



Budget changes approved for Cain Center for the Arts

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Carrie C. Causey



CORNELIUS – The overall project budget for the Cain Center for the Arts has increased by \$2.1 million.

During their Aug. 19 meeting, town commissioners approved revised architectural and management services agreements with the nonprofit in charge of building and running a new regional arts center in downtown Cornelius. The total project cost is now estimated at \$22.7 million.

Town Manager Andrew Grant said the project is in its schematic design phase and the original construction budget was not enough for the initial ideas for the facility. Changes were made, but cost estimates were still higher than anticipated.

The new budget came after the town and the arts center staff asked Rodgers Builders to spend more time looking at cost estimates now rather than later, according to Grant.

“We’ve got to get it right,” Mayor Woody Washam said. “We don’t want that exposure.”

Commissioners Dave Gilroy and Kurt Naas questioned whether the increase for pre-construction services was justified and if staff members were confident in the new number – though document revisions with the budget changes were approved unanimously.

“There are many steps to go, but because of the extra steps we’ve taken early on, I’m feeling more confident,” Grant said, later adding, “I always add the caveat that you have unknowns you have to deal with.”

He said the initial budget had been on the low end based on the project scope.

Cain Center for the Arts staff and board members have been working to raise \$25 million for the facility, which is slated to have a 400-seat theater, an art gallery and gathering spaces. Already – based on an update delivered at the Aug. 19 Huntersville Town Board meeting by Cain Center Executive Director Justin Dionne – the campaign has raised more than \$15 million.

A \$5 million contribution from the Cain family, for which the center will be named; a \$2 million donation from the Keele family; for which the art gallery will be named; and a \$4 million commitment from the Town of Cornelius have spearheaded the drive.

Grant said the next design phase could start this fall with permitting beginning next summer.

“If fundraising stays on track, we could break ground fall 2020,” Grant said, adding the facility could open as early as 2022.