

Rapids Theatre under new ownership

Rec Room management taking control off 100-year-old-plus venue; selection process draws ire of local politician & businessman

BY DAVID YARGER

For about three years, the historic Rapids Theatre in Niagara Falls has sat dormant – no lights, no camera, no action.

Recently, though, the Main Street venue received a chance for an encore, as downtown Buffalo bar Rec Room co-owners Chris Ring and Dale Segal received the keys to the concert hall.

The City of Niagara Falls most recently bought the theater out of foreclosure for \$800,000 in late-2024. Since then, the venue that once hosted the likes of Stone Temple Pilots, Eric Church, Snoop Dogg, Mac Miller, Fall Out Boy and Our Lady Peace has been empty.

Ring comes in with vast experience as a concert promoter. He is the owner of After Dark Entertainment, which hosts over 250 live shows across the state, including locations in Western New York, such as RiverWorks, Town Ballroom and Rec Room

Of the acquisition, Ring said, “I have extensive history booking shows at the Rapids already. I’ve been doing shows there since it was The (Pleasure) Dome, so I am super familiar with the venue and familiar with the capacity and the need for that venue in the marketplace. ...

The 1,200- to 2,000-cap venue really does fill a void that this market doesn’t have. When it shut down, the market would just lose tours. ... When it came back up for sale, we begun looking at what the situation was and threw our hat in the ring.”

Ring said his goal is to turn Rapids back into a national touring destination, but also open it up to the community for weddings, fundraisers and local events.

In a release shortly after the acquisition, Niagara Falls Mayor Robert Restaino said, “To secure operators for the two anchor buildings on Main Street in such a short time is a tremendous boost in revitalizing one of the most visible business districts in our city and we are confident that this will spur further investment and development in neighboring properties.”

As part of the bid, Ring also acquired 1701 Main Str. That location is on the corner just a few steps down from the theater. This space, Ring said, would hopefully be something similar to what Rec Room accomplishes now with weekly and biweekly programming, such as dueling pianos or karaoke, to name a few.

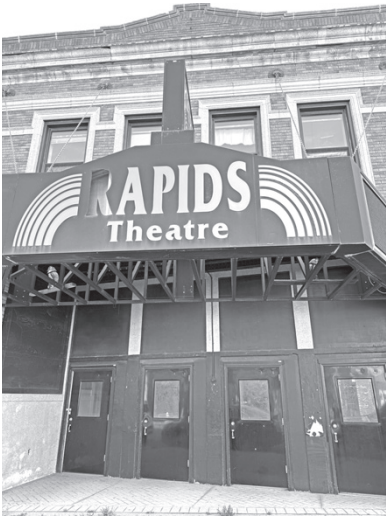
Additionally, Ring mentioned, with the acquisition, he hoped it would spark a transformation for a Main Street area that has, for the most part, been a ghost town for several years.

Gooch had interest in site

Ring and co. did have competition in the race for Rapids, as 7th District Niagara County Legislator and CEO of JG Productions & Entertainment Jesse Gooch submitted a bid for the building.

Gooch said as soon as he saw a chance to purchase the old Niagara Falls landmark, he wanted to jump on it, as it brought back a ton of memories.

“I have an emotional and passionate connection to this particular project, building and that area,” Gooch said. “My grandfather used to work in the Jenss building on weekends. ... My grandmother would take me to Slipko’s on Main Street and then she would take me to see my papa at the Jenss building, and right across the street was the Rapids Theatre. So, I remember that as a little kid – I



The site of the former Rapids Theatre, at 1711 Main St., Niagara Falls.

have childhood memories of what it used to be before.”

The City of Niagara Falls used members of the Main Street Revitalization Committee as the election committee to decide who would eventually receive the rights to the building. This included Restaino, Executive Director Andrea Klyczek, Director of Business Development Morgan Genovese, Director of Business Development and Retention Jeremy Geartz, Vice President of Government and Community Relations Karen Kwandrans and Deputy Director Erin Corrao. There were two presentations, one by Gooch and one by Ring and his team.

In a recent Facebook post, which has received over 100,000 views, Gooch went into detail on the elaborate presentation he gave the committee. In his post, he mentioned a couple members not giving much attention at all to his ideas and initiatives for the building.

“With my years of business experience, construction and hosting one of Western New York’s largest outdoor free concert series in the summertime (NT’s ‘Thursdays on the Water’), my legislative experience, along with my community involvement, the theatre would be a perfect fit for me,” Gooch wrote in the post.

Additionally, Gooch said he spent several months getting a team in place for this endeavor and assessed the building at about \$500,000, leading to his bid of \$200,000, which he stated, was \$200,000 more than the offer from Ring and Segal. On top of that, Gooch said he has yet to receive a refund from his \$10,000 application fee, which is supposed to be returned if the bid loses.

Staying local was something that struck home for Gooch in this entire process. In his post, he stated he was going to utilize three Niagara Falls catering companies for food; his sound engineer lives in the Falls and has experience working at the theater; the Niagara Falls Police would operate as security; and he would work with Niagara University to give students firsthand apprenticeship training experience.

“It’s extremely important. I have a vested interest in this community, and I have been able to prove it,” Gooch said. “I’ve always felt that, when you have a local developer wanting to build something locally, I think, naturally, they’re going to put a little more attention, love and care into it because it’s in their backyard. ... It’s in the county that I represent.”

Gooch said he submitted a FOIL request to see Ring’s presentation and plans for the building, but has yet to receive the information. The winning bid was said to have scored higher with the selection committee.

The legislator added that, through-

out his years in the business, he felt this was the least transparent process he has ever been through.

“There was zero transparency compared to other proposals I have been a part of,” Gooch said. “Communication was terrible. ... I asked how the scoring system works and I got very vague answers on it. If I would’ve known what I was getting scored on, maybe I would’ve done my proposal differently. Maybe the other guy was explained it a little differently and he focused on those areas.”

Ring responds

Of Gooch’s comments, Ring seemingly didn’t take much offense, and noted that he felt very confident that the city made the right choice, noting his years in the music industry.

“I thought the process was fine and fair,” Ring said. “I don’t know what wouldn’t have been fair with the process. ... I’ve been in the music business here in Buffalo for almost 30 years booking national acts, doing high-profile events – I was the first to go into the Outer Harbor where The Pier used to be and we built the stage from the ground up. My business partner has 25 years operating venues in hospitality. ... When it comes to programming a 2,000-capacity venue on a national stage, relationships come into play in this business – there’s only a handful of people that do what we do in this market. ...

“Selfishly, I think the city made the right decision. When you compare the resumes, PowerPoints aside or whoever came in to stand by his side, I think the city made the right decision.”

Moving forward, Ring said he has high hopes for the concert building – admitting it will take work to get it back where it once was – but he seemed confident the Main Street staple would again host big-name acts.

He said he is willing to work with local businesses and he wants to do what’s best for the project and take the best bids.

“Looking at the long-term plan, what’s best for Niagara County is getting it open and running and re-establishing it as a premier place to play for national touring bands, and I think that’s what we’re going to do,” Ring said. “We’re going to open the room up to other promoters, whether it’s national promoters or regional local promoters to get shows in the room. If Jesse wanted to do shows in the room, I’d be happy to have him if he wanted to be a promoter. I know he runs the shows in North Tonawanda, and if he wanted to continue to run a series like that year-round, we’d be more than happy to house the shows.

“It’s not a venue that’s just built for local music. It’s a big room – 2,000-capacity, million-dollar sound system. There’s just certain overhead that comes with running a facility of this size. With that comes a level of acts that are going to play that room.”

Ring noted he never thought acquiring the building would become a reality, but as far as ownership stakes, it ranks near the top in his professional career.

“I’m looking to take it back to the glory days. I’m really looking forward to it; it’s exciting. I’m really looking to help redevelop the community,” Ring said.

According to concertarchives.org, the last show at Rapids Theatre was Rob49 on Jan. 27, 2024.

Ring and crew’s next step will be seeking bids for projects related to the theater.

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Niagara County Public Notice

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PINAY MARKET LLC Articles of Org. filed NY Sec. of State (SSNY) 6/3/26. Office in Orleans Co. SSNY design. Agent of LLC upon whom process may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to The LLC 115 E Center St Medina NY 14103. Purpose: Any lawful activity. Tribune/Sentinel June 19 and 26 and July 10, 17, 24 and 31, 2026

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A DOMESTIC LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY. Name of LLC: The Bookmark Bakery LLC. Date of filing of Articles of Organization with the NY Dept. of State: May 24, 2026. Office of the LLC: 864 Ohio Ave, North Tonawanda, NY 14120; Niagara County. The NYSS has been designated as the agent upon whom process may be served. NYSS may mail a copy of process to the LLC at 864 Ohio Ave, North Tonawanda, NY 14120. Purpose of LLC: any lawful purpose. No specific duration attached to LLC. Tribune/Sentinel June 19 and 26 and July 10, 17, 24 and 31, 2026

LEGAL NOTICE

THE LEWISTON BARN AT LOWER RIVER, LLC. Filed: 06/10/2026; NIAGARA COUNTY; Process Address: 2749 Lockport Road, Niagara Falls, NY, 14035; Service: NY Secty/State/copy to LLC at above address; Purpose: Any lawful purpose permitted for LLCs under NY Limited Liability Company Law. Tribune/Sentinel June 19 and 26 and July 10, 17, 24 and 31, 2026

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A DOMESTIC LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY. Name of LLC: WNY Home Detailing LLC. Date of filing of Articles of Organization with the NY Dept. of State: April 28th, 2026. Office of the LLC: 5833 Cameron Dr. Lockport, NY 14094 Niagara County. The NYSS has been designated as the agent upon whom process may be served. NYSS may mail a copy of process to the LLC at 5833 Cameron Dr. Lockport, NY 14094. Purpose of LLC: Any lawful purpose. No specific duration attached to LLC. Tribune/Sentinel June 19 and 26 and July 10, 17, 24 and 31, 2026

LEGAL NOTICE

IRON AND OAK COLLECTIVE LLC. Filed 3/14/26. Office: ORLEANS Co. SSNY design. as agent for process & shall mail to: c/o Spencer Charles Alan Pilon, 956 Iroquois Dr, Waterport, NY 14571. Purpose: General. Tribune/Sentinel June 12, 19 and 26 and July 10, 17 and 24, 2026

LEGAL NOTICE

Oliver Street Parking LLC. Art. of Org. filed with the NYSS on 6/6/26. Office: Niagara Cnty. NYSS designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against may be served. NYSS shall mail a copy of process to the LLC, 342 Oliver St NT NY 14120. Purpose: Any lawful purpose. Tribune/Sentinel

Erie County Public Notice

LEGAL NOTICE

144 Sawyer, LLC, Articles of Organization filed with the Secretary of New York (SSNY) on 7/6/2026, Office in Erie County. SSNY is the designated agent of LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to 62 Holland Ave, Lancaster, NY 14086. Purpose: Any lawful purpose
Dispatch
July 24 and 31 and August 7, 14, 21 and 28, 2026

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A DOMESTIC LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY. Name of LLC: 224 Main LLC. Date of filing of Articles of Organization with the NY Dept. of State: 07/09/2026. Office of the LLC: 75 Greenspring Court, West Seneca, NY 14224, Erie County. The NYSS has been designated as the agent upon whom process may be served. NYSS may mail a copy of the process to the LLC at 75 Greenspring Court, West Seneca, NY 14224. Purpose of LLC: Any lawful purpose. Duration of LLC: No specific duration attached to LLC.
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