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floating:
Page 8



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Local group halts Teslow grain elevator demolition

By Hunter D'Antuono
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Livingston's Teslow grain elevator might yet remain standing.

Demolition of the iconic structure was halted after an agreement was reached between the group Save the Teslow, Montana Rail Link and the elevator's owner and developer, Chris Salacinski.

The accord was announced at a Monday night meeting held by Save the Teslow at the Shane Lalani Center for the Arts.

With demolition preparation starting over the past week, Save the Teslow hastily organized over the weekend and secured initial funding from "a number of wealthy individuals" to purchase the building from Salacinski, said Barclay Rogers, a Livingston lawyer and member of the preservation effort.

Rogers declined to specify the number of people contributing funds or who they might be, but described them as people with "deep ties to the community."

Salacinski has agreed to sell the building at cost, a statement that drew a strong applause for Salacinski, who sat near the back row among the 40-some people who appeared at the Monday night meeting.

Melanie Nashan, a member of Save the Teslow, said an additional \$1,800 was pledged to the Teslow from meeting attendees.

At the meeting, structural engineer Scott Higinbotham of A&E Dynamics explained the

first priority is to secure the top section of the building, or "the head house," and to tack down the large outer sheets of silver metal.

About a third of the roof of the headhouse was blown off in a storm last November and more chunks of the building are at risk of flying off.

Save the Teslow members said MRL, which leases the land on which the Teslow sits, is in line with Salacinski's sale of the building, so long as the building is secured in a timely manner.

The eventual plan of the preservation group is to create a nonprofit foundation for the building, to ensure funding for its future maintenance needs.

Looking ahead, Save the Teslow members said it will be up to the community to decide what purpose the building will serve.

"The most economical option is leaving it there as a monument," said Rogers.

Seonaid Campbell, an architectural writer and member of Save the Teslow, said the group will "make a good faith effort" to employ Salacinski's assembled demolition team for the preservation of the building.

Across Montana, these relics of the state's agricultural traditions are being demolished, with the historic grain elevators of Wilsall, Laurel and Columbus recently descending into clouds of dust.

"In many towns it's the welcoming signal when you see the elevator on the horizon," said Chere Jiusto, executive director of the Mon-

tana Preservation Alliance, who has 30 years of experience in Montana historical preservation.

Jiusto said the grain elevators of yore were rendered impractical by the modern concrete monoliths that can store far more grain and load product into railcars exponentially faster.

"Because they are now technically obsolete, they are not only endangered in Montana but across the country," she said, following up with praise for the Livingston community for its efforts to save the Teslow. "That community is really demonstrating how important these buildings are and more importantly how to get (preserving them) done."

Bruce Selyem, founder and president of Bozeman's The Country Grain Elevator Historical Society, has photographed about 225 different elevator sites across the state. Some of the sites have multiple elevators. Selyem said that with recurring frequency when he returns to sites to shoot elevators in different seasons, he finds they've disappeared.

"They signify our agricultural history, the town's local economical history and a North American industry," he said. "They became obsolete, as our own culture needed things faster and bigger. It's part of a bigger global picture."

The work site around Livingston's Teslow grain elevator on east Park Street is pictured, Monday morning.

Enterprise photo by Hunter D'Antuono

