

PRESS-REPUBLICAN

The Hometown Newspaper of Clinton, Essex and Franklin Counties

Business

SECTION D

► Agribusiness D4

► Automotive D5

business@pressrepublican.com

Sunday, February 7, 2010 D1

Plans under way to revive former Masonic Lodge

By DAN HEATH
Staff Writer

Efforts continue to convert the former Masonic Lodge building on Main Street in AuSable Forks into a three-level retail and arts center.

Craig Brashear, executive director of the Appleby Foundation and Rebecca Kelly Ballet, said the Tahawus Lodge Center would be a centerpiece for the hamlet's economic revitalization. The Appleby Foundation, the 501c3 non-profit New York City-based organization that operates Rebecca Kelly Ballet, acquired the Masonic Lodge building in the hamlet of AuSable Forks in July.

Plans call for a three-story, multi-use center that combines retail, office and meeting space with an arts gallery and dance and wellness studio. Ballet Artistic Director Rebecca Kelly, also chair of the Appleby Foundation Board of Directors, said the project has an estimated cost of \$1.2 million.

"We're in the early phase of our capital campaign," she said.

The project was awarded a \$60,000 matching grant by the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal Office of Community Renewal New York Main Street program. That was used to fund asbestos-abatement work.

Plans call for a three-story multi-use center that combines retail, office and meeting space with an arts gallery and dance and wellness studio.

The project has received \$16,000 from two dozen individuals and businesses and a leadership donation of \$10,000 that was announced Jan. 7. In a press release, Brashear said such private initiative will spur the project.

"This gift will encourage others to join in our efforts and support the TLC effort," he said. "It sends a wonderful message to our legislators and to our federal and state funding agencies that the community is behind us. The timing of this generous gift is

a wonderful message to our legislators and to our federal and state funding agencies that the community is behind us. The timing of this generous gift is



Staff Photo/Neil Catania

Plans call for an estimated \$1.2 million to be used to convert the former Masonic Lodge building in AuSable Forks to the Tahawus Lodge Center, a mixed-use retail, arts and office complex.

Set in motion



Photo Provided

Rebecca Kelly and Craig Brashear of the Appleby Foundation and Rebecca Kelly Ballet. Efforts to create the Tahawus Lodge Center are underway, with fundraising, formation of a steering committee and a growing group of volunteers to work on the project.



Photo Provided

This third-floor space is to be converted to a dance and wellness studio. The project will progress in phases as funding becomes available.



Photo Provided

The staircase that leads from the second floor to the third floor shows the quality craftsmanship that went into the lodge, which was built in 1911.



Photo Provided

This space will be converted to house a gallery, office space and meeting area.

See CENTER Page D6 ►

The Hometown Newspaper of Clinton, Essex and Franklin Counties

business@pressrepublican.com

Sunday, February 7, 2010 D1

Center: Fundraisers planned for spring, summer

► From Page D1

perfect because legislators are returning from recess. Now we want them to focus on the TLC project, and a demonstration of community support provides compelling incentive to give it a higher priority."

The next phase of the project will focus on restoration of the first-floor glass storefront. Work is expected to start within the next few months.

By e-mail, Kelly said it will initially be used to house the Windows of Change Gallery.

"It is our intention to temporarily use the pair of large, street-facing windows for rotating displays, including a place to portray the Tahawus Lodge Center's town history. Using the elements of surprise, delight and frequent change through the visual arts, TLC should stimulate interest in the culture of the town and whet the curiosity," she said.

The Appleby Foundation will be the display curator and will focus on works by local and visiting artists as well as contributions by youths and seniors and those that deal with town history.

Kelly said plans call for a three-year timetable, but that depends on a successful fundraising campaign. It is likely to proceed floor by floor as funding makes work possible.

The second floor is expected to include an art gallery, visitors center and office space, while the third floor will house a dance and wellness studio.

General building-wide work still to be done includes debris removal and refurbishment of the of the electrical, plumbing, insulation and HVAC systems. Kelly said that will include environmentally friendly systems.

The center's steering committee now has 21 members (see box).

MORE INFO

The members of the Tahawus Lodge Center Steering Committee are Craig Brashear, Rebecca Kelly, Fred Balzac, Richard Broderick, Rhonda and Dave Brunner, Valerie Daniels, Patti and Bill Dilworth, Steven Godlewski, Robert Farkas, Cheryl and Mickey Maggy, Richard McElhiney, Bill McKibben, Sue Pulitzer, Ellen Ryan, John Sanpietro, Annie Scavo, Andrew Schonbek and Sidney "Jay" Ward III. To learn more about the Tahawus Lodge Center or to make a donation, visit www.tahawuslodgecenter.org.

Community support is seen as a key to securing grants and other funding.

Brashear said it is now easier than ever to make donations online at www.tahawuslodgecenter.org.

The project has been approved as a Community Development Project located within the Essex County Empire Zone. That qualifies those who make a donation of \$500 or more by the end of June to receive a 25-percent tax credit.

Funding is expected to come from a combination of government grants, legislative member items, grants from foundations and donations from businesses and individuals.

There are also a number of naming rights available for those who make donations ranging from \$2,500 to \$500,000. The entire list is available on the Web site.

Hollywood Theater owners Sierra and Cory Hanf hosted a fundraiser last fall that attracted an inquisitive crowd. The ever-expanding group of volunteers solicited door prizes donated by a dozen local businesses and held a 50/50 raffle that helped raise \$1,347.

Additional fundraisers are planned for late spring or summer.

Architectural work is being done by Premises, an Essex-based architectural firm headed by Bryan Burke and Beverly Eichenlaub.

Kelly and Brashear said they are working with town officials to coordinate with the AuSable Forks Downtown Revitalization plan.

Brashear said it is hoped the ballet's Kids Co-Motion program will also be part of the first-year programs offered. It is described as a choreographer's inspiration and whole child developmental approach resulting in an integrated, creative movement and dynamic dance program for every age with family involvement.

Kelly said the program has previously been offered in the North Country. It provides an opportunity to engage children with the arts at an early age to promote a lifelong participation.

"It's a chance to enhance the quality of life and bring families together," she said.

Kelly said she and Brashear have been involved in the art world for 30 years. The only way to survive that long is to get things done on time and under budget, she said.

"I hope our experience will help with that," Kelly said.

She said the community support is very encouraging.

"It's nice to work on a project where everybody smiles when they talk about it."

E-mail Dan Heath at:
dheath@pressrepublican.com