

Let the makeover begin

The Brick Store Museum begins phase one of its facelift

By Molly Lovell
Staff Writer

The Brick Store Museum on Main Street in Kennebunk is getting a facelift thanks to donations raised for the museum's capital campaign.

The campaign, dubbed, "Connecting Generations, Building a better future for preserving the past," kicked off last June, in conjunction with the museum's 70th anniversary, with a goal of raising \$1.5 million.

As part of the first phase of the renovation, scaffolding was put up last week and workers will soon begin with chimney repairs and brick work. During the past several years rain has leaked in to the building through the chimneys, comprising the museum's exhibits.

The museum's Executive Director, Tracey Baetz said

roughly 56 percent of the \$1.5 million has been raised through pledges and donations.

Once achieved, half of the funds will go toward the restoration and historic preservation of the museum's four buildings, while the other half will be allocated to the museum's endowment fund for future needs.

Baetz said a comprehensive engineering study was performed in 2004 to identify problem areas. Results of the study found that the buildings are in need of a number of repairs including beam work, roof repairs, brick work and repairs to the electrical system.

"The buildings themselves date back to 1810 to 1860. Work on the buildings has been done over the years, but as with anything that has a little bit of history, they need some tender loving care," she said.

The museum's last major fundraising campaign was more

than 13 years ago and the building has undergone some limited improvements, Baetz said, but added, "Some of that has fallen short of addressing the core integrity of the buildings."

Baetz said that the museum is located in the national register of historic districts, and that by being able to better care for exhibits, the museum is preserving the history of the region.

She called the museum an, "Iconic gateway into the Kennebunks."

"It's a view of Americana and Main Street that you don't see anymore," Baetz said about the museum along with the Kennebunk Free Library and the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church.

"It's the largest commercial block of historic buildings in Kennebunk," she said.

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Repairs to the buildings are being done in phases so that all parts of the museum can remain open, but Baetz said that as they get in to some more of the invasive work, parts of the museum will have to be taken off line.

Baetz said she sees the restoration of the museum as a learning opportunity for not only patrons, but for the community as a whole.

"I would imagine that the issues we face are similar to a lot of those that homeowners face," she said, and added, "This is something the community can really wrap their arms around in terms of learning."

Baetz said residents, businesses and those from away have contributed to the campaign and George and Barbara Bush are honorary co-chairs.

The couple has donated many items from their family home on Walker's Point and visited the museum on a number of occasions, said Baetz.

Donations for the museum's capital campaign are still being accepted. To find out more, visit the museum Web site at BrickStoreMuseum.org.

People can also contribute to the effort by participating in the museum's brick paving program.

Any one interested can purchase a brick, have it specially engraved, and have in placed in the museum's courtyard. The bricks are priced at \$100 each.



GETTING THINGS DONE - Scaffolding was recently put up outside of the Brick Store Museum in Kennebunk as part of the first phase of its capital improvement plan. (Molly Lovell photo)