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Visions at odds

By Rachel Carter

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

Thirty days is up.

A group of residents wants to save the Loveland Feed and Grain building.

Owners Dean and Betty Anderson want to move on.

Everyone wants a decision.

The Loveland Historic Preservation Commission could decide Monday night whether to grant the Andersons' request to demolish the 115-year-old grain elevator — but the commission also could delay a decision for another 60 days.

“We have a request from the guy who has a contract on it to tear it down. Please vote on it; don't stall us; it's time to make up your mind,” said 75-year-old Dean Anderson, who owns the property at 130 W. Third St.

“Give us an answer, yes or no. They could turn us down, but at least that's progress. Then we could appeal to the City Council.”

Residents who rallied to save the building also want an answer, although not the same answer the Andersons want.

“Personally, yes, I would like to see a decision made,” said Loveland resident Erin McLaughlin, who helped organize the effort. “It's not fair to drag it out.”

Developer Gary Hassenflu has a contract to buy the 1-acre site from the Andersons. Hassenflu, president of Garrison Cos., based in Prairie Village, Kan., wants to raze the building to make way for apartments.

Hassenflu originally wanted to retrofit the grain elevator for apartments. He applied for several grants and tax credits to make the project work. All of them fell through — and without more financial backing, Hassenflu said renovating the grain elevator isn't financially possible.

He still wants to buy the property and build apartments from the ground up.

Before that can happen, the Historic Preservation Commission has to approve the Andersons' request to demolish the building, which is a designated landmark on the local historic register.

But a group of locals wants to keep the graying walls up.

McLaughlin and about four other residents have spent the past month gathering support to prove the community wants to save the 1891 grain elevator.

The group collected about 700 signatures on petitions and about \$10,000 in pledges. They talked to interested developers from Washington, D.C., Savannah, Ga., and one local developer who is still incognito.

They have possible grant money and loans from the State Historical Fund and Colorado Preservation Inc.

They hope to raise \$400,000 through donations and grants to buy the building. They then would seek either money or a developer to renovate the building into an art center, stores or a combination of uses.

And they hope it's enough.

"I really feel like we're there," McLaughlin said. "I feel like we're where we need to be to ask the city to oppose demolition."

But if the commission votes Monday to allow demolition, McLaughlin says the group will continue trying to save the grain elevator.

"I don't think any of us are giving up on this until the building is on the ground," she said. "There are a lot of things that can happen between now and the months when the building is actually razed. If something comes up, and Garrison backs out, we want to be there, ready."

The Andersons, however, are ready to move on — which means getting permission to tear down the building and selling the property.

"We don't want to spend the last years of our lives nursing this thing along," Dean said. "I have other things I'd rather be doing."

2002: The city identified the Loveland Feed and Grain building as a potential "catalyst" project for redevelopment.

2003: The city did a structural assessment of the 1891 building.

2004: The Loveland Feed and Grain Co. closed. Dean and Betty Anderson became sole owners of the property. The city held a workshop July 10 to solicit potential developers and discuss ways to redevelop the property. In September, developer Gary Hassenflu contacted the city and the owners about turning the building into an affordable-housing complex.

2005: The Andersons obtained landmark status for the building on the Loveland Historic Register to allow Hassenflu to apply for historic grants. Throughout the year, Hassenflu applied for tax credits and historic grants. He did not receive any. Hassenflu considered other alternatives but decided he could not redevelop the grain elevator without those funds.

2006: In late January, the Andersons submitted an application, at Hassenflu's request, to tear down the Feed and Grain building. The Historic Preservation Commission voted Feb. 20 to delay a decision until its March 20 meeting. A group of residents spent the month raising money and support to save the building.

What: Loveland Historic Preservation Commission meeting

When: 6 p.m. Monday

Where: City Council Chamber at the Municipal Building, 500 E. Third St.

Why: The Loveland Historic Preservation Commission could decide Monday night whether to approve a request to demolish the Loveland Feed and Grain building at 130 W. Third St.

Participants at a party Saturday for people interested in saving the Loveland Feed and Grain building look toward the structure from the roof of the Masonic Lodge building at Fourth Street and Cleveland Avenue. At front is Ruby McLaughlin, 2, and back from left are Erin McLaughlin, who is holding her son Jonathan, 6 months, Scott Waterhouse and Christopher McLaughlin. Supporters raised money by selling artwork at the event, which also featured live music and refreshments.

A sign announcing the upcoming meeting of the Loveland Historic Preservation Commission sits outside the Loveland Feed and Grain building, 130 W. Third St.