

NEWS from Congressman John W. Olver
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Representing the First District of Massachusetts

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OLVER ANNOUNCES HOUSE APPROVES \$265,000 FOR AMHERST CINEMA ARTS CENTER

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman John W. Olver (D-1st District) announced that the U.S. House of Representatives has approved a funding bill that includes \$265,000 for the Amherst Cinema Arts Center, a nonprofit three-screen independent cinema and arts center in downtown Amherst, Massachusetts.

Olver secured the funding in the FY08 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Appropriations bill, which the House passed on July 24.

Olver is the Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation and HUD and worked in that role to secure HUD funding.

The Senate must still approve its appropriations bill and then both chambers will have to approve a reconciled bill before it goes to the president's desk to be signed into law.

“The Amherst Cinema Arts Center is giving the town and region an economic boost by making Amherst center a destination for cultural tourism and anchoring an exciting new complex of eateries and shops,” Olver said. “The new center has also created the positive spin-off effect of increased foot traffic into the town center’s restaurants, stores and other businesses – giving people a reason to spend time in town both day and evening, all year round.”

“We are very grateful to Congressman Olver for his efforts on behalf of the Amherst Cinema Arts Center,” said Carol Johnson, Executive Director. “His interest in our project reflects the growing realization that the arts can play an important role in economic development.”

“Our center is having a noticeable impact on the region,” Johnson said. “About 2,000 patrons a week walk through our doors, coming from all over for programs rarely seen outside New York and other major metropolitan areas.”

“Congressman Olver’s announcement is especially wonderful because it helps keep the momentum going in our fundraising plan to raise the remaining \$1.8 million needed for the center’s home,” Johnson said. “The outpouring of support to date has been really inspiring.”

“We also have over \$1 million pending in proposals to foundations and major corporations and to the state under the new Massachusetts cultural facilities legislation. We expect to be notified this fall about the state grant. We are counting on individuals and businesses to take us through the home stretch.” Johnson said.

The Amherst Cinema Arts Center presents first-run independent film and the classics 365 days a year and features extensive educational and cultural programming. The center features both American and foreign language films. It is a participating venue for film festivals, hosts talks by award-winning and emerging filmmakers and presents documentaries and retrospectives of film masterpieces. The center also shows the best of work by students in area schools and the Five Colleges.

In coming months the center plans to expand offerings in collaboration with area film faculty, museums and other nonprofit organizations, Johnson said. Additional film series are also in the works, she said.

The Amherst Cinema Arts Center is an addition to the historic Amherst Cinema Building, which has been transformed by Amherst developer Barry Roberts into a multi-use complex, with restaurants, retail shops and office space.

The project includes one 186-seat theater and two 46-seat theaters, stadium seating, Dolby sound and a lobby featuring architectural elements preserved from the historic Amherst Cinema. The center is fully handicapped-accessible and adjoins parking lots reached through a lighted, covered pedestrian walkway.

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For general information about the Amherst Cinema Arts Center, please visit www.AmherstCinema.org.