

SAVAGE Pacer



Savage Depot relocation is in the works

By Nancy Huddleston

Editor

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Relocating the Savage Depot in the city isn't going to be easy, but the Dan Patch Historical Society is stepping forward to make sure it happens.

A study done by the city shows it will cost between \$10,000 and \$25,000 to move the depot from Murphy's Landing in Shakopee to Savage and approximately \$100,000 more to renovate it and bring it up to code. Then there are questions about how the depot will be used when it gets back to town.

But, for the historical society, moving the depot back is a top priority. "We would facilitate the volunteers, contributions and a general contractor to get this done," said Councilwoman Janet Williams, who is also the secretary of the historical society.

The exact methodology of the fund drive is still in the works, but Williams said the society is committed to getting the depot back. The initial fund drive would be to cover the expenses associated with moving the depot from Murphy's Landing to the town square property in downtown Savage.

Handling the expenses associated with getting the depot renovated would be the subject of a secondary fund drive.

Williams said community support for the depot relocation and finding connections to the city's historical roots are two things residents said they supported in a recent city-wide survey. The depot relocation also received favorable marks at city visioning meetings in January.

But the report on the disposition on the depot that was presented to the city council during a March 28 work session was not flattering.

Chief Building Inspector Jay Scherer's report concluded the depot would require extensive renovations in order to bring it up to code and further remodeling would need to be done to utilize the building year-round.

The estimated costs are around \$100,000 just to bring the depot up to code. "In my opinion, the present appearance of the depot, due to the required renovations, will suffer greatly through the modification," he concluded.

Another issue the city council was asked to consider is what role the city should play in facilitating the project.

City Administrator Barry Stock listed seven questions in his memo, ranging from if the town square lot is the right location; how much money the city should contribute to the project; what the responsibilities of the city and historical society will have once the depot is placed in the city; who would be responsible for maintaining the depot once it is renovated; what the depot might be used for; how the city should manage the project; and should the city charge fees to bring the depot up to current code?

"I can pull up 20 more scenarios about this project," said Councilman Craig Chamberlain, "The cost is high to bring this to a habitable state. What if we just make it a landmark?"

Williams asked the council to consider the project in a different light.

"I'd like to look at it from the perspective of why this should be done and answer the question of 'how do we make this happen?' versus finding 20 things here that are impediments to getting this done," she stated.

Williams said the historical society has seen the building inspector's report. "The general feeling was that we didn't want to own the building, but that we wanted to facilitate the move and do the work that Three Rivers wants done to clean up the old site at Murphy's," she explained.

As far as liabilities associated with the depot once it's in place, Williams said the city could enter into a joint powers agreement with the historical society to spell out who is responsible for what.

"We saw in the community survey that people supported moving the depot here and that they wanted to reconnect to their roots," she continued, "We feel this will provide a sense of place for residents and that the depot should be placed directly across the street from where it once stood."

Mayor Tom Brennan agreed there is community support for the depot relocation and that it will help provide residents with a sense of community. "People can get their hands around this and we could get a lot of community buy-in on this," he said.

"But is it worth a \$200,000 investment for the city and historical society to make?" asked Chamberlain.

Stock suggested the depot could be placed on a foundation in the town square and initially used as a landmark and then be renovated over time.

Chamberlain liked that idea, saying the work could be done in phases with donations from the community.

And Williams noted the historical society already has corporations and residents interested in making donations to the depot project.

"This is something the community can rally behind," Brennan noted.

"This is like any development proposal where there will be give and take," Councilman Kevin Lienau said. "But there needs to be a pro forma for this project and a plan."

Stock said a concept plan for the town square parking lot has been completed. It includes an area set aside for the depot and the consultant believes the depot relocation is a good fit with the overall Hamilton Revitalization Plan.

The town square concept plan is scheduled to be presented to the city council during a regularly televised meeting later this month. The plan also takes into consideration if Ottawa Avenue should be vacated between Highway 13 and 123rd Street to allow for more public parking that could be used by nearby restaurants – specifically El Loro, Culver's and Neisen's Sports Bar.

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