

Auditorium proceeds on two fronts

Clock tower and stairways eyed.

The City Hall Auditorium Restoration Committee is moving ahead on two separate phases of the project.

According to Helen Johnson, committee chair, plans for restoring the clock tower that once adorned the turret should be ready to go to the state for approval within 30 days.

In addition, the committee has chosen the installation of stairways as the first step in its effort to make use of the auditorium theatre more practical.

Committee members hired architect Arlan Kay to develop a phased approach to further restoration after they realized they had pretty much finished the smaller projects. The phases are intended to avoid having to re-do previous work and will be implemented as fund-raising efforts allow.

The committee chose the stairways because, once finished, they will allow the use of the upstairs theatre for up to 200 people at a time, as opposed to 35 at the present time.

"We're real excited about that," Johnson said. "The more people we can get up there, the more we can whet their appetite for the acoustics, and also for what could be (as restoration proceeds)."

Stairways for the west side of the building and also the southwest corner are being re-searched.

A fundraising committee will be established when plans are drawn.

Johnson said a revival of the old-time fiddler's contest held locally for many years is being considered as a fundraiser, possible in the fall.

Once the additional stairways are completed, attention will be turned to the possibility of an elevator, lobby, and restrooms at the northwest corner of the building.

Meanwhile, research is being conducted on the proper use of materials for the clock tower project, an effort which Johnson feels broadens the base of interest of the community.

"There are lots of people who aren't interested in restoring the theatre, but who do want the clock tower back on," she said.

The committee is seeking to borrow any old closeups of the tower, which came down in the early 1960's.

Plans for the clock tower should be submitted for state approval within 30 days.

— Arlan Kay graphic

