

Opinions

OUR VIEW

Time will tell if city made right choice

Color us skeptical, but willing to be swayed.

The decision by Rochester City Council to award operation of the historic Chateau Theatre to Exhibits Development Group seems out of step with the community's desire for the building.

From the time the city purchased the Chateau, talk was that this could be a center for the performing and visual arts. Oh sure, other ideas (a visitors' center, etc.) cropped up from time to time, but it seems to us the community thought that for a \$6 million investment (including \$500,000 from Mayo Clinic), the Chateau should be made available for local residents to perform and to enjoy performances.

That's especially the case given what appeared to be an impressive presentation by Rochester-based Arts Trust of Minnesota to make the Chateau a center for live theater and other entertainment. Rochester's

burgeoning performing arts scene is scraping to find spaces for classes, rehearsals, storage and performances.

In other words, the Chateau and the Arts Trust of Minnesota seemed to be made for each other. "The future usage was going to be a theater, and that is why I thought the ATOM proposal fit in better for the learning of how this would work or wouldn't work," said council member Patrick Keane.

However, the majority of the city council saw it differently, and opted for the plan by Exhibits Development Group to present a variety of exhibits that will be combined with related events and performances. It's an intriguing proposal, but is it right for the Chateau? Or might it be better located in an exhibit hall at Mayo Civic Center?

City officials said they like the proposal's potential to have something of interest, especially for Mayo

ON WEDNESDAY: Rochester needs a voice on 'U' regents board.

Clinic visitors, in the Chateau every day. That, rightly or wrongly, will only confirm talk around town that Destination Medical Center-related projects are primarily about visitors rather than local residents. While we don't entirely buy that sentiment, we do understand it.

The next step for the city is to negotiate a contract with Exhibits Development Group, which is seeking \$230,000 in further public investment in the Chateau.

Time will tell if the council made the correct decision for the Chateau. Keep in mind, though, that this setup is really only an interim step to get something going in the Chateau before a permanent use is determined three years down the road.

So again, color us skeptical—but



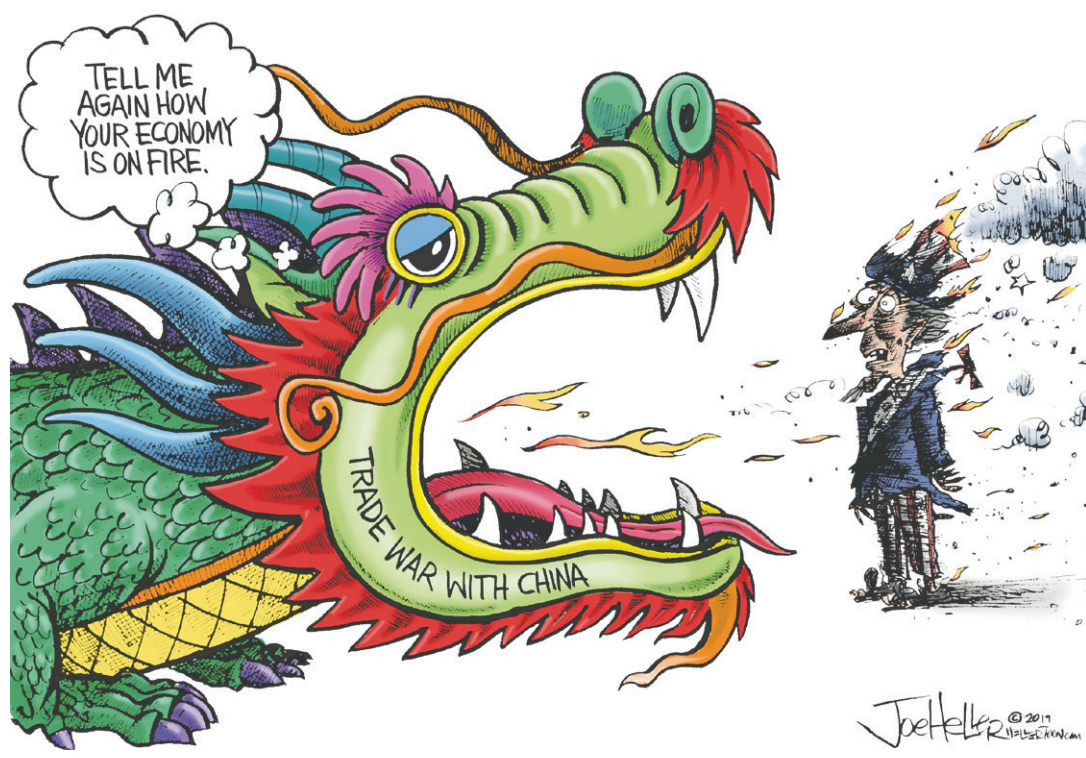
Post Bulletin file photo

The Chateau Theatre opened in 1928 as a vaudeville theater.

hopeful.

Meanwhile, we hope the mayor and city officials are sincere when

they say they want to work with Arts Trust of Minnesota to find more space for performing arts groups.



Arts Trust of Minnesota will continue work to find space for more art

BY MISHA JOHNSON

The City of Rochester purchased the beautiful iconic Chateau Theatre building in 2016 and pursued plans to restore it to its original glory as a performing arts theatre.

As part of this process, the city sought proposals to activate this space temporarily until the final plans could be realized.

The Arts Trust of Minnesota (ATOM) was born from a hope to be the bridge between now and then, in addition to serving a real need in Rochester among local arts organizations seeking space in which they could thrive.

When the Rochester City Council decided to move forward with the museum group Exhibits Development Group, ATOM walked away from the meeting feeling heard and encouraged. Council members Patrick Keane and Michael Wojcik both voted in favor of our proposal, and Mayor Kim Norton said "I am committed to working with the arts community to continue to create different venues."

Even more encouraging are the numerous emails, social media posts and citizens reaching out with a desire to keep this "movement" alive. Why are so many excited? Why is this so important right now? It's not just about the Chateau. It's about the people.

Rental rates for performance venues throughout town are cost prohibitive to the majority,



Andrew Link / alink@postbulletin.com

Concerts at The Castle in downtown Rochester are popular and are selling out, evidence of a growing need for art performance space, the Arts Trust of Minnesota says.

and The Rochester Civic Theatre's recent decisions to move into hiring more professional out-of-town equity actors and directors, has created void for local artists. ATOM became a natural consortium for our more than 20 community organizations.

The local arts scene is thriving! Both Rochester Civic Theatre and the Rochester Repertory Theatre are selling out their performances. The new Castle Community is selling out its concerts. That means there is an audience for this programming, there is room to grow, and there is absolutely no reason why such growth should be equivalent to a competition between venues.

Sue Schnell from The Rochester Repertory theatre said, "We are the third-largest city in Minnesota with well over 100,000 potential theatre attendees, along with a large number of guests and their families that visit Mayo every year.

Offering them a wide variety of theatre options is what we should be working toward."

A city that has more arts and cultural organizations equals a city burgeoning with more diverse programming, including but not limited to: theatre, indie movies, concerts, chamber music, art exhibits and cultural events. More art equals more art, and it only serves to further enrich our community.

ATOM believes when we support each other, we all benefit. ATOM will continue our search for space as that is a need that will not dissipate.

We contacted city officials the morning after the May 6 council meeting to follow up on their expressed commitment to find a viable space for our growing arts community. We look forward to what is next!

Misha Johnson is the executive director of Immersion Youth Repertory and a Arts Trust of Minnesota board member.

Trump's economic show goes on

"We're doing trade deals that are going to get you so much business you're not even going to believe it," President Trump told an American Farm Bureau Federation meeting in January. The attendees cheered.

Meanwhile, farmer income for the first three months of this year fell almost \$12 billion. Farmers account for only 2 percent of all employed Americans, but the drop-off in their income was such that it suppressed the entire nation's personal income growth number for March.

I'm convinced that even as Trump recharges the trade war responsible for so much pain, his many fans in agricultural America would still whoop at his punch lines. If they didn't stop long ago as their misery mounted, why would they now?

You've got to hand it to Trump. His talent for seducing and entertaining his audiences is extraordinary. That takes genuine skill, and it's also a useful means to hide a less impressive reality: Trump campaigned as a genius deal-maker who would spread his magic formula for getting rich across the land.

Trump's supporters ignored evidence to the contrary. His six bankruptcies were public knowledge. Way back in 1987, as Trump's Atlantic City investments were crashing, The Philadelphia Inquirer ran a headline reading "Bankers Say Trump May Be Worth Less Than Zero." A new report in The New York Times documents a decade of carnage (1985 to 1994), when Trump lost over \$1 billion.

In 1988, when he lost almost \$47 million, he announced, "If the world goes to hell in a handbasket, I won't lose a dollar." In 1990, when he lost over \$400 million, he said, "It's been good financially."

And his skilled spinning has hypnotized a usually sophisticated media into declaring this an era of amazing economic prosperity. Many of the indicators show strong growth for sure, but a look at the graphs of the decadelong expansion portrays the Trump years as mostly a



FROMA HARROP

continuation of the Obama years. In terms of job creation, they're not as good. The much-heralded jobs number for April was indeed welcome. It brought the average number of jobs created during the 28-month Trump presidency to 202,000 a month. But in Obama's last 28 months, job growth averaged 220,000 a month. In 2014, he could have bragged of an average 251,000 a month but didn't.

To soundtrack to the news of 3.2 percent economic growth for the first quarter, Trump activated the nation's marching bands. Under Obama, however, the quarterly gross national product quietly surpassed 3 percent growth eight times. In four of the quarters, it rose 4 percent or better.

In not-so-good news, the deficit under Trump will jump from 3.5 percent of the economy in 2017 to 5.1 percent in 2019. Piling up debt in good times will make digging out of bad times harder.

Back in the heartland, farm income rose in December only because the government sent out checks to cover some losses caused by the trade war. To be fair to Trump, farmers were also hurt by low prices for their commodities. And some confrontation with China was needed to change its unfair trading practices.

Unfortunately, Trump has been taunting the Chinese. He accuses them of wanting to delay negotiations until a "very weak" Democrat is president. That's entertainment mode, not business mode.

Trade deficits are a much-misused measure of economic health. But since they are one of Trump's favorite yardsticks, do note that the U.S. trade deficit has reached its all-time high under him.

Humiliating the other side is not a clever negotiating tactic, assuming results are the goal. A businessperson would want to close the deal. An entertainer wants the show to go on.

Follow Froma Harrop on Twitter @FromaHarrop. She can be reached at fharrop@gmail.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Minnesota will never be a Kansas

Climate is always changing; however, there are many micro climates within our state of Minnesota.

There was an article in the January Agri-News issue, with the title of "Will Minnesota be the new Kansas?"

The people that were used in that article have so much egg on their face. These were professors and teachers from the U of M and the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. February through April, we had a total of 86.5 inches of snow and the old record was 85.1 inches.

I doubt we will be a Kansas because they are many miles south.

In the long run, Medicare for all pays off

In reply to Jim Hagedorn's health care thoughts in the paper April 27.

Let's have two companies purchase 10 cars for their needs. One in Thunder Bay and one in Duluth.

The Duluth company takes the position that just filling up the gas tanks is enough and does no preventive care — doesn't change the oil or filters and doesn't replace air filters "because we can't afford to do all that."

The Thunder Bay company goes by the book doing maintenance. Oil and filters get changed. During the winter, the cars get the underside flushed of road grime and salt. If a fender gets nicked, the bare metal gets a dab of paint.

Figure 10 years and 120,000 miles go by.

We traveled from the Dallas area to St Charles. In one day. In Dallas, the leaves were already out on many trees and in northern Oklahoma there were flowering plums. This was on April 9. The buds north of Kansas City were smaller at a roadside stop. We did stop at a roadside stop a mile north of Ames, Iowa. It was cold and the forecast was for a snow storm across southern Minnesota.

My wife and I decided to drive to St. Charles. We did see the beginnings of snowdrifts alongside the roadway about 35 miles south of Mason City, Iowa.

Don Snyder, ST. CHARLES

Which cars are still going to be on the road?

Granted the Thunder Bay company will have paid out many dollars in maintenance. But at the end of those 10 years, the cars will have cost much less overall because none have lost a motor or transmission, and the fenders won't be rusting away.

Does it not make as much sense for everyone to have health care from Day One?

Because of Canada's health care system, the men in Thunder Bay live an average of three years longer than in Duluth — same for the women. Infant mortality rates are lower in Canada.

We can afford Medicare for all of us.

Michael McTigue, ST. CHARLES

IF IT MATTERS TO YOU, IT MATTERS TO US

POSTBULLETIN

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