

Nonprofit builds momentum in bid to 'Light up the Park Theater'



Photo Pippa Fisher

The Park Theater Trust hopes to be able to purchase the historic building.

By Pippa Fisher

The city council heard a presentation May 28 from Tracey Farrell of the newly formed Park Theater Trust as momentum builds around the possibility of purchasing and operating the historic Park Theater cinema.

The 250-seat theater, built in 1941, has been closed since 2005 but Farrell says that reopening the Park Theater has remained consistently in the top four community concerns and is a priority for residents and local merchants. The building is currently on the market and TPTT is in negotiations with the sellers. But as TPTT Committee Member Tim Hennessey pointed out, despite talks with the seller, it could disappear: "We are up against the market."

In the fall of 2018 a small group formed a citizens' committee to get community

input and explore options for bringing the theater back to life. Now, eight months later, the group has an active email distribution list of over 50. In April 2019 it formed The Park Theater Trust and was awarded seed monies by the Lafayette Community Foundation. The group has applied to form a nonprofit 501(c)(3) which will allow it to fundraise on its own, but for now the LCF serves as its umbrella organization.

The trust looked at market data and found that (according to the Motion Pictures Association of America 2018 data) movie attendance is up 4 percent since 2016, despite Netflix and other home streaming options. TPTT looked at other independent, small theaters around the country and saw the benefits to local businesses in these locations.

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Is Lafayette going to the dogs?



Photo Pippa Fisher

Niroop Srivatsa reads to dogs and children at Bel and Bunna's during the Dogtown Downtown event June 1.

By Pippa Fisher

Every dog has its day – and that day in Lafayette was June 1, when the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce hosted Dogtown Downtown for the benefit of canines big and small. This year the annual event focused on highlighting the dog-friendliness of the downtown area.

Up and down Mt. Diablo Boulevard pooches and their people strolled and visited stores. Businesses handed out treats. Several adoption agencies along with other doggie groups had booths set up.

A highlight of the morning for the better-read pups and two-legged youngsters was a reading of doggie-themed books by Interim City

Manager Niroop Srivatsa who, shunning the ages-old advice never to work with animals and children, held both kids and puppies spellbound with her storytelling at Bel and Bunna's Books.

Srivatsa has been volunteering for ARF since 2005.

"Our golden Max had just died and we desperately needed another dog," says Srivatsa. "I immediately fell in love with that place and have been volunteering ever since."

She explains that she is a dog socializer who reads to dogs during adoption hours. "It helps to calm them and make them more adoptable. I truly believe that I have benefited more from this experience than my furry friends," says Srivatsa.

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