

Undeterred, ex-manager gives the Royal new try

Concerts planned to rescue theater

By Eric Firpo
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GUADALUPE — The former manager of the Royal Theater now has a new lease, a new strategy for attracting business, and new pressures to turn the town's landmark moviehouse into a success.

The City Council, which took over the expired lease from San Luis Obispo theater owner Jim Dee, voted Thursday in a special meeting to sublease the theater to Chris Tobey, who managed the theater under Dee.

"It's month to month until I test my marketing plan," said Tobey, taking a break Friday from theater window washing. "I just wanted to get the lease and I got it, so I guess you can say I'm excited."

But there's also stress for Tobey, who's under the gun to turn around the Royal financially.

Though Dee invested money to upgrade the aging theater that had been closed for a decade, the new and improved Royal Theater still flopped, averaging a little more than five people per show.

In May, Dee decided to get out from under the lease.

Tobey said she wants to add live shows to help push the business into the black. The first is a concert scheduled for 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Aug. 15 called United We Rock featuring three bands playing music from the 1950s to the 1990s.

"The plan is to get at least four or five (live shows) a month," Tobey said.

Guadalupe-native Shirley Cisneros of Envision Music Marketing and Promotions booked the concert and plans to do more in the future.

"My plan is to bring in at least two a month," Cisneros said.

Two live shows have been scheduled by Cisneros in September,



Eric Firpo/Times

Chris Tobey once managed the Royal Theater in Guadalupe. Now she holds the lease — on a month-to-month basis — and hopes to make a go of the landmark that has fallen on hard times.

ber, she said.

Live concerts, with \$10 tickets, can be a economic lifesaver to the theater, and can even sustain it until films are shown.

But it will be at least a month and possibly longer before the theater is able to show films again, Tobey said.

The sound equipment has been removed from the theater and Tobey is trying to drum up investors for speakers and other needed

equipment.

"I've got a couple of months to come up with the financing, big-time financing," she said. "I need sound equipment and my goal is to go digital. I've got to be able to compete, quality wise. I've got to have a good show. I'm just making sure it's done right."

"Do I think it's going to work? Yeah. I'm just stressed out because because (the City Council) has me month to month."