the seating of 195 theater-goers.

Safety and accessibility improvements to the facility will include the addition of a fire sprinkler system (which was not required by code when the building was constructed in 1998), aisle lighting, additional ADA (Americans with Disability Act) seating, and a Hearing Loop Assistive Listening System. The latter will greatly improve the theater experience for all patrons with telecoil-equipped hearing aids.

Special acoustic paneling is also being brought in “which should make the

clarity of the spoken word better for absolutely everybody, hearing loss or not,” said Goes.

Fans of the theater will notice that entrances, restrooms and the box office will be relocated as well.

“I’m really, really excited about the impact on the audience experience,” said Goes.

The anticipation for the reopening is palpable following this turbulent past year and a half. The theater has had to endure not only financial, but also COVID-related hurdles to reopening.

When construction started last spring, Goes said she was hopeful that the theater could open in October. This got moved to December. Then February. Now sights are finally set on April.

Part of the reason for this series of setbacks include rising costs of materials, but also shipping issues.

“We were shut down by mandate for so long and so we finally raised enough

money to get started on our construction project that’s well underway,” said Goes, “and that’s where we’re paying for COVID a second time — because we are encountering delay after delay in materials availability.”

Something as simple as back boxes for stair lights, for example, has held up construction.

“We were ready for those and waited for two and a half months while they sat somewhere on a freight train waiting for a truck to pick them up,” Goes lamented. “And we couldn’t pour the concrete until we

had them because they have to be recessed into the end of the steps.”

Even doors and windows ordered in June won’t arrive until sometime in December.

“So we’ve had to keep shoving back our opening date, again and again,” she said.

In the end, the project is expected to cost around \$2.5 million. The theater is currently around 95 percent of reaching that goal.

Once construction is done, the theater will also need around two months to prepare for its return. Re-

hearsals, lighting, sets and all the elements of a production need to be taken into account.

Much of the cast originally set to be in the 2020 Mama Mia production will still be able to do the show, though some parts will need replacing.

“It finally gives them a chance to perform because they spent months rehearsing and then never got to see the stage,” said Goes.

As the theater prepares for reopening, it will also be looking for volunteers to help rebuild the set, repaint and usher at performances.

Goes expects recruitments won’t start until February, but is hopeful for a strong response when the theater does reach out.

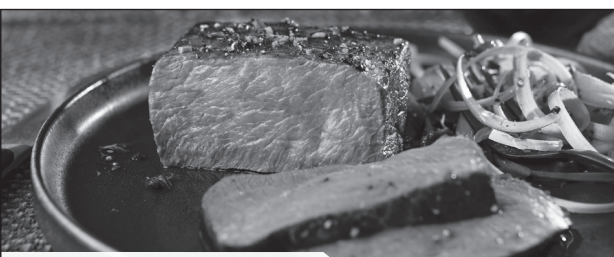
“And that’s really the heart of this organization — bringing people together to work on a creative project,” she said. “And it’s sort of a community building activity.”

Subscribers from 2020 are expected to receive a notice soon which gives them the first chance to select seats.

For more information, visit the theater’s website at cottagetheatre.org.

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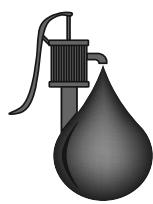
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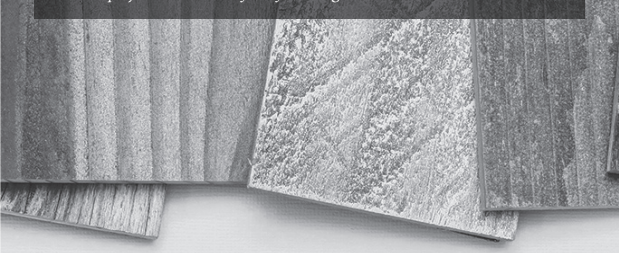
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