

Governor Phil Murphy

Press Pool Coverage: Governor Murphy, Speaker Coughlin, Mayor Busch Highlight New Jersey Economic Development Authority Resources to Support Arts and Culture

04/2/2024

PRINT

Gov. Phil Murphy arrived at the Forum Theatre in Metuchen at about 11 a.m. Tuesday. He was greeted by Metuchen Mayor Jonathan Busch and Christopher Paladino, President of New Brunswick Development Corporation,

Busch led Murphy, as well as Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin and other local officials on a 20-minute tour through the 96-year-old theater. The facility was purchased by the borough in 2019 and is part of the local arts district.

The Mayor explained that the theater is a point of pride for the borough and something that residents and visitors have special memories of. He joked that the local Chief of Police tells the story of his first kiss taking place in the theater.

The Mayor told the Governor that over the years the theater has seen different uses, from movies and vaudeville acts to civil and social gatherings, but that the borough became concerned for the future of the landmark and stepped in five years ago.

Murphy asked what Busch envisions as a perfect night in five years and Busch responded that it could be a show or a dinner, but it would be something that “brings the community together” and that ultimately the goal is to build a black box to serve as a flexible space with a flat floor and moveable seats.

The Governor compared it to the venue at Oceans Casino in Atlantic City which also has moveable seats.

When Coughlin asked if there are plans to keep the stage or even one of the chairs, Murphy jokingly responded that the Speaker can keep it in his house, before noting that he has a seat from the old Boston Garden in his basement.

Busch mentioned that he heard that Murphy used to be a performer himself and the Governor responded “sometimes I still am.”

The Mayor showed Murphy some images of the Forum through the years, including a photo of then Sen. John Kennedy driving by the theater. Murphy told Busch that he had been in a production of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, though he did not elaborate as to what role he played.

The tour concluded with images of concept art displayed on the theater stage where Murphy asked more pointed questions about use and capacity of the venue, as well as transit accessibility.

Murphy noted that the venue is in a “sweet spot” in relation to other theaters in the region and that it will be a “game changer.”

Katie Sobko, Bergen Record

VIDEO

[04.02.2024 Forum Theatre Pool Footage - Dropbox \(https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/zv9a1wgg9if5bg5conlsb/h?rlkey=d1eh94ts97f46iyes6c5wj0ub&dl=0\)](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/zv9a1wgg9if5bg5conlsb/h?rlkey=d1eh94ts97f46iyes6c5wj0ub&dl=0)

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