

Quarterly Ascertainments/Community Issues

STATION: WKKW

SUBJECT: Unsafe Buildings on Main St. in Kingwood, Preston Co.

KINGWOOD — Repairs have started on a building Kingwood Council deemed unsafe to walk by.

Stone has been falling from the Herring Building, at the corner of Price Street and W.Va. 7 (Main Street) downtown, for months.

The sidewalk on the Main Street side of the building has been barred to pedestrians even longer, in part because of concerns about the condition of a metal fire escape that hangs on the building.

Angelina Stone and Marble, of Bridgeport, Ohio, erected scaffolding on the Price Street side of the building this week.

Angelina Stone vice president John Emery said workers will remove the cornice and parapet, replacing them with split- face block to match the rest of the 105-year-old building.

It's not the first time Angelina Stone and Marble has worked in Preston County. Emery said the company also did work on two Catholic churches in the county.

He estimated the work will take two to three weeks. Only the front of the building is being addressed. Mayor Jean Guillot said electricity will have to be turned off for a period of time on that section of the block, while Angelina is working near power lines.

Guillot hopes it's only the start of work on the building. Council has been back and forth with the owners since October 2017. B&L LLC, of Charleston, bought the building at auction in 2016 for \$34,000.

"We want her to tackle the side and the fire escape, too," Guillot said.

In February, a structure was built over the Price Street sidewalk to protect pedestrians from falling stones. Council billed the owner for the work. And the building's only tenant, Preston Home Medical, moved out.

Sweet Annie's

The Herring Building isn't the only one council wants repaired. The mayor said the Sweet Annie's building, down the block from the Herring Building, has shifted further on its foundation. The building has been leaning to the side for some time.

"Some of the 2-by-4s have snapped," Guillot said, referring to boards put up in an effort to control the structure's lean.

The building is owned by Anna Brown Gupta, of California. Her attorney has written council that she is no longer the owner. Two different attorneys have advised council that Gupta is the owner, even though there are tax liens against the property. It was sold at the county tax sale in 2012 for nonpayment of taxes.

Last week council directed its attorney to send another letter to Gupta, telling her of the new development. It's unlikely she will cooperate, Councilman Mike Lipscomb said at the time.

Sweet Annie's was extensively renovated within the past 15 years but is now empty, with the floor collapsed into the basement. The city boarded up entrances to the building.

DATE: Sunday, May 19, 2019 on WKKW

TIME/DURATION: 2:32

GUEST: Kingwood Mayor Jean Guillot

MEDIA INTREST: Morgantown AM -- WAJR, Dominion Post, WVAQ, WKKW, WBOY, WDTV, Facebook, Twitter

YEAR: 2019

QUARTER: 2nd