

## **“Roadmap” to the future of Franklin Opera House**

The vision of Franklin Opera House Inc. is to offer performing arts entertainment for the community in a facility that preserves the character and charm of its original construction while being a practical venue for modern performances. To do that we suggest:

- Replace or install those elements that are dangerous, missing, or outdated – sprinkler and fire suppression systems, fire detection systems, electrical wiring, fire egress routes, etc.
- Repair things that need to be repaired – plaster, woodwork, squeaky floorboards.
- Create a space that is attractive and welcoming to patrons from a 50-mile radius – adequate lobby and concession area, adequate restroom facilities.
- Add elements that make the venue more accessible to handicapped patrons and performers, and more accessible to touring performing groups and their equipment – elevators, counterweighted stage rigging system, theatrical lighting positions.

These building enhancements will enable us to program a selection of touring acts that are a notch above the caliber of what can currently be accommodated, drawing some larger audiences with higher ticket prices, while still offering the affordable entertainment to which our community is accustomed. This will contribute to the overall economic vitality of Franklin. We anticipate offering entertainment virtually every weekend of the year, at three different price points:

- Ten weekends will be reserved for community theatre or school drama productions, or Opera House fundraising events.
- 20-25 small acts with ticket prices of \$15-25;
- 15-20 medium acts at \$25-\$40;
- 12-14 better-known acts at \$40-\$60.

We will continue to work with professional consultants to determine if these goals are realistic and to develop the capacity to accomplish them, which will require changes in management structure and the utilization of volunteers. We will likely enlist the help of one or two booking agents to coordinate and contract touring acts. And we will include the sale of beer and wine to concessions for events that are not specifically “family-oriented.”

We also hope that we can offer an after-school theatre arts program... perhaps a year-round Franklin Area Children’s Theatre.

Our ability to communicate this vision of the future will help us in our fundraising efforts, whether it be a capital campaign, or our grant applications, or from our ongoing membership, sponsors, business advertisers, and sustaining donors.

We received \$149,000 in ARPA funding through Merrimack County to purchase rooftop smoke ventilation units and new energy-efficient stage lighting equipment, which have been purchased and are currently in storage awaiting installation.

At the present time our Renovation Fund contains approximately \$160,000. We are applying, and will continue to apply, for grants to add to this fund. Since the city council approved bond funding for the renovation we have applied for 13 grants. One has been approved and we will receive \$10,000 in January. One was declined (which is not surprising, as there were 800 applicants for 25 grants). We are awaiting response from the other eleven. Grants are competitive, and we know we will only receive a percentage of what we apply for.

In the spring of 2025 we will apply for a \$500,000 grant from the CDFA Tax Credit program. This and other potential funding sources, like a Community Development Block Grant, will require cooperation and assistance from the City or FBIDC.

We are formulating plans for a capital campaign to further add to our financial reserves. We will have a better idea at the end of the year, when our current feasibility study has concluded, of what our goal will be for that campaign.

We recognize that these fundraising goals cannot be accomplished in a matter of months. All these fundraising efforts will continue for the next 3 to 5 years. There may be new sources of funding that become available. Every dollar raised to offset the costs of renovations will reduce the burden on the taxpayers.