

Library to seek funds to study restoration

Ronald Hawkins rhawkins@reportert.com

September 29, 2009



The Morgan County Public Library Board of Trustees gave the go-ahead Monday to funding a feasibility study for renovations of and possible uses of the buildings it owns at 75 and 77 E. Washington St. This view is of the front of the building. Photo by Ronald Hawkins.



How to restore the buildings the Morgan County at 75 and 77 E. Washington after its long-term neglect that began before a fire on the adjacent property that now is the home of the Morgan County veterans memorial park would be an aspect of a feasibility study for its future use, according to a document sent to public officials. This view is of the back building. Photo by Ronald Hawkins.

MARTINSVILLE

The Morgan County Public Library Board of Trustees pledged Monday evening to contribute \$2,100 to a \$21,000 feasibility study for future uses of the building it owns at 75 and 77 E. Washington St.

The feasibility study, proposed by Rediscover Historic Martinsville and the Morgan County Historic Preservation Society, could lead to a grant of \$500,000 to renovate the building, a portion of which is used as a library annex. The two-story, 12,000 square foot building also is home to an art gallery/framing business and a veterans' museum, adjacent to the Morgan County veterans memorial.

Krista Ledbetter, the library director, told the board, "We need to either get rid of it or fix it up. ...We have an organization to partner with at what would be a minimal cost to us."

According to a letter by Ben Rawlins of the Indianapolis firm of Odle McGuire Shook written after a tour through the building in early September, the firm would seek to define ideas for use and designs for the interior of the building, develop a facade renovation plan, concepts to link it to the park and a cost estimate for renovations.

In a document submitted along with a letter to several elected officials, Joanne Stuttgen, president of the Morgan County Historic Preservation Society, wrote that the building is still threatened by long-term neglect and by the effects of the fire that destroyed the building on the property that is now the home of the veterans' memorial.

The long-term term goal for the building is a complete rehabilitation, Stuttgen said, after which it could be suitable for use as a home for community organizations, a community computer center operated by the library and public meeting space.

The funding for construction and development could come from community focus fund planning and implementation grants that could require a 10 percent local grant. The implementation grant could be, if received, for \$500,000 if it is used as a community center.

The library board's vote to pledge \$2,100 toward the feasibility is contingent upon receiving contributions by the historic preservation society and RHM to go along with the \$3,000 already received from the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana.

After the meeting, Elmer Reynolds, who helped coordinate the veterans' memorial, said the board's action was a positive development for downtown revitalization and for those would like the building to be used as a full-time veterans' museum.

Copyright: Reporter-Times.com/MD-Times.com 2009