



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Cohoes Launching Search for Management of Cohoes Music Hall**

**Cohoes, NY (April 30, 2020)** – The City of Cohoes has launched a search for a new management structure for its historic Cohoes Music Hall, with a plan to have a new contract in place by August 1, 2020.

“We are looking for a creative, innovative, management team to operate the Cohoes Music Hall in a financially sustainable way,” Mayor Bill Keeler said.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cohoes Music Hall has been closed since March and, like other performance venues, is not anticipated to be able to resume public performances for the foreseeable future.

“I am planning for the time, perhaps 2021, hopefully sooner, when the lights are back on and the seats are filled. I envision an eclectic mix of professional and community programs – theater, music, comedy, dance – that will appeal to people of all ages and interests. None of that would be possible if we did not take the actions we are taking now,” Mayor Keeler said.

The City today issued a “Request for Proposals” (RFP) from qualified entities – due May 21, 2020 - to provide management operations at the Cohoes Music Hall. Proposals will be rated on:

- how the respondent’s plan fits with the City’s mission to bring arts and commerce to downtown;
- how the plan contributes to the greater Cohoes arts community;
- how the proposed activities at the Music Hall would be integrated with programming for local youth and schools;
- the creativity, innovation, uniqueness or interest of the proposal;
- the depth of experience of the respondents; and
- the anticipated direct financial impact of the proposal on the City of Cohoes.

“We are deeply committed to having a vibrant Cohoes Music Hall, and we will, with the support, enthusiasm and dedication of our community and the many other people I have heard from across the region who cherish our music hall,” Mayor Keeler said.

### **Background**

Seeking \$200,000 in savings, on Tuesday April 28<sup>th</sup> the Common Council unanimously supported Mayor Keeler’s proposal to cancel the contract for the Music Hall Arts Alliance, the company that manages the Cohoes Music Hall, and for the Park Playhouse, the organization that produces programming both for the Cohoes Music Hall and for Canal Square Park. Those contracts will end July 31, 2020.

“The structure of existing contracts for management and programming at the Cohoes Music Hall were not financially sustainable, particularly when it is not possible to have performances,” Mayor Keeler said.

“The audited net cost of these two contracts to the City of Cohoes over the last two fiscal years, from January 2018 to December 2019, was \$429,362,” City Comptroller Michael Durocher said. In addition, there was a shortfall in anticipated ticket revenues, the city’s portion of ticket sales were paid late or not at all, and rent was regularly not paid on a timely basis. That situation was only magnified by the fallout from the pandemic.

“Though it is not possible to host performances in the theater in the next several months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are using this time wisely to restructure the operations of the Cohoes Music Hall in a way that honors its rich history, becomes part of our economic recovery, and is sustainable well into the future” Mayor Keeler said in announcing his proposal to cancel the contracts.

“In addition to being a hub for the Cohoes arts community, the Cohoes Music Hall is an essential component for the vitality of our downtown. By seeking a more fiscally sustainable path forward for the management of the Cohoes Music Hall Mayor Keeler is ensuring that the music hall will continue to operate on secure footing for years to come,” said Cohoes Economic Development Director Steve Napier.

### **History of the Cohoes Music Hall**

The Cohoes Music Hall is the 4<sup>th</sup> oldest operational music hall in the United States. Constructed in the center of the business district 1874, with the grand opening in November 23<sup>rd</sup> with a performance of London Assurance, the Cohoes Music Hall operated until 1905. Located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of what was then The National Bank of Cohoes, the theater was shuttered and no one set foot in it again for 60 years. In 1968 the bank ceded the building to the city of Cohoes for \$1, the community raised funds for its restoration, and it reopened with a performance of London Assurance on March 7, 1975.

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