

**UNION COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

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County of Union Authorizes Feasibility and Cost Study of the Union County Arts Center

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders has authorized the firm of NBBJ to submit a feasibility and cost study proposal for work to be done on The Union County Arts Center in Rahway.

Union County Freeholder Alexander Mirabella stated, "The Arts Center is a cultural gem in Union County. The first step in ensuring needed improvements are made is for the Freeholder Board to secure a professional engineering firm to conduct this study. NBBJ has a diverse background with many theaters to their credit including The New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark and the Paramount Theater Renovation in Seattle, Washington. Their study relating to the Arts Center should prove invaluable in improving and maintaining the Arts Center."

The cost of the study will be \$47,000. The scope of the work includes a study for adding a side lobby and dressing room area, air conditioning, reconfiguring space in the front of the building and at the bank building next door, and improvements to the surrounding area.

Two possible scenarios are being considered. The first is the demolition of the existing stage and construction of one about twice the depth. The second is the addition of a crossover behind the present stage with new wing spaces to either side. The Board is also interested in having NBBJ study the potential for modifying mezzanine seating to improve the audience's ability to see clearly from more seats, evaluate the heating system and recommend improvements. The work that NBBJ has been asked to do includes the preparation of cost estimates for each scenario including air conditioning, and related site work.

The expertise of four exceptional consultants has also been called in on this important project: Cosentini Associates (MEP, Fire Protection); PMK Engineering (Site/Civil); VJ Associates (Cost Estimating) and Cerami Associates (Acoustics).

Union County Freeholder Chester Holmes, who is from Rahway, said "The Freeholders consider this a vital effort to keep the Union County Arts Center as one of the premier homes for the arts in New Jersey. The arts have a positive effect upon businesses that are in the area and upon our quality of life."

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