

Lawmakers OK Armory purchase

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ALBANY, N.Y. -- Legislators authorized the transfer of the Hoosick Falls armory to the local nonprofit seeking the space for the grand sum of \$1.

The bill's sponsor in the state Senate, Republican Sen. Roy McDonald, said legislators could be dealing with 200 to 300 bills Thursday, on the tail-end of a busy legislative session. "This has been a good year. ... It's been busy, it's been very productive, and amazingly, to a large extent, it's been nonpartisan," said McDonald, who complimented local plans for the Hoosick Falls armory.

"I think the town's doing something very innovative with a building that's an old historical building, and the nonprofit that will go in there. It wasn't my decision, it was their decision, and I support them. ... And the state was able to see the significance."

In a previous interview, Republican Assemblyman Tony Jordan characterized the building's conveyance from New York's hands to the local nonprofit as "truly home rule."

"The municipality says, 'This is what we want to do,' and the state will help them do that," said Jordan, sponsor of the bill in the Assembly. Both concurrent bills passed unanimously in their respective houses, in the Senate on Wednesday and in the Assembly Thursday, during the end of the session where "local bills" are passed through committee and considered in rapid succession.

Aelish Nealon, executive director for the Hoosick Area Youth Center and Community Coalition, the nonprofit coalition group that successfully sought to obtain the armory, said Thursday the next step would be to follow the direction of the community, after an input-seeking meeting earlier this month. Potential uses for the armory from that event were compiled and are now posted on the HAYC3 website.

"We've got our directions," said Nealon, drawing comparisons to when area youth were asked for their input during the revamping of the youth center seven to eight years ago. "That's always the best map to follow."

Hoosick town Supervisor Keith Cipperly said he was thanking "everyone involved" in the effort. "They've done a tremendous amount of work," he said. "It can finally be a community center."

The bill authorizing the commissioner of general services to transfer the armory explicitly states a purchase price in the sum of \$1, an addition to the original language amended earlier this month. The concurrent bills were first introduced in May in response to a resolution by the Hoosick town board in support of HAYC3 acquiring the building.

The Office of General Services is allowed to set certain conditions, known as covenant restrictions, on the transfer to ensure the building retains its historical integrity and fulfills use requirements as outlined in the bill "for community programs." A representative from the state Historic Preservation Office in January explained his office's role as a working relationship with the building's next tenants to review rehabilitation work and provide general guidance.

An OGS representative said previously that upon legislative passage, the transfer of ownership of the armory could take three to four months. The bill allows HAYC3 one year to review and accept or reject the terms and conditions.

Nealon said her organization would need to meet with town officials to plot the future arrangement regarding the town's offices. While the National Guard unit remained, the town leased office space at the armory for the advantageous price of \$682 a month.

Cipperly said the town would support HAYC3 "110 percent" through the transition. He said the town offices would remain for a six-month trial period to see how the new arrangement works. "If it works out ... maybe we can stay there," he said, going on to reiterate concerns with court proceedings and surprise arraignments.

"My hope is they grow so much we have to leave."

Calling the state's armories interesting and attractive buildings, McDonald said there was also important historical significance surrounding them. "On the other hand, there's a lot of work to bring them up to modern specifications, codes, things of that nature. So you try to save what you can," he said.