



Saugerties Lighthouse

Landmark stirs restoration efforts

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SAUGERTIES — Acting in response to the Coast Guard's proposed abandonment of the Saugerties Lighthouse, residents interested in its preservation are exploring the possibilities of saving the 1865 structure.

At a special meeting Tuesday night, Clifford Steen of the Saugerties Lighthouse committee and Elise Barry, consultant for the Hudson River Task Force, presented options for saving the landmark.

Barry said the Coast Guard has begun proceedings to officially abandon the structure to pave the way for its proper restoration. Abandonment proceedings take at least 18 months, Barry said, since reviews of the proposal are required in New York City and Washington, D.C. If the Coast Guard succeeds in abandonment, the building would then be turned over to the state, which would probably make it available to a private group for historic preservation.

"If Saugerties couldn't take on the restoration, we (the task force) would be in a position to transfer it to a suitable preservation group that could take on that responsibility," Barry said.

Currently, the Saugerties Lighthouse and three others on the Hudson River are available from the Coast Guard for historic preservation on a 20-year lease. Saugerties has never been able to use this option but it has been taken for the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse and the lighthouse at the mouth of the Rondout Creek in Kingston through the efforts of private restoration groups and the DEC task force, both of which have been involved in reclamation projects.

The 120-year-old Saugerties structure has fallen into disrepair that is now beginning to jeopardize its stability. "It's a house of cards at the moment," Barry said. The main problem seems to be in one section of the roof where two slopes come

together, forming a valley. Rain and snow have collected there for years, leaving the roof unsound.

A task force engineer is currently doing a study on the structure to come up with cost estimates. The report is expected within 10 days but Barry said a study done last year estimated the cost of just stabilizing the lighthouse at about \$100,000.

Several people at the Tuesday meeting offered to donate time, labor and materials for restoration to help reduce costs. As resident Richard Jackson said, "To keep costs down and to move the project along, it's going to have to be done the way a lot of projects are in Saugerties — through sweat and through the good will of the people."

Barry said much work on the

Hudson-Athens Lighthouse had been done the same way and had "really helped to make restoration manageable."

Until 1979, the village of Saugerties had leased the structure from the Coast Guard and maintained it to some extent, Steen said. But money and insurance liability problems finally forced the village to give up the project, leaving the building to fall into major disrepair. Steen urged a major restoration move.

A similar meeting is scheduled at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at the Tivoli Firehouse. Interested Saugerties residents will meet at the Village Clerk's Office at 6:45 p.m. and go to Tivoli as a group.