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BLOOMINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Council next step for theater funding

City plan to put $1.2 million into Buskirk-Chumley to be debated next week

By Bethany Swaby
H-T Staff Writer

The Bloomington City Council is expected to discuss a proposed ordinance next week that would pour $1.2 million into the Buskirk-Chumley Theatre over the next three years. During those three years, the theater would most likely be managed by some form of a public-private partnership, but those details are still being worked out.

The partnership would involve the city, the Lotus Education and Arts Foundation, Monroe County Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Bloomington Area Arts Council.

After three years, the theater would probably pass into the possession or management of the city, according to city controller Tom Guerra.

The theater owes about $764,000 in outstanding debt. That includes two loans from Monroe County Bank and the city's $100,000 loan last year, Guerra said.

The ordinance would propose paying off that debt, leaving the theater with about $137,000 annually for operating expenses and a little extra for capital maintenance projects, he said.

The $1.2 million would come through a $500,000 additional appropriation from the city's 2001 budget, with the remainder culled from the downtown TIF Increment Finance district.

In a TIF district, all property taxes from improvements to property after the district has been created go to finance necessary infrastructure such as streets, sidewalks and sewers for that district.

The additional appropriation from the 2001 budget would come from the city's recent $1.7 million windfall. The state recently found it owed Bloomington that amount from local taxes collected by the state but not distributed to municipalities, Guerra said.

"I think this is an incredibly important move," he said.

IU officials drop idea of buying the Von Lee

Historic theater would need $750,000 in renovations

By John Meunier
H-T Staff Writer

Indiana University won't be taking over the Von Lee movie theater.

Ever since the theater's owners decided last fall to close the downtown movie house, historic preservationists, IU film faculty and others have been lobbying the university to buy the theater.

Although IU did give the building a close look this winter, officials decided not to pursue trying to buy it.

"We are not currently in any discussions with the owners of the Von Lee theater," said Lynn Coyne, IU's director of real estate. "We evaluated the building and following the evaluation we have not had any discussions."

IU's engineering staff prepared a report on the cost of upgrading the seating, lighting, roof and mechanical equipment in the building to meet legal and university requirements.

IU architect Bob Meadows said the total cost would be about $750,000.

"Frankly, IU doesn't have the money for these kinds of things unless a donor comes forward," he said.

Even if IU had acquired the site, it would have been converted to classroom lecture space with film viewing capability rather than preserved as a movie house for the general public.

IU got approval from the Indiana General Assembly this year to spend $10 million on a new classroom building that will