

Efforts Double to Keep Movie Viewing Local

(KNZA)--The Hiawatha City Commission has voted to place a new sales tax proposal on the November general election ballot for the construction of a city-owned movie theater, while a revitalization initiative is announced for the current theater.

The commission voted Monday evening to place a special question on the November ballot seeking approval of a three-eighths percent city-wide retailers' sales tax for a ten year period to fund construction of a new three-screen theater after the Brown County Clerk's office certified a petition submitted last week by local resident Matt Haws.

County Election Officer Debbie Parker said the petition contained 231 valid signatures, well over the 190 required. Commissioners were told by the city attorney's office that state statute requires that they submit the question to voters.

Meanwhile, Ian Schuetz, president of the community-based non-profit organization Hiawatha ACES, appeared before the Commission to announce efforts to maintain and revitalize the current Arrow Theater.

Schuetz said a contract is pending for the purchase of the theater by a small group of private donors. Schuetz said once the sale is finalized, the building would be donated to the Hiawatha ACES.

Schuetz said plans are to upgrade the two-screen theater in several phases as fund-raising efforts allow. He said initial improvements will focus on the necessary digital conversion including new projectors and screens, sound systems, and 3-D capability. Schuetz said they would then concentrate on upgrading the current seating and upholstery as well as renovating the lobby and making the bathrooms handicapped accessible.

He said the cost to upgrade the theater technology and amenities has been estimated at around \$200,000, with an additional about \$20,000 for building renovations.

Schuetz said current theater owner, Clint Holthaus, has agreed to continue to operate the theater on a 12-month renewable contract basis.

Mayor Crosby Gernon and Commissioners commended the efforts of Schuetz and Haws.

Many Signals Communications