

# Silverhill considers keeping Little Hall at park



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By John Underwood [independent@gulfcoastnewspapers.com](mailto:independent@gulfcoastnewspapers.com)

SILVERHILL, Alabama --- After nearly a year of discussions, the Town of Silverhill is now considering a new option in the quest to save the Little Bohemian Hall. Leave the building where it is, or at least in the general area.

The more than 90-year-old structure was shifted off its foundation and sustained extensive damage during a tornado that struck in Silverhill in March of 2011. In May the Town Council voted to proceed with plans to demolish the structure and build a new Community Center, which will be located in the southwest corner of the park.

But after several concerned residents came forward, plans proceeded in August to save the Little Hall and move it to a new location.

Nearly 40 residents attended a public meeting on Monday with the main topic of discussion deciding on a new location for the structure after plans to move the building to Paul Anderson Park across from town hall fell through.

But lifelong resident Jim Langley presented another solution to the Council and residents in attendance during the meeting, which lasted just over an hour.

"Why can't we just turn the thing around and put it on the corner near the water tower," he said.

As it turns out, said Silverhill Mayor Tim Wilson, leaving the building at the park, provided there are no objections from the Havel family, who donated the building to the town in the 1970s, is a viable option.

"We spoke to the insurance company and they said as long as we give the building a new address, we can keep it in the park," Wilson said.

The problem presented in the past, Wilson said, is the entire park area, which runs along the corner of Third Avenue and Fourth Street, is all one address. After declaring the building a total loss in August of last year, town officials were told they had to move the structure in order to keep insurance.

But, Wilson said, if the town were to subdivide the structure and give the building its own address, either facing Third Street or Fourth Avenue, then the structure could be insured.

"It would require action by the town's Planning Commission," Wilson said, "but we believe it could be done."

Wilson said he would approach the Havel family with the new proposal and if they approved, the town could then proceed with repositioning the structure and taking the necessary steps to secure a new address for the structure.

"We had proposed moving the building to the tennis courts, but they objected because they did not want both buildings there," he said, "but they may not object if we propose leaving the structure in the general vicinity of where it is now and this would certainly save the town a lot of money."

If that is not an option, then the town will have to consider moving the building to another property. Right now, Wilson said, the only property available is residential property, which would have to go before the town's Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustments for a variance.

Any private property used for the structure would have to be donated to the town, Wilson said.

Frankie Kucera, chairman for the Save the Little Hall Committee, gave an update on the structure, saying more than \$13,000 has been raised so far. Of that money, approximately \$3,500 has been paid to put the walls back in place and get the structure ready to be moved, which was matched by the town out of a \$17,500 fund received from the insurance company for the structure.

"I love Silverhill. I've lived here all my life and served this town as mayor and as a councilman," Kucera said. "Neither myself nor any of the Committee members would be doing what we're doing if we didn't love this town and want to do right by it. This building has served the town for a long time and we need to save it. We have saved it. We just need a place to put it."

Several residents in attendance commended the Town Council and the Save the Little Hall Committee for their efforts in saving the structure.