

Work day for Little Bohemian Hall in Silverhill set for Saturday



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SILVERHILL, Alabama --- A work day has been scheduled for Saturday for the Little Bohemian Hall in Silverhill.

“Anyone who can come out and help is welcome,” said Frankie Kucera, chairman of the Save the Little Hall Committee, adding that work is scheduled to begin at 8 a.m. “We’re hoping to get the hurricane tie-down straps in place and begin the electrical work.”

Most of the day will be spent deciding what needs to be done on the structure and planning future work, Kucera said.

“We’ll probably tear out some of the dry wall to see what’s behind it and what needs to be done,” he said. “It’s really mostly going to depend on who shows up.”

In April, just over a year after it was damaged when a tornado ripped through the area, the Little Bohemian Hall was moved and set on its new foundation, approximately 200 feet from where the more than 90-year-old structure sat for the better part of three decades.

The journey to save Little Hall began in March of 2011, when the building sustained extensive damage during a tornado. Two months later the Silverhill 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.

Following the vote, several concerned residents came forward asking to save the structure, and another three months of discussions later, in August of last year, plans proceeded to save the Little Hall and move it to a new location.

Another six months of discussions followed, trying to decide what to do with the structure, where it could be moved and how to move it. Then, on Feb. 13, a proposal was presented to the Council at a specially called meeting to move the structure closer to the corner of Third Avenue and Fourth Street near the town’s water tower.

After receiving no objection from the Havel family, who donated the land for the park and approved the usage of the land when the structure was moved in the 1970s, and confirming with the town’s insurance company that, as long as they give the building a new address, it can stay at the park, the Town Council voted at its regular meeting March 5 to move the structure to its new home at the corner of Third Avenue and Fourth Street, mere feet from where the structure has been for more than 30 years.

Three weeks later, after receiving approval from the town’s Planning Commission and following the proper procedures to facilitate the move, employees with the Town of Silverhill and Fauver’s Movers out of Semmes worked together to right, turn and move the structure from facing east toward Second Street to facing north toward Fourth Avenue.

On Saturday, Kucera and others will take a giant step in the process of renovating the structure.

While the structure itself is sound, Kucera said, much of the sheetrock in the walls and a lot of the roofing structure, which was saved and now sits on the floor inside the building, will have to be put back into place.

But first, Kucera said, the whole building will have to be rewired from top to bottom. Once that is done, it can be determined whether or not the eight ceiling fans that line the ceiling, can be fixed or will have to be replaced. The blades on nearly all of the fans appear to be warped, but can be easily replaced if the fans themselves still work, Kucera said.

Then there is the stage and bathroom area, which was damaged beyond repair in the storm and had to be completely removed before relocating the structure. The front port area will also have to be completely replaced, Kucera said. Kucera and his brother, George, who is 78 and a master carpenter, built temporary steps leading up to the front of the structure.

Six windows on the east side (formerly the south side) of the structure were blown out in the storm and will have to be replaced. Part of the stage area was salvaged and also sits on the floor of the building.

“It can all be replaced if we have enough money,” he said. “It’s really going to depend on how much money we raise as to how much gets done.”

Fundraising efforts so far have proved fruitful, Kucera said. This year’s Car Show raised well over \$8,000, which will go toward repairs for the structure, Kucera said. A pair of fundraisers were held recently through United Bank, raffling off a Valentine’s Basket and an Easter Basket. The Committee is also currently selling chances on a handmade quilt which was donated for the fundraising effort and, Kucera said.

Once completed, the building will serve as more than just a meeting place, Kucera said. It will also serve as a museum of sorts, showing the history of the town and specifically its Czech and other heritage which has so long been a part of the identity of the town.

Plans are to have photos lining the walls from the early days of the town. There will also be shadow boxes constructed which will house artifacts and examples of traditional dress from the Czech and other cultures.

“We want this to be something everybody in Silverhill can be proud of,” Kucera said. “This building was a gift to this town and that’s exactly what it’s going to be when we give it back to the town.”

Kucera said anyone wishing to attend Saturday’s work day should bring a hammer and gloves. Saws, saw horses and some other tools will be provided, he said.

“You should probably also bring water or something to drink with you,” he said.

For more information on how you can donate to the Save the Little Hall Committee, contact Kucera at 251-945-5506.