

ViewPoint

Editorial

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Gifted Playhouse

The announcement last week that the Bedford Playhouse has secured a major donation puts the project on a stronger financial footing as it nears a much-anticipated opening later this year. Congratulations are due to the Playhouse board of directors and staff for steering negotiations with Clive Davis, the legendary music producer, to a successful finale. In exchange for Mr. Davis' largesse, the Playhouse agreed to name in his honor an arts center within the broader complex that will house musical performances, art exhibits, theater and other non-film programming.

"Beyond all the other benefits of Clive's support and involvement, our ability to brand the Clive Davis Arts Center will help us convey that we're not just a beautifully renovated movie house, but also a vibrant cultural center," said John Farr, Playhouse founder, using the occasion of Mr. Davis' gift – for an undisclosed sum – to underscore the message he has delivered often about the theater's broader mission and potential.

In the high stakes world of big money donations, more than just dollars are at issue. Completing the deal with Mr. Davis, who has owned a home in Pound Ridge for decades, required Playhouse officials to win approval from the Town of Bedford for signage design prominently displaying the donor's name. After several tries, they succeeded in getting backing for a revised main sign from the notoriously hard to please Bedford Village Historic District Commission. Last Wednesday, the town's Zoning Board of Appeals approved a variance for the sign, sealing the deal terms with Mr. Davis and paving the way for the Playhouse announcement.

It has been more than three years since Mr. Farr issued a call to arms to preserve and renovate the theater, which opened in 1947. That initial effort yielded more than \$2 million in donations and met a critical deadline from the building owner to begin long-term lease negotiation.

Today, the total amount available for renovations and operating funds likely has swelled somewhere north of \$7 million, a figure based on past numbers and naming donation targets provided by the Playhouse and a reasonable estimate of Mr. Davis' "substantial" contribution. But don't put away your checkbooks just yet. The Playhouse is seeking new donors to participate in its seat-naming campaign in the main theater, one of three that will operate in the complex.

While nor'easters continue to roll through the area despite what the calendar says, fundraising for the Playhouse continues with equal force. Evidently, for the energetic and focused Playhouse leaders, fatigue is not a word written into the script.