

## **WHO'S GOING TO PAY?**

It is regrettable that we need to look at the dream-like Confluence Project through the cold facts of economics. As taxpayers we have to do so.

The Project is projected to cost \$88 million - just to build. The Confluence Project consists of:

- One building complex with a 6-story University of Eau Claire dormitory, retail space at both Eau Claire River and Barstow Street levels, and a City of Eau Claire Parking Garage for approximately 196 vehicles.
- A second building complex will be a Theatre Arts Center for the UWEC and the community.

This total Confluence Project is proposed by the newly formed "stakeholders" - Haymarket Concepts, LLC. (It was formed by the following: Commonweal Development Corporation, Market & Johnson, the UWEC Foundation, and the University of Eau Claire.)

- Haymarket is asking the state for \$55 million. As a resident of Wisconsin, I am going to have to pay part of this.
- Haymarket is asking the county for \$5 million. As a resident of the county, I am going to have to pay part of this.
- Haymarket is asking the city for \$10 million. As a resident of the city, I am going to have to pay part of this.

As a taxpayer so will you. But, this is only the beginning of the cost the city taxpayers will be asked to contribute. Haymarket Concepts is asking the city taxpayers to commit \$200,000 dollars toward the annual Theatre Arts Center's operations and that taxpayers would be responsible to reimburse/pay for any annual deficit. The annual deficit is an unknown amount, but could be substantial. Even though they hope to get these funds by collecting additional room taxes, there is nothing in this proposal that would increase over-night stays in Eau Claire. So, what if the room taxes do not cover this additional expense? Where will the funds come from?

In the city's initial \$10 million dollar investment for the Confluence Project –

- The existing and historic buildings will be raised. Considering when these buildings were built, will there be issues with their removal?
  1. Is there any lead paint, mold, asbestos, etc., that will require expensive remediation techniques that the city's taxpayer will have to pay for? There are laws involved when disposing of these types of materials.
  2. Have these substantial costs been included in the amount the city taxpayer will have to pay?
- The city taxpayer will also be responsible for building and maintaining the Eau Claire River Pedestrian Bridge AND the underground Eau Claire Parking Garage (below dorm).

- **The property improvements include raising the land out of the flood plain, infrastructure requirements, costs for the plaza, and pedestrian/bike trails.**

**All of these projects add up. There remain many unanswered questions. We, as the taxpayers, deserve to know the answers because WE would have to pay the bills!**

**The existing and historic buildings on the proposed Confluence Project site are on the tax roll. Once these buildings are removed and eliminated from the tax role, and the Confluence Project is completed, will the dorm and the Theatre Arts Center be placed on the tax roll? I believe this will all depend on who becomes the final title holder of these buildings. At this point we have not been told who that will be.**

**Questions:**

- **What if the Theatre Arts Center does not make a profit or falls into financial need?**
- **What will happen? Will the city taxpayers have to bail out the Theatre Arts Center to keep it in business as the city taxpayers did for the Ray Wachs Civic Center?**
- **What will be the increased ticket cost? Will I/we be able to afford to go to a show?**
- **Will other Theatre Art groups that currently utilize The Eau Claire Regional Arts Center (State Theatre) be able to pay the significantly higher rental rates?**

**These are all items that need to be considered. I feel that we, the taxpayers, deserve answers to these questions before we commit our hard-earned tax dollars to this Confluence Project. As taxpayers, let's get out there attend public meetings. Contact your City Council representatives, Plan Commissioners and Waterways and Parks Commissioners before it's too late.**

**Janice Wnukowski**

**President of the Eau Claire Historic Preservation Foundation**

**ADDITIONAL:**

- **The UWEC intends to rent parking space from the Civic Center for the dormitory students. Will there be adequate parking for Civic Center events and the guests at the Ramada?**
- **When the Theater Arts Center, the Civic Center and the Ramada Hotel all are in use simultaneously, most especially weekends, how will all the parking be accommodated?**
- **The arts patron would pay \$1.50 surcharge over and above the ticket price.**
- **I understand that The Children's Theatre staff has not been contacted.**
- **Haymarket reps. claim 28 meetings (insinuating great public input).**

However, the truth is that one (1) was a public input session at Pizza Plus; the other sessions were presentations before clubs.