

Hello again! This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Wednesday, August 7, 2024 beamed in from the *Jefferson County Beacon* for KPTZ 91.9FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

After a series of setbacks, the Rose Theatre is in need of tending because like its namesake, the Rose requires attentive care to continue to blossom. After surviving a small fire in a popcorn machine at the beginning of July, last month ended with a much darker mechanical problem. On Saturday, July 27, the projector went down for the Rose Theatre's oldest and most lucrative screen during the opening weekend of this summer's Marvel blockbuster. In response, owner George Marie said she broke down crying. Those tears come after struggles far beyond any one day's challenges.

The movie industry as a whole is still suffering from the drought of pandemic shutdowns and the dual strikes of both actors and writers that put a stop to film production. Domestic box office sales peaked at \$11.9 billion in 2018 before plunging to \$2.1 billion in 2020. After a comeback to only around \$9 billion in 2023, projections for this year have been hobbled by the impact of the strikes. Analysts believe sales for 2024 may reach little more than \$8 billion, a year-over-year decline. This decline has been hard on all cinemas, but it especially affects independently owned movie theaters. Low attendance numbers have already killed off thousands of theaters. Since 2019, the number of total screens in the U.S. has decreased by around 3,000. Closer to home, the Uptown Theatre closed last month when the building was listed for sale.

Rose Owner Marie made clear that when there's low attendance, there's no way to have the funds when things break, and things are always breaking. After hours on the phone trying to fix the projector and a devastating day of lost sales, they're still not out of the weeds. All three of their projectors have reached an end-of-life stage, and Marie estimates it will cost over \$150,000 to replace them with new servers and projectors. Thankfully, the community came running to the call when the Rose launched a crowdsource funding campaign through GoFundMe. Within a week, they hit their original goal of \$75,000 to get new servers installed and received a significant uptick in movie attendance as well. They then increased their fundraiser to \$150,000 to purchase new projectors, though this goal may be adjusted as they learn more.

Marie said that they're still debating the technology because the projectors they use now aren't made anymore. She noted that brand new projectors can cost over \$100,000 a piece, but they hope to locate some that are more affordable. Affordability remains at the heart of their endeavor across the board. Ticket costs at the Rose are about 25% less than the average for the area according to Marie, who said she keeps those prices low because she knows young families are struggling. She also mentioned that they offer a discounted matinee showing for seniors who might otherwise not be able to afford their already low prices.

To dig in even deeper with the community, the Rose will begin hosting a community movie on a first-come-first-serve basis once a month, starting with a showing of Steven Spielberg's *E.T.* on August 11. While it may seem counterintuitive to give things away when times are tight, the hope is that if the Rose is willing to cover the screening fees, the community will help support the theater in other ways like through concessions where they make a better percentage of sales. Tickets for the community movie are available in-person at the theater and it is recommended to get your tickets in advance.

As primary election results begin rolling in, Heather Dudley-Nolette received an encouraging sign ahead of the November election, collecting over 70% of the vote for Jefferson County's District 1 County Commissioner in her race against Port Townsend City Councilmember Ben Thomas. Only those within District 1 were able to vote for this seat during the primary, but come November, both move on as the top two candidates, allowing the

county as a whole to have their say. For more information on statewide election results, you can find them easily at <https://www.jeffcobeacon.com/>.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturdays, partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from jeffcobeacon.com. You can submit ideas to the Beacon through info@jeffcobeacon.com. This is Derek Firenze. Thanks for listening.