

Stamp of approval

Isham Day House plans praised by Mequon aldermen

By Gary Achterberg

News Graphic Staff

MEQUON — A proposal to convert the historic Isham Day House into a postal museum got an enthusiastic endorsement Dec. 13 from the Mequon Common Council.

Sam Cutler, a longtime area resident, has proposed improving and remodeling the building across from Mequon City Hall to reflect one of its earliest uses as a regional post office.

He wants to transform part of the building into an old-time post office with historical displays. The remainder of the building would become a postage stamp gallery, housing Cutler's extensive collection and other items donated to the Mequon-Thiensville Historical Society.

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Isham: Plan will make the Historical Society more visible

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"This is a project we think can be highly successful in a variety of ways," said Cutler, who has offered to make a substantial donation to help refurbish the building. "The house is a gem, but it is 177 years old. It cannot stand to be neglected much longer — and I think we have a good solution."

Cutler and Bob Blazich, president of the M-T Historical Society, made a presentation to the Common Council. They said they want to make improvements to the interior of the building that are in keeping with its historic nature. They are not asking for city funds. They said their first step will be to hire an architect to advise them on potential improvements and what they might cost.

"What we're looking for at this point is a green light to see if this is feasible," Blazich said.

While no formal vote was taken, council members were unanimously enthusiastic about the plans.

"This is a great idea," said Alderman John Wirth. "It's taking a nice property and actually doing something with it."

Alderman Pamela Fuhry-Adams said she thought it was "an excellent partnership" between the city and the Historical Society.

Alderman Rob Strzelczyk said he thought the plans were logical and very well thought out.

"I like that it's in the Town Center," he said. "It will be a nice way to make the Historical Society more visible as people are coming into the area."

Blazich and Cutler said they hope to get their plans finalized over the winter and early spring so they can begin renovations by summer. They hope to open the museum by June 2018.

Cutler said there are only a handful of postal museums around the nation. Initial publicity surrounding the plans already has resulted in interest from prospective donors of stamp collections.

As donations come in, the Historical Society hopes to keep the best items to enhance the collection and sell the other items through online stamp-collector sites, generating much-needed income for the Historical Society. Since it moved from the Logemann Center to an office building in Thiensville, the MTHS is paying monthly rent.

Once the renovation is complete, plans call for it to be open in warmweather months. As a limited museum, it would not be subject to accessibility rules. The building also would not have restrooms.

The Isham Day House is the oldest structure on its original foundation in Ozaukee County.

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A small model of the future Isham Day House postal museum and stamp gallery was on display earlier this year.

Photo by Mark Justesen