

No decision yet on demolition of Davenport hall

Davenport
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DAVENPORT — The old Foresters' Hall on Davenport's main drag will remain untouched for at least another month while the county Historic Resources Commission mulls over what to do with it.

The question is whether the county should allow the decrepit but historically significant building to be torn down.

Commissioners decided to continue their hearing until June 17 because they received another staff report late in the day Thursday and didn't have time to review it.

"Have any of you seen it (the building)?" Myrtle Garaventa, Davenport's postmaster for 44 years, asked the commissioners. After all three said they'd

never been inside the building, Garaventa said "Then I don't think you know what you are talking about ... It didn't mean anything to the town."

Arlene Licursi inherited the hall from her aunt, who died last December. She has become concerned that someone will get hurt as the building continues to fall apart. The Licursi family says it cannot afford a lawsuit nor can it afford to renovate the building, which is estimated to cost \$193,000. The family doesn't really want to tear it down, but it hasn't many options.

But since the hall, unused since the 50s, is listed on the county's Historic Inventory, the commission must approve its demolition.

County staff has recommended two things:

If the commission finds the rehabilitation of the building "infeasible" it should allow for demolition. But if restoration is possible, the commission should deny the demolition application.

Just what is feasible and infeasible was discussed Thursday afternoon and will be discussed more later.

The Licursi family hired engineer Don Ifland to study the damage to the building. Ifland found many of the structural supports destroyed by fungus or bugs. He also found fire damage, deteriorated walls and floors and a sinking foundation. He maintains restoration is neither physically nor financially possible.

About 40 Davenport residents signed

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a petition asking the county to let the Licursis tear the building down. But at least one person showed up at the hearing to defend it.

"It's such a historical site," said David Carnaghe of the Santa Cruz Architectural Heritage Club. He added that the county, the owners and other historic preservation groups could pitch in for its restoration. "It's a unique building."

But Garaventa, who said she's had her finger in nearly every Davenport pie for 61 years, disagrees.

"I went to the last function there 58 years ago, it wasn't a pretty building then," she said. "If they want to save it, why don't they pay for it?"