

Transcript of public portion of hearing on Proctor's RestoreNY grant application held at Troy City Hall, April 22, 6pm. Estimated attendance: 150 people.

[presentation by Joe Nicolla of Columbia Development, not transcribed – hearing transcribed in chronological order after first 15 minutes]

Jim de Seve:

My name is Jim de Seve and I'm a member of a group called Troy Proctor's, which is an outgrowth of a group that started years ago called Friends of Proctor's. A few of us, mostly concerned citizens, have gotten together to ask a vital question which is, is there an alternative to the project being proposed. First of all I'd like to say very warmly thank you to Jeff Buell, for inviting us to do this presentation, and thanks to Joe Nicolla for very graciously adding us to the program. I think it's important to note that we don't come here in opposition to Columbia Development or RPI. What we're looking to do is to be a part of the dialogue about how this theater can be saved and we can work into the Proctor's Theater Redevelopment Project.

What we're hoping will come out of this is a dialogue about how this theater can be re-used. There's always alternatives and I know the Restore NY application is due May 4th, that's coming up very soon, but once that grant is in, and if there is full public support behind it, which includes the almost 2,500 people who have signed the petition online to support keeping the theater, we can throw that support behind Joe's project and a joint project that would develop offices and breath new life into the theater - whether it's as a theater or in some other adaptive re-use format.

First off, how many people here believe we should attempt to save the theater, raise your hands. So very large number of people. [to Jeff Buell: How many people does this chamber hold? Buell: One hundred and fifty] So we've got pretty much a full house. Most of 150 people are saying that they want to see the theater worked into this plan and we appreciate your being here to show that support. How many people have never been in Proctor's? A few have. How many people have been in Proctor's and remember from the old days?

What I'd like to do is take you through an historical walk through Proctor's so we can have a sense of what that space is like. It's a little dark in here but use your imagination and you can see it better. So, Friday night, you guys had a wonderful dinner at Lo Porto's Restaurant, you decide you're going to head across the street and see a double feature vaudeville show, Proctor's Theater, 1923. You come through this entrance. You come to this lobby. Again this is a little hard to see but this is the lobby. The lobby is pretty modest. This is the only part of the theater I think Joe Nicolla talked about would be saved. Honestly not the best part of the theater.

You come in through the mezzanine, and as the usher walks you down to your seats in one of the grand boxes to the side of the stage – below you to look down, and you see Rex Coury seated at the grand Wurlitzer organ ready to entertain you with the latest popular songs of the day. You look at your playbill, Proctor's Theater and down at the

grand stage, above you a beautiful mural of Lafayette's visit to Troy in 1824 painted by renowned artist David Lithgow. And out on the stage comes F.F. Proctor, comes to greet you, and F.F. Proctor has a few things to say. He tells you that the theater was built in 1914 at the cost of \$350,000. One is that in 1979 he's learned that his theater's going to be put on the National Register of Historic Places. It has national historical significance. Why? Because F.F. Proctor was the dean of vaudeville, the man was a pioneer in vaudeville. Because Proctor's Theater is the place where vaudeville shows and movies, the transition between the two took place with this pioneer.

And he explains to you that in 1914 he built the structure for \$350,000 using modern building techniques using ferrocrete and riveted steel I-beams. A diagram of the building shows us these massive balconies that are supported by steel I-beams. This building is not structurally unsound. In fact it is so structurally sound that this sign was on the front of Proctor's building for years [shows picture of bomb shelter sign]

Performers at Proctor's Bob Hope Jimmy Durante Jack Benny – many others that went around on the vaudeville circuit and performed here in the city. So what does the theater look like today – here are some pictures from a few weeks ago.

If you notice there is some damage, some water damage – but everything is straight and true still since 1914. This building was built to last centuries, a battleship of theaters. Considered by the National Register to be one of the finest theaters of New York State.

A view from the balcony

One of the murals that is still on the walls

The chandeliers which still hang from the ceilings

And a lot of the plaster work which is still intact

So, what is being proposed now is a double feature – offices and retail. What we are proposing is a triple feature – offices, retail and some re-use of the theater – This whole process came up suddenly last month and we have been scrambling to understand what development can be done for the future of the theater. So we don't have numbers for you tonight, but we do believe that there are alternatives and if we can work together and be unified as Joe suggested we can come up with a way to preserve this very important piece of Troy history.

The numbers that we do have: conservative yearly estimates show \$365,000 in revenue from the theater, \$320,000 revenue in retail and restaurant revenue downtown.

A lot of people say, well Proctor's, people have tried to develop it and it has not worked, it keeps failing. The really important element that has been missing in these redevelopment plans over the years has been the involvement of the community. It has only been through the involvement of the community that theaters, Proctor's in

Schenectady, the Palace in Albany, the Hudson Opera House, any of these great movie palaces that still stand across this land is because the people – the people of Troy, and other places, people have gotten involved and said we want to save our history.

And we would like that to be incorporated into that plan

Preservation makes economic sense. For every million dollars spent on renovation in New York State, ten full-time jobs will be created in one year. \$560,000 in income, \$36,000 in local tax and \$35,000 in state taxes. These numbers are from an accredited preservation group.

Renovation of the building also leads to historic tax credits – 20% historic tax credits which you don't get if the theater is demolished, you lose total access to those and that is on the state and federal level. So, demolition equals no tax credits.

We also have the issue of the money that will be spent on demolition. Wouldn't it be wiser to take that money that is going to be spent on demolition to take that money and spend it to begin a restoration project.

We also know that Troy has plenty of vacant sites for new construction. If we are talking a five-story office building, why does it need be on the site of a historic National Register theater?

Why can't we find another location for that office building? Again we would love to have that office building and have the workers shopping and eating in our restaurants, but why can't we have it all? There has to be a creative way that we can maintain the theater and have the offices.

Talk about viability of the theater – some people say well, it isn't viable because we are oversaturated with theaters in the area. We have nothing like Proctor's on this side of the Hudson. And if viability is a question – then why would EMPAC have been built?

RPI saw fit to spend between 150 to 220 million to build EMPAC – a great addition to the city.

The other way to think of the theater is like a loss leader in a supermarket. Yes, perhaps the theater struggles – but with donations and government support it is still able to keep running. But think of it like that cheap 50 count bag of clams you can get for 5 bucks in the market. It brings people in to buy more and that is the effect that proctor's has had in Schenectady. It may have lost \$300,000 but what was the net effect on the whole ecosystem of the downtown?

I think that anyone who has been to Schenectady recently realizes that without Proctor's there nothing is going on. And before we take the really (pause) reckless step of destroying the theater.

The public supports renovation – most of the people here tonight, by the show of hands support saving the theater. And now we are up to 2,400 signatures on the petition to save the theater. Most of them are local, most from Troy but we have reached out and people from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences have signed, Leonard Maltin the movie reviewer has signed, people from Belgium people from France have signed because they realize how important this theater is. And if we let it go, that's it. We all know that if this place goes, it is gone forever. So before we take the step to say let's knock it down and put up the office building let's look at all the alternatives and possibilities.

The petition can also be used in support of RestoreNY funding. It is structured in such a way that it says we don't want it for demolition but we do want the money. Joe is absolutely correct that Troy needs that RestoreNY money preservation group we are not opposed to that. We want to put our full support and we hope the public will put their full support behind getting that restoration money for Troy.

We look forward to the next steps with RPI, with Columbia and the city government – We hope that everyone will be open to meeting and discussing with us and seeing if there are other options. Joe, I would like to ask you right now if we can meet sometime in the near future to discuss possibilities.

[Nicolla:"tomorrow"]

OK, great. We would love to do that. And who is here from RPI? Mr. Rounds, would you also be open to sitting down with us?

[Rounds: "If the city and Columbia development are at the table, we will be at the table."]

Great.

I really quickly want to run you through some pictures of theaters we have lost in Troy. The Bijou, the Lansing, the Gaiety, the Griswold theater, Shea's theater, Rand's opera house, the Troy. The last standing great movie house of Troy is Proctor's and if we don't take steps now, if we don't act in a creative and forward thinking way we will be destroying an incredible part of our city's history.

And we all love Troy for its history and we know that Troy's future is in its past. So I hope that all of you will join me and work together as suggested to make sure that we keep this part of Troy. Thank you.
(applause)

Sondra Little: We now begin the public comment part of the hearing. Come up to the mike in an orderly fashion. We are going to keep you to a five minute time period. If you hear the bell (rings), everyone hear that? ... (indiscernible)

Annie Borthwick:

Hello, I'm Annie Borthwick. I live at 2148 Fifth Avenue. I married a Trojan and came to Troy as his wife in 1969. I saw a movie last at Proctor's in 1975, all wrapped up in blankets because there was no heat. But it does mean I was in it when it was still in business. I came to Troy early enough, visiting my future husband in 1964, to see Troy before all the empty worn out buildings were pulled down. So I saw a lot of things that could have stayed up but didn't. When we moved here a lot of things burned down, either due to water damage, or left to fires, or to arson. I think an awful lot of arson happened in 69, 70, 71 and 72. I also was here for urban renewal, and one of the things that concerned me very much was in urban renewal when they tore down a lot of downtown, one of the pieces torn down was half of the Frear building. I think they were going to tear down all of the Frear building. And there was a big attempt to save the two sections of the Frear Building. One section got saved. The other section we were unable to save, and it took the demolition a week to two weeks to tear down. It was very, very difficult to tear down, it was so well built. We all know that parts of the Atrium look good, and parts of the brick structure that surrounds it, are pretty boring, so to me I think that if there's a way to save all or part of this grand theater, it's something that we should really try to do. Thank you. (applause)

Unidentified man:

The point here is Troy doesn't really have any entertainment. In order for Troy to be viable, I'm not talking about the beautiful Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, or EMPAC – they have a specific purpose. I'm talking about commercial entertainment, and Proctor's is the only viable possibility. Now, all we have to look at is the progress in Schenectady, the progress in Albany with the Palace. They have taken a nice old theater that really is not in the center and slowly kept on meticulously restoring it piece by piece. It's got a long way to go, but that's something else. If you don't have it, you can't do anything with it. We have this, and this is Restore NY. I find that a very depressing condition when you talk about restoring something and in the same time you're really destroying it. The point here it is it can be done. You don't have enough to attract an audience to downtown. Trojan Hardware is going out of business. This is going to repeat itself and repeat itself. Proctor's offers many opportunities if we can take time. We have RPI, the students have no place to go for movies. We have institutions in this area looking for a home, including the Empire State Institute. If they have a chance for chipping in and cooperating, for Lake George Opera could have a winter home. It doesn't take much except imagination to realize we can have something. I'm always probusiness. At the same time business by itself is not going to sustain the community. You need an after business life. It's time to stop demolition first of all. Find investors to invest in the theater itself. To lose sight of this as a cornerstone would be a failure to business, life is not all work. I have been there many times. I know what's there, and it's a shame that it's been neglected so long. But we can stop that. We have to save what we have. Maybe not right now. Maybe now is the time to concentrate on the business aspect of the building, but in no way should we make Proctor's nothing like it was. It needs time. I think the administration's gone about this in a very poor way. That they're not getting public opinion. I haven't seen any figures on what they're going to do. It's not that we doubt the words of the presenters that were here. The point here is I want to find out

what the city is going to invest a lot of money in. Please consider that once you start you have to finish. But if you're going to finish first, you must first finish.

Thomas Aldrich:

Good evening. My name is Thomas Aldrich and I was born and raised right here in Troy. I'm 61 years old. I remember going to Proctor's when I was a kid, paying 15 cents to get in, 20 cents for a big bucket of buttered popcorn. You couldn't better spend 35 cents. We've got so much office space in Troy right now. From what I understand you're going to bring 150 jobs here. I believe the Chasan building would fit that well. It's just a shame. We've got so many small businesses that are closing downtown, yet we have no people coming downtown. We've got nothing to bring them downtown. Sure you've got Lo Porto's, but that's the last anchor on Fourth Street right now. We need something else to draw people downtown, and I believe that Proctor's could do that. I'm sure that with putting some kind of mixed use venue in there it would draw the people downtown. Please take this into your consideration. Thank you. (applause)

Jim Foster (?):

I'm Jim Foster (?) I've been here in Troy for forty years. I understand that you're trying to use the space for retail and office space. I simply had a question. Has anybody done an inventory of how much vacant or free office and retail space already exists in Troy? And if not, why not?

Karl Moschner:

Good evening I'm Karl Moschner. I'm at 169 Second Street. I'm also the president of Troy Chromatic Concerts. While I applaud efforts to save Proctor's, I don't know that it's viable. And that's one of the key questions. I see a lot of people here ready to support Proctor's, but it needs cash. Troy Chromatics, The Music Hall, NYSTI, EMPAC, the other venues around the area, Proctor's in Schenectady, The Palace Theater, we've probably all seen reductions in attendance. I don't know what the plan is if you want to create a performing arts center. I was in there too, back in '74, seeing third run movies, and it is really a shame. This was THE prime Proctor's theater, but that was the time to save it. Is it possible or viable now, sure. So I'd like to see some business plans, if that's the proposal. Otherwise I think it's time for the city to set some deadlines. Proctor's has been on the market, in a sense, since mid-seventies, late seventies. It's time to fish or cut bait on this. I don't want to see this let go, absolutely not, but I think this needs an imaginative solution. Again, a lot of people have tried, and a lot of people with money have tried, and looked at it, and basically walked away, so I don't know what your options are. One thing I would suggest is that the city is, if you're going to put money on the table, you should offer it to both sides. The first plan is not necessarily the best plan. Set a timetable, let's do it. There's bound to be hard feelings on either side, which I worry about. Thank you. (applause)

Tom McGarf (?):

Hi my name is Tom McGarf from Brunswick Apartments, top of Hoosick Street. I have a personal connection to Proctor's, though I was too young to actually have seen things

there. My great grandfather was stage manager there, Horatio Roselles (sp?), for about 25 years, ran the first motion picture machine from Troy. I'm here to speak in support of restoring this area especially from a young person's perspective. I'm thirty. There's plenty in my age group looking for someplace to go, someplace to see a good show, see movies on this side of the river. We'd be happy to have this place if the restoration would be done and give them our money there.

Angela De Cox (?):

Hi I'm Angela De Cox (?) I grew up in Sycaway, I live at the bottom of Hoosick Street now. I apologize for being late. I didn't hear what everybody had to say. What I did hear, I do like the idea of the theater part, having the theater there, offices, and retail. From what I remember when Mayor Tutunjian was running for office and saying we were trying to keep a way of RPI and Sage colleges to stay in Troy, have the students be here, bring business in to keep the economy in Troy going. So now I look around and say, there isn't really a whole lot of jobs, there's a lot of markets, there's places to eat, there's things that have happened to Troy that do look good. But as far as just building an office, I just got laid off from a building that was constantly building offices, and is still building offices, but there's no work. Do you have jobs listed? I would like to see Proctor's be repaired. Work would be great and shops would be wonderful.

Carrie Jefts (sp?):

My name is Carrie Jefts and I actually work at Union College but live in Troy. A lot of people ask me why I don't live in Schenectady and it's because Troy has a lot to offer that Schenectady doesn't, that Albany doesn't, that Saratoga doesn't, in that there's a lot of enthusiastic people within the city of Troy. There's also a strong arts community in Troy and I don't think that keeping the theater should be seen as a sort of competition to other venues. I think it's more of an asset. Arts organizations work better when there's groups. The city of Troy has become an arts destination within the Capital District and over the dispersed areas for its arts activities, and I think that the arts can revitalize communities, so if there's a way to make this project go ahead, you would be very wise to support our chance.

Keith Holmes:

I'm Keith Holmes, I'm a developer in Troy. I have about 12,000 square feet I'm converting to live/work space for artists and I want to thank Columbia for having interest in Troy. I think it's a very important thing to hear public voices. We bid on the Proctor's and Chasan properties through RPI, and we were one of two or three developers to do so. Our idea was to an adaptive re-use of the theater, as a science and engineering museum. We were going to convert the Chasan building to a commercially viable use and that proposal is working its way through SEFCU, and I don't know where it's going to go. I think to knock down the theater would be a travesty. While I'm a real estate developer I'm a preservationist at heart. I think we should have a period where we move forward with the grant, but then have a 60-90 day period to solicit proposals from other developers and architects and the general public in Troy to see how the area could be developed. One of the things that I wanted to point out is that with Joe's proposal to do a

55,000 – 58,000 square feet, but I actually think the proposal should focus on redeveloping the Chasan building first, and give the theater a five to seven year plan to make it viable. At that point if the theater is not a viable arts center, look for alternatives.

I also wanted to point out that in my proposal, a portion of the proceeds from the Chasan building, some of the cash flow from this office would go to the theater. I think there are ways to support a public theater organization. I can't get too technical and deep with it in five minutes, but the cash flow from the Chasan building would be roughly \$100,000 a year, and that could go to support the theater operations. Everybody says Proctor's in Schenectady won't money, this won't make money, but there are ways to support the operations. So I think we should concentrate on the Chasan building first, secure the Restore NY grant, for five million dollars, restore this building, give it an opportunity to succeed. Lastly I want to read a letter from my mom.

I am what I call a son of a Trojan. My mom was from Adams Street in Troy, my dad went to RPI. She grew up on Adams Street and went to Proctor's many times. I just want to read her letter. As a child long ago I delighted in shopping in all the stores in Troy and going to the movies at Proctor's. It made me feel special to be seated in the elegant balcony seats of this once magnificent theater. The experience was, quote, magical. As an adult, I accept that time has changed and a once bustling city can no longer afford the luxury of such a place. But it is our place and part of our memory, and it is ours to cherish as part of our historic heritage. Adaptive re-use of it could certainly add to the growth of downtown in so many wonderful ways. Please look at the possibility of the space as a science museum for young adults and the general public. We have a thriving monument to science nearby but nothing to captivate a rapidly changing world. Many graduates of RPI, MIT and Union have contributed (bell rings)... Thanks. (applause)

Richard Herrick:

Good evening. Richard Herrick, 29 Second Avenue. I'd first like to say that I oppose the use of any Restore NY money to destroy Proctor's theater. (applause) Who can save the great space. Let's think about this. What is a friend of Proctor's anyway? They're us. They're people who believe in the power of Troy's past and we believe in the future vision of a thriving Troy downtown. Yes, we think Proctor's can be saved. It is something that can be done.

The friends envision a bright future and we decided to take action to work in a collaborative manner with Rensselaer and with Columbia Development. Columbia Development is one of the premier construction development companies in the United States and I have the highest respect for Mr. Niccolla and I hope to sway him a little bit by working with him. So what's the vision of a friend of Proctor's? To empower citizens, you. To create a movie theater, a performance space, to create artists' resident studios in the front part of the building, so that Troy, in conjunction with the EMPAC center could provide housing for the hundreds of Master of Fine Arts which will be graduating. And what better place for them to do their future artistic work in Troy, New York. I think the vision of the friends of Proctor's, and Rensselaer, and Columbia should

be to provide space for the public to experience the joy of watching a movie, an old fashioned Broadway production once in a while. All the while, it stimulates the local economy by hundreds of thousands of dollars, in fact by millions of dollars a year by making sure a real destination point. The restaurants and shops.

What's the vision of Friends of Troy, we hope to forge friends not only with Columbia but we also hope to form alliances with other not for profit groups. The Troy 100 Forum, the Troy Downtown Collaborative, The Troy Redevelopment Corporation, Rensselaer Colleges of course, the Sage Colleges of course, Hudson Valley Community College of course to create a vibrant, 24 hour downtown Troy. A theater can do that. I've made several suggestions that some people have heard but let me present it again. Rensselaer currently houses the Lighting Institute in a leased building. You don't own the Gurley Building, you lease it. So why not move the Lighting Institute into space which you currently own? It makes economic sense for Rensselaer to do this. Envision if you will the construction of floors within the theater space itself. Construct two office floors in there and these floors would overlook the stage and create a tremendous opportunity for students coming to study at the Lighting Institute. Mr. Niccolla noted that this can be done and I think the simple way to do it is, but it will cost a couple million dollars more. All we do is increase our grant application to \$7 million to get the money to save the interior of Proctor's Theater. We can work with the New York State Theater Institute. It's a theater that this city, the mayor, and the city council recently passed a resolution, urging the state to keep this world class theater for our children in Troy. (bell) I can't agree more. I guess my time is up. Thank you. (applause)

Twyla Madsen (sp?):

I'm Twyla Madsen. I finished a Masters at RPI in Urban and Environmental Studies in 1979, at which time at which time President Reagan wiped out planning jobs all over the country, and my professors told me go west, the Northeast is dying and we're tearing down this town anyway. So I went west and I would like to share with you some of the towns I visited that were if you can believe it more grubby than Troy. I watched what happened when the people got together after the horrible riots in Los Angeles. There was one particular person in South Central, Magic Johnson, who built Magic Johnson Theater for his community. There was one wealthy man in that terribly distraught section. He hired minority kids in the worst neighborhood of the city, dressed them in fancy uniforms at this beautiful building -- we have what can be a beautiful building -- and gave them jobs, pride, the community around them began to come back again. Magic Johnson since then has joined AMC theaters and TGIF restaurant chain.

In Burbank, another grubby town, nothing was happening. Somebody built a multi-lex with twelve theaters, little bitty places. The businesses in the surrounding areas, such as old antique shops that sold old movie scripts came back to life. And believe me, since it was the only one around, that old town started to burble again. Pasadena was so awful that it was the center of homeless people, like other little towns around here I've heard about. We don't have one homeless shelter in the whole county, and they won't even allow it to be in the city of Troy, has to be in Rensselaer. So the fact that we have homeless, unserved people is as much a disincentive as the lack of a theater or the lack of

businesses.

So I would like to recommend a cooperation between all the human services people to work with all those who want to preserve Proctor's, because in the town of Pasadena, they had built a multiplex theater behind the businesses and they were moving in top grade, rich retail stores. Not just little retail. This meeting tonight is to help people have a dialogue. We only have two weeks. We all admire the work that's been done so far, but let's keep in mind as this thing progresses that everybody can work together and take some little part of the problem, because of all of these problems impact the theater itself. It may end up that all we can do for Proctor's for the good of the cause, which everybody hates to think of, but it may be the best we can do is to produce a memorial book for Proctor's theater, all the people here write their stories, in pictures, we produce a nice glossy book, sell the book, make a lot of money, and develop a new entertainment center. So like Pasadena on a Friday, Saturday night, you have to hang onto your friend, to keep from getting lost, it would be so crowded, but that's because people worked together. I thank you. (applause)

Steve Rein:

Steve Rein 118 Second Street Troy, and I appreciate the efforts of Columbia Development to try and preserve as much of Proctor's as we can, but I think that you can't just knock that theater down without making every effort you can to mobilize the community, mobilize whatever we can to at least hold that theater in the shape it's in. It seems like it's not in danger of falling down. It perfectly sound. What I hope we could do is to make a plan for getting the Restore NY grant dedicated towards the Chasan part and the front part of the Fourth Street side, and maintain, just hold the theater while we work on a plan to see if we can possibly bring that back. I realize that it's a difficult thing to start up a theater. It's financially difficult to make it viable, but I just don't think we can go wrecking ball first and hope for the best. I'd gladly offer my time, and I do restoration work myself. I'd do whatever I can to pitch in. I see a lot of friends around here, most of them are working on buildings too, so we've got some skills in this room. I just hope that we could try to get that grant money but save the theater as long as we possibly can. If it has to come down in the end, it has to, but let's not do that first. (applause)

Jon Flanders:

Jon Flanders 280 Tenth Street. I've lived in Troy since 1987 and I'm getting a little tired of coming down to City Hall to try save another building from being knocked down or totally re-oriented in some terrible way by people in suits who have a lot of money and think they can solve problems that way. Living in Troy for the last twenty years or so is a little bit like living in a slow motion train wreck. I see historic buildings coming down, Frieghoffer's, the façade of the theater on River Street, and in its place what goes up, drug stores, put up by almost bankrupt companies like Rite Aid for example on Hoosick Street. We have drug stores running all the way up to Walmart I definitely oppose destroying Proctor's. I think Troy has been the victim of tremendous economic forces: the automobile, the retreat to the suburbs, the flight of industry from the Northeast, eventually across the water like everything else, but you have to look at what you have

left. What you have left are historic buildings like Proctor's. With community elbow grease and sweat equity we can restore, with the collective effort of the citizens. Jim de Seve, to my mind is too kind to RPI. RPI made the decision, they own Proctor's, they could have spent a million dollars restoring it. They chose instead to build EMPAC up there on the hill, looks like some kind of giant spaceship to me. I don't think it has that much appeal to the working people of Troy. Frankly I think they would be intimidated by it. (applause) I'm sure some good things go on in there. Some things I could enjoy myself if I had the time. But Proctor's represented mass entertainment for the working people of Troy so it needs to be preserved. This is a historic working class town built by iron workers, laundresses, collar workers. That's is our heritage. Proctor's is part of that heritage and that is why it needs to be preserved. Thank you. (applause)

Marcy Haskell:

Marcy Haskell, Troy New York. The presentation was quite impressive, but we have to remember that Troy's an old city. Proctor's Theater is a landmark in the city, and we would like to keep it such. Furthermore I strongly feel that we're going to be putting in, from taxpayer dollars, over five million dollars, for a piece of property that we now don't own. I heard there's going to be jobs, well, there will be people working when they renovate the building, take it down, put whatever they want back up. The bottom line is how many jobs will be created over the years? Are we talking maybe 20, 25 people? We have businesses right now leaving the area for lack of retail business. We do not want that to happen. What I would like to see. We do not own the building, RPI does. Are we going to see the taxes on this property? Property, school, county?

What does the city get out of it? I'll tell you what I would like to see the city to get out of it is to restore it to the original. Last month I attended the Council meeting. On the agenda it says, from the grant, Restore NY communities Initiative grant program. The council voted in favor of it. I also would like to read an addition to where it says, revitalization plans for downtown Troy, it didn't say demolishing. The proposed financing is specific for the specific building or projects. The existing buildings – it didn't say demolishing them. When I read this I get the sense the money will be available if we renovated our buildings, and that's the way it should be.

And why should the taxpayers' dollars should be spent on property that they don't own? I can name you a few right now that probably the taxpayers dollars should be better used in other areas than into a building that we don't own. What guarantee do we have? Yes I am in favor of saving Proctor's Theater because it's one of our landmarks. I've lived here since 1953. It's a beautiful building, and just leaving the façade does not save -- anything else, you'll not recognize it. You'll see the façade, you'll say that this is where the Proctor's Theater was, but after it was all said and done, it won't even look like it was. I'm here tonight to tell you that we should preserve our buildings in the city of Troy. Thank you. (applause.)

Blaise Hartley:

Blaise Hartley 270 Pawling Avenue. I just wanted to bring up a couple points. I've been working with the Troy Proctor's group and I think everyone's willing to accept that there

are practicalities, and that a theater sitting by itself being run as a theater isn't necessarily the way it's going to end up. But I think what everybody wants is that the space itself could still have its historic value, because that will bring people to it. From a strictly practical point of view, looking outside the theater, assuming we run the theater, we have some numbers I put into a spreadsheet.

We've got some numbers that are very very conservative, modest attempts to use the space, assuming we could get the basic renovation done, nothing major: 25 events a year. We're talking ticket sales in the low hundreds per night. When we run those numbers, we show between 19,000 and 20,000 extra consumers in downtown Troy after 5 p.m. We're talking about making Troy a 18 hour city, making Troy a 24 hour city, what have you, putting consumers in our restaurants and our stores after hours, that does that. Even if it's only a couple hundred at a time, that makes a big difference. Hundreds of thousands, possibly millions of dollars in retail sales depending on how well the theater does. Even if we never get past the basic modest numbers, and we're talking about maybe ten movies a year. We're not talking major Broadway spectaculars or anything like that -- to bring 20,000 people a year to our stores. I don't think that's not feasible. I can't imagine why we couldn't find a way to make a theater work in downtown Troy. Thank you. (applause)

Paul Bouchey (sp?):

My name is Paul Bouchey (?) I live in Grafton, New York. For what it's worth, my family lives in the city and still does, since 1867. I remember right after college, after working up north for the summer, driving down River Street approaching the Green Island Bridge, and seeing half of the city gone. Flattened out, as though it was bombed during World War II. I remember talk of urban renewal going back to 1958, when there was a plan where the former Van Rensselaer Inn is now to do rehabilitation, rebuild the city after the train station was torn down.

Driving through the city tonight, I came through Lansingburgh, I drove around town, I looked at all of the empty retail store fronts. And all or part of the following buildings have office space available. The Hendrick Hudson. The Quackenbush, former Grant Building, god knows how many thousands of square feet are in that structure, which a developer is spending a considerable amount of money restoring the façade of. There's the Keenan Building, the Rice Building, and Trojan Hardware, and John Hedley's former Market Block. I don't know if people realize there are three huge halls on the second and third floors of that building.

I worked for almost fifteen years as a professional theatrical technician, I've been in theatrical marketing, I've been onstage, offstage, backstage and the back of the house. I've helped apply for grants from nonprofit theatrical organizations. I worked with the Lake George Opera Festival the year that Proctor's closed. We were approached. We never said no out of hand. At the time we were suffering our own financial setbacks, but it was something that the operator would have and might have pursued, had the city been more forward and more enthusiastic as a proposal and as an ongoing possibility. That did not happen.

One question was answered tonight and that was would this project proceed without the Restore NY five million dollar grant, and the answer we received, with all due respect was that Columbia Development has made a 66% commitment to this project, not a 100% commitment. If the five million doesn't show up, apparently, neither does Columbia. It's not as simple as let's fix up the barn and put on a show. It's also not as simple as pigeons have been living there for 32 years, let's tear the damn thing down. I worked on the restoration of the Cohoes Music Hall in the early 70's. That theater had been closed for 65 years with a leaky roof, and it's been semi-thriving, in some cases thriving dramatically ever since. I'm well-aware of the realistic considerations of restoration, preservation, declaration and ongoing running of any nonprofit arts facility and venue, whether it's used for producing, presenting, or a combination of them all. If Troy had no space, no empty lots, no vacant offices in historic buildings in various states of readiness to be developed, I'd say, well maybe Proctor's has to go. That is not the case. Why now? Why Proctor's? Why not look at the rest of the space, be it undeveloped land or existing buildings that can be and should be and ought to be turned into viable office and retail space. So my mixed feelings have changed tonight and in the last few days. You can always come back and revisit the tearing down of Proctor's. Once you tear it down, you cannot reconsider. Thank you. (applause)

Lindsay Schnieder (sp?)

I'm Lindsay Schnieder. I'm nine years old. I know I might be young, but I think it's a smart idea to at least try to save Proctor's.

Cari Schneider (sp?)

I'm Cari Schneider and I don't have too much to add to what's been said except that I know my friends from the Cohoes Music Hall who I hoped to have come speak here tonight, I spoke with them today and unfortunately they couldn't make it, it was rather short notice. I know they would agree with me that it is worth the effort to try to save the theater. Cohoes Music Hall, as the man who spoke before me noted, was in danger of demolition. It is now operating a full 12 months a year as a successful theater, doing excellent New York quality Broadway shows. They have a summer camp for children, theater camp, and it was also in threat of being demolished. I'm here to support restoring the theater. (applause)

Amy Halloran

I'm Amy Halloran and I live at 221 Tenth Street. When I moved home ten years ago I became a student of my city's demolitions. I researched the Uncle Sam Mall Project, the proposed arterial that was never built, the block of glorious houses that was between Fulton and Broadway on Fifth. These properties were all demolished with government funds, and plans for new structures fell through. The only demolition project that came to fruition was the Hoosick Street Bridge, and draws people out of the city. The site of the Atrium was a fenced in hole for seven years until Carl Grimm built the glass mall. I am afraid of putting more holes in our city. Recession polluted the economic climate in the 1970's, and we are facing the same stormy money weather. I think adaptive reuse is the safest and only answer for Proctor's. If you tear it down there's a chance that

nothing, absolutely nothing, will take its place. Bulldozers are a showstopper. (applause)

Charles (Thot?)

My is Charles (Thot?), 250 Third Street. I moved to town seven years ago. I took the time and went to the library and researched. This town was one beautiful place at one time. But now you're tearing down all your beautiful places, all your structures. This town is one, or was one of the most beautiful cities in New York State. But now, you got so many openings, holes, what are you going to do? Proctor's is one of the last beautiful buildings that's standing. It needs to be restored and open, and let the children of Troy have time to enjoy it.

Undiscernable name:

xxxx..27 Centerview Drive, and I'm a relative newcomer, having only been in Troy about 20 years. When we first came here one thing that struck me was as the last speaker mentioned the historic beauty of the city, and the significance. It was in a much more rundown condition then than it is now. I'm not a world traveler but I do have occasion to see some really great sights, and a few years ago, my family and I were in Southern Scotland. We went to a restored mill, exactly like the Cohoes Mills.

When we came back we said, this is really something, because they had set it up for people to go into the mills and see what it was like from the eyes of a child. And it was fabulous, it was a mill city. Shortly after that when we returned, two of the mills in Cohoes, one burned down and one just fell, because of no one taking care of it over the years. Another opportunity that I've had recently was going to New York City and taking a tour of the home of the Rockettes. I mention these things because other than Dubai and Walt Disneyworld, I think most tourists try to go to historic areas. They really aren't coming for new construction. Last week I had the opportunity to go to Savannah and I took a trolley tour around historic Savannah, and I was so excited. I'd been trying to go there for six years. And it was one of those things, off again, on again trolley, where you could get off, go see what you want to see, and get back on, for twenty five dollars. I was thrilled. It was a cheap day out. We had lunch.

As other speakers have mentioned, you need things to draw people to the city, and then people go there and spend money. We ended up shopping along River Street. We've lost Freighoffer's in Lansingburgh. Over in Cohoes, we've lost the mills I mentioned. There's no reason that this area can't have a trolley system that takes people around for twenty five dollars a day. We employ drivers, we employ the company that runs those trolleys. Proctor's theater could be a stop on that line, as well as many of the other fabulous historic things in the Capital District, most of which are in Troy. (applause)

Dave Fedder (?)

My name is Dave Fedder (?), I was born and raised here and I've been on a slow train wreck too all these years, watching all the buildings go away. I'm a professional actor. When I'm not working as an actor, I'm a remodeling contractor, so I see Proctor's from all sides. I recently spent two years touring a Broadway show. We played 44 cities, and of those 44 cities, 42 of them we played in restored, beautiful theaters like our Proctor's.

And the people showed such pride in those places it was unbelievable. They just loved them. They were like the hearts of their downtown cities. I was thinking, art is part of the word heart. You take away the art and you're left with E H, which is 'eh'. And that's what we would have. I think we owe Troy to save its heart. Thank you. (applause)

Denise Ciccado (sp?)

Denise Ciccado , 2522 Fifth Avenue, Troy. Many years ago when we were building the Atrium, we tore down many of downtown Troy's beautiful buildings. How many of us today still hear people say we should have never torn down those buildings. What a mistake we made at that time. Many cities around the country have the same sentiments. It destroys historical history and buildings that are going to bring Troy fast back to its glory. Let's not make that mistake again. Thank you. (applause)

Russell Ziembra

Good evening. My name is Russell Ziembra. I live at 1813 Highland Avenue in Troy. I've lived in Troy for 31 years and I chose to make this my home because it's a wonderful place. It's got marvelous architecture, I fell in love with that. It's pretty much the only city that has a real downtown. It has the best riverfront access of any city in the Capital District. It's remarkable that it has three colleges, two of which are outside of downtown, but it doesn't really capitalize on the students, doesn't have a college town feel. I think Proctor's will help bring students from Sage and RPI into downtown more and keep them from driving out to Colonie Center or Crossgates.

Proctor's is well-positioned. It's in walking distance of tens of thousands of people. It's on a bus line, several bus lines. It has a parking garage directly behind it that was built for it not too long ago. It's a great downtown. Although the Palace is a wonderful theater, there isn't much around it. Proctor's is in a better situation in Schenectady, but Proctor's in Troy is even better. Just recently I've been thinking about the needs of low income people because we've been applying for CDBG grants and Proctor's really qualifies for it, because it's at a venue that people can walk to, bus to. I would propose that if the theater was up and running, people could get discounts, seniors and children could go in for free. There's so many aspects of it. I'd like to thank the city for holding this. And for Columbia Development and RPI, for being here, and for listening to our plea.

Because I think that if there was a partnership between the city and Columbia and RPI and thousands of people who are interested in Proctor's and are willing to be volunteers, I think we could really make this project work. It's my understanding that SEFCU may be interested. I'm a member of SEFCU and I've been trying for years to get SEFCU to have a downtown Troy branch. I go over to the Albany branch that's in Arbor Hill on Clinton Ave. Why don't you have a branch in Troy? Oh we have a branch in Troy, on Hoosick Street. Well, that's not Troy, that's Brunswick. The Chasan building would be perfect for SEFCU – I think that was a bank building. The Troy branch, corporate headquarters up above, what an anchor, that would be fantastic. When RPI took over Proctor's many years ago, I know many of us were very excited. It's an enlightened institution, one of the high points of Troy, an institution that has money and appreciates the arts and history

and architecture and Troy. So we were very excited. I think that there still is a possibility to involve both dimensions. I would ask the city and RPI and Columbia to try to work with us. I know that if we got the theater stabilized, the roof was not leaking, the dangerous areas roped off, lead paint encapsulated, asbestos encapsulated, mold taken care of, we could get plenty of volunteers, people who care about it. Bringing people in there to do that would create an audience. Please work with us. We want to see Restore NY grants come to Troy. We want to see it happen. And I think we can do it if we all work together. (applause)

Geri de Seve

Geri de Seve, 1833 Fifth Ave, and I have lived here from the time I was born, so that's a number of years. I've been around to see a lot of changes in Troy. I saw it in its day when I was a kid, the streets were so crowded that you didn't dare let go of your mother's hands, because you would immediately be lost in the crowds. And I know that we've been through a lot of changes. Society has changed and people have moved to suburbs. I don't expect that we can instantly return to that, but people are starting to rethink moving to cities. Which we've seen in our own city. We have a lot of young, enthusiastic people moving back in. We still have some great architecture in Troy but boy we have lost a lot. I live a block away from where our train station used to be. And that was such a beautiful building. I look at what has replaced it and I want to cry. I don't know if everybody's seen the Raddock Building but I think they had to work hard to make it as ugly as they did. I'm very very nervous about people coming in and saying we want to take away what you have left.

Proctor's is a beautiful building. It's a beautiful structure. I've seen pictures that were taken recently in that walk through, it doesn't look bad at all. Yeah, it's a little way from fixing up the barn and putting on a show, but it's not that far. It is amazing to me how much is in tact. I tell you, I don't know if five million dollars would be enough to tear it down because I would bet you that it would be a very difficult structure to tear down. One of the things about us Americans is that we like to travel to Europe and look at all the ancient buildings.

I went to Prague recently and looked at buildings that were built in the fifth century. The theater that Mozart wrote his first opera in. People love their buildings there. They put a lot of money into their theaters, and these are poor countries. Why do we destroy them and then go someplace else to see them? Why not preserve ours and bring people here to see what we have? If you have seen Proctor's and have been there, then you understand. So many people have come here in support of this because they understand that this is our community, and we love our community. I think restoring Proctor's would bring us together as a community.

I ask that we not use Restore NY funds to destroy Troy. We've been doing a lot of that lately. The man from Columbia said they're going to restore that magnificent lobby. The lobby was nice but it's not the best part of the theater. Think about it. Restore the magnificent lobby to go to what, an office building? Come on. I mean cold space. Office space, new office space. Why would you restore the lobby? You're taking the

heart out of the building anyway if you tear it down. So don't give us this little song and dance about the lobby. I think we're smarter than that.

Don't take the heart out of this building. There's plenty of office space that surrounds it. It could make wonderful retail, office, theater space. We talk about all the different competitors – the EMPAC building, the Troy Music Hall, and I don't see them as competitors. I see it as critical mass to bring people here. There are lots of ways to re-use that building. So please think twice before you destroy our heritage. Thank you. (applause)

[Joe Nicolla returns to floor – not transcribed]

Question from audience member to Joe Nicolla: Will the gentleman entertain a question? Why not buy the Quackenbush building? Why not the old Mooradian's, the old Cluett and Peabody and the old Standard furniture building. The question that people have is why there? And the second question is why would you put a hotel on Hoosick Street instead of renovating a hotel downtown, which you turned into student housing, which would be better located up on Hoosick Street two blocks from campus. (applause) And the third question is how many drug stores does the city of Troy need? (applause)

Comment from audience member: Can I just say that there were people who tried to do things over the years. So you can't say no one tried anything. We haven't seen an economic plan for how much money you're going to spend. How much taxes you're going to spend.

Sondra Little: We will have additional public hearings. If anyone who hasn't had an opportunity to speak would like-

Jeff English

My name is Jeff English, I live at 6 Lansing Avenue. It was stated that theater development is not your thing, so maybe you're not the right developer for this site. (applause)

Sondra Little: We are closing down the public part of this hearing, the public portion. Again I want to reiterate that this will not be the final public hearing. There will be other opportunities to have input on this project. Thank you for your time and input.

[End Tape]