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Support Growing for Campaign to Save Park Theater

By Cathy Tyson



Wei-Tai Kwok traveled to Chicago in August to attend Al Gore's training program on climate change. Photo provided

that requirement entirely? I think that would be tough to do, but it is a City Council decision." Currently the theater has a dozen parking spaces.

Srivatsa explained the city's effort for a public/private partnership to address the dilemma. "The Plaza Way overlay that was approved in 2012 offers property owners some relief from the city's parking requirements. A property owner opting-in to the Overlay District is required to enter into an agreement with the city and terms of the agreement are negotiated on a case by case basis. Thus far, the city has negotiated with the Poys (who own the Squirrels, Plaza Way Tailor, and Handlebar Toy spaces) and the Park Theater Group; the Poys signed the agreement, the Park Theater Group's agreement is still in draft form. In both cases, the owners were required to provide at least some of the required parking in site."

Key organizers, who include some members of the Lafayette Community Foundation, are in discussions with the building's owners. A business plan is currently being written with advice from the operators of the Rheem and Orinda theaters.

While the effort is very preliminary at this point, Lane has hopes that the jewel, circa 1941, of Lafayette can be restored and the theater can be self-sustaining. The "Save the Lafayette Park Theater" Facebook page already has over 1,300 "likes," now they just need some angel investors and possibly more parking spaces.

A grassroots effort to re-open the Park Theater is just getting off the ground with Lafayette residents Chris and Natalie Lane spearheading the effort. Chris Lane grew up in Lafayette and has been very involved in the community with Rotary, the Art and Wine Festival Committee and as past president of the Chamber of Commerce; right now the focus is on the Park Theater.

He has started a Facebook page, "Save the Lafayette Park Theater," that is gathering momentum daily, organized a group of interested residents, and is in the process of getting a commercial contractor to investigate the soundness of the structure to determine the repairs necessary to open the doors to the public. The ultimate goal of the endeavor is to form a non-profit to buy and operate the theater.

For years, one of the wrinkles in revitalizing the vintage movie house was the city's parking requirements. Lane said he has spoken with the city manager and believes existing parking can be grandfathered in, so no additional spaces are needed. However there may be a difference of opinion. "If the theater were to reopen, it would require about 88 parking spaces," said Niroop Srivatsa, Lafayette's planning and building director. "Would the city waive

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