

March 7, 1996

The Honorable Italo Cappabianca  
State Representative  
Box 73 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Italo:

I wish to thank you for your early and ongoing support and championing the Warner Theater Restoration Project.

While others may not remember or acknowledge your significant role in having this project placed in the Capital Budget under Governor Casey, I do.

Once again, for all you have done and continue to do for our great city, I thank you.

Sincerely,



Joyce A. Savocchio  
Mayor

JAS/mnl

# WARNER THEATRE PRESERVATION TRUST

**Warner Theatre**  
**811 State Street**  
**P.O. Box 1645**  
**Erie, PA 16507-0645**

**Erie Civic Center Authority**

**Phone 814-459-8852**  
**Fax 814-459-8692**

August 17, 1995


Representative Italo S. Cappabianca  
P. O. Box 1988  
Erie, PA 16507

Dear Italo:

Thank you for forwarding Secretary Bittenbender's letter regarding lack of money in the Redevelopment Budget for funding the Warner Project. This message is consistent with that from Mark Campbell and Ann DiTullio, who met with us last week to discuss possible approaches to funding. They indicated that there currently is only \$ 1 million in uncommitted Redevelopment funds. This will change only if the ceiling is increased and a new budget is passed or if some previously committed projects do not proceed such as Luzerne County. Incidentally, they indicated that that stadium project has been given two years to come up with a match and that, therefore, the associated funds would not be available to us.

They suggested the possibility of PIP funding although they were unsure of the details of this program. We assumed that this would lead to DGS control of the project which would eliminate our need to raise local funding but, we believe, would delay completion of the project and diminish our influence over the design. Please give me a call at 796-6739 if you have any thoughts on this.

Very truly yours,  
WARNER THEATRE PRESERVATION TRUST

  
Thomas C. Vicary  
Chairman



Chairman  
Thomas C. Vicary  
Vice-Chairman  
Thomas L. Doolin  
Treasurer  
Philip A. Garcia  
Secretary  
Thomas A. Tupitza

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August 16, 1995

Representative Italo S. Cappabianca  
P. O. Box 1988  
Erie, PA 16507

Dear Italo:

This is in response to the questions in your August 2nd letter regarding the Warner Theatre Project.

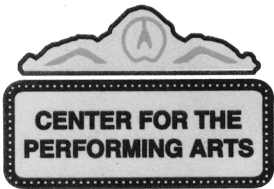
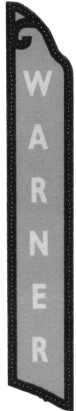
1. Based on a start of construction in late 1996, we are requesting State funding in the total amount of \$ 10 million spread over 36 equal monthly payments.

2. State funds would be used for necessary design work, land acquisition, materials, equipment and construction. They will supplement local funds which will be used to meet the total project needs. For the Theatre alone, the total costs are approximately \$ 11.5 million which rises to \$ 14.7 million including the associated Integra Bank expansion and community room which will be jointly used with the Warner.

It is important to remember that this project can not be accomplished in a piecemeal manner and if the total funding is not assured, design and construction will not commence, leading to important negative consequences for the State and the community.

3. Per the attached financial recap, the State funds will be matched dollar-for-dollar based on consideration of three sources (cash or in-kind): funds raised locally, associated co-use construction by Integra Bank, and the appraised value of the Warner Theatre in its current condition. In determining what qualifies for matching funds, this approach is similar to that applied to construction of the ballpark where the new parking ramp and the land value of the Sears property were included in the local match. On this basis, we already have commitments for the full amount.

If the State will not consider the value of the Theatre as part of the match, the financial picture changes and significant additional local fund raising will be required. Currently, the local campaign, if required, is scheduled with the Erie Conference for 1996, but this will move to 1997 if a commitment is not soon received from Harrisburg.



Chairman  
Thomas C. Vicary  
Vice-Chairman  
Thomas L. Doolin  
Treasurer  
Philip A. Garcia  
Secretary  
Thomas A. Tupitza

In either case, the project has tremendous support and we are confident that the necessary local funding can be realized if the State commits to appropriation of the matching portion in a timely way.

4. As the center for Arts and Entertainment in the northwest Pennsylvania region, the Warner Theatre renovation and expansion project will have significant positive economic impact.

- The facility is the home to the Erie Philharmonic, North Coast and Lake Erie Ballets, Enchanted Forest Children's Theatre, Erie Civic Music Association and many other professional and amateur arts, educational and entertainment groups which typically play to a packed theatre. Even ignoring the deterioration, this converted 1931 movie/vaudeville theatre is inadequate to the needs of these groups and unable to support any traveling Broadway Theatre beyond bare-bones productions. Annually, these groups add millions of dollars to the local economy. There is no other comparable facility within 100 miles and none in the community that exceeds half the seating. Without the proposed renovations and expansion, it is reasonable to expect that the theatre and, therefore, these groups would cease to exist within the next ten years.

- The presence of a suitable facility and such high quality performing arts groups are major factors in determining the regional quality of life. They act as a significant attraction for new business and employment to the region and are important assets in retaining existing inhabitants of all ages. These groups perform not only to entertain and enrich a broad cross-section of our community, but to provide a training ground for our youth and an active outlet for our senior citizens. Without them, Erie would continue to be a "great place to visit" (for 3 summer months) but would become an also-ran community as a place to live and raise a family.

- Not only will restoration and expansion of the Warner Theatre lead to increased use in itself, it will help to spark greater utilization of the entire Civic Center Complex through its ability to support conventions and meetings with large lectures and presentations in a properly maintained and air-conditioned facility. Expanded capability for such events would have major impact on the entire regional economy and, in particular, revitalize our downtown in ways that are not possible with many other new facilities.

August 16, 1995

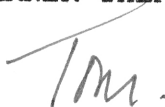
- The Warner project and the associated Integra project will pump nearly \$ 15 million of vital new construction into the downtown area. When the expansion is completed, the facility will create increased revenue for the Erie Civic Center Authority and expanded employment of stagehands, technicians, sales and other support personnel.

- As a State owned facility, there is a need to upgrade the facility to meet ADA requirements. Furthermore, rapid deterioration of the electrical, lighting, HVAC and plumbing systems is resulting in increasingly costly stop-gap maintenance. Both concerns are addressed with the renovation work.

- To create a first class performing arts center for an investment of only \$ 11.5 million represents an outstanding bargain for both the State and the community. Similar new facilities in Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Fort Worth have costs ranging from \$ 65 to 180 million and will lack the beauty and ambience of the Warner. Even a comparable renovation project for the Scranton Performing Arts Center, which has already received State funding from the Casey Administration, has a cost estimate of \$ 20 million.

Italo, I apologize for such a lengthy letter, but it is important that these issues be fully understood in Harrisburg. We appreciate all you have done to support this project and look forward to working together with the State and local government bodies towards its completion.

Very truly yours,  
WARNER THEATRE PRESERVATION TRUST

  
Thomas C. Vicary  
Chairman



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
HARRISBURG

ROBERT A. BITTENBENDER  
SECRETARY  
OFFICE OF THE BUDGET

August 21, 1995

Honorable Italo S. Cappabianca  
House of Representatives  
Room 30, East Wing, Capitol  
House Box 202020  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120-2020

Dear Representative Cappabianca:

This is in response to your letter of August 11, 1995 regarding Redevelopment Assistance Capital funding for the Warner Theater in Erie.

As you noted, Luzerne County has encountered difficulties with its convention center project. Luzerne County voters disapproved a bond issue to provide local matching funds for the convention center. However, in an effort to honor the State's funding commitment for this project, Governor Ridge has given Luzerne County until October 1996 to secure alternative matching funds. My office has had continuing discussions with County officials and it now appears that the project has secured the required matching funds from private sources.

Thank you for taking the time to make me aware of your continued interest in securing funding for the Warner Theater.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert A. Bittenbender".

Robert A. Bittenbender

ITALO S. CAPPABIANCA, MEMBER

1216 WEST 26TH STREET  
ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA 16508-1520  
PHONE: (814) 453-7639  
FAX: (814) 871-4713

ROOM 30, EAST WING  
HOUSE BOX 202020  
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120-2020  
PHONE: (717) 787-4358  
FAX: (717) 772-2284



COMMITTEES

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, CHAIRMAN

House of Representatives  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

August 11, 1995

Honorable Robert Bittenbender, Secretary  
Office of the Budget  
238 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Secretary Bittenbender:

Thank you very much for your prompt response to my recent request for funding for the Warner Theatre in Erie through the Capital Budget of 1994-95.

While I am aware that Governor Casey released all available funds from that Capital budget prior to leaving office, I am also aware that there is now \$19.2 million left unable to be allocated to the arena project in Luzerne County. Since that County has been unable to proceed with their project, isn't it true that those funds remain?

As you can see we are desperately looking at all avenues to obtain the funds necessary to preserve and renovate the Warner Theatre (which is owned by the Commonwealth). If it is at all possible to channel some unused funds into this project, we would be very grateful.

Thank you for your careful review and kind consideration of our request. In the future, I look forward to working with you in this regard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Italo S. Cappabianca", written over a horizontal line.

Italo S. Cappabianca  
Representative, 2nd District

ISC/cmr



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
HARRISBURG

ROBERT A. BITTENBENDER  
SECRETARY  
OFFICE OF THE BUDGET

August 8, 1995

Honorable Italo S. Cappabianca  
House of Representatives  
Room 30, Main Capitol Building (EW)  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Representative Cappabianca:

Governor Ridge has asked me to respond to your recent letter requesting the release of Redevelopment Assistance Capital funding for the Warner Theater in Erie.

Although I appreciate the need to move forward on this project, I am unable to offer financial assistance at this time. Former Governor Casey committed all funds available under this program during the last year of his administration, leaving Governor Ridge with inadequate funds to begin this or any other authorized Redevelopment Assistance Capital project.

Thank you for taking the time to express your support for this project. I assure you that your support will be considered in any future review of Redevelopment Assistance Capital projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert A. Bittenbender".

Robert A. Bittenbender



ITALO S. CAPPABIANCA, MEMBER  
1216 WEST 26TH STREET  
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House of Representatives  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

COMMITTEES  
FEDERAL-STATE RELATIONS, CHAIRMAN

July 17, 1995

Honorable Tom Ridge, Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
225 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Ridge:

It is my understanding that the Executive Board of the Warner Theatre Preservation Trust has recently written you a letter seeking your support and commitment in securing approximately \$10 million for the restoration of the theater.

Not only do I support this request, I subsequently suggest that the \$7 million I had included in the Capitol Budget for 1994-95 (Act 74 of 94) be released. This money remains in that Capitol Budget and has yet to be authorized to proceed. While I realize that this \$7 million is less than the \$10 million now needed, it is certainly a beginning, (I am willing to place the \$3 million balance in any upcoming Capitol Budget).

In light of the fact that time is of the essence, authorizing this \$7 million would eliminate a great deal of time involved in placing the entire \$10 million in a Capitol Budget yet to be moved through the House and Senate. The money is there, the language is there, can we not simply release these funds, in order to see this valuable and vital project move forward within the next few months?

I firmly believe that this restoration project is one that can become a reality if we can simply receive a commitment from your Administration. The community support is in place, we must now take the step and show that the Commonwealth is ready to move on this.

Thank you for your kind attention to this very important project. It is certainly appreciate by all concerned.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Italo S. Cappabianca'.

Italo S. Cappabianca  
Representative, 2nd District