

Local REFERENCE

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First steps taken to restore Conner House

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After months of speculation and discussion, the Manassas Park City Council agreed to fund a study of the Conner House to determine the best way to treat the historical property.

"I really think we need that information," Vice Mayor Douglas Parks said of the study. "I think we need to take a good look at it."

The study, to be performed by Paciulli, Simmons and Associates, will cost the city approximately \$18,625.

An additional \$5,000 is being donated to funding the project study by the Manassas Park Womens Club. The funds were raised through the club's collection of recyclable materials.

When complete, the study will offer the city specific options and suggestions about the best way to preserve the house. The study will also help to determine the feasibility of moving the house from its present site to the Signal Hill area.

"We need to know if it (the move) is possible," Parks said.

The Signal Hill area would be appropriate for the house, Councilwoman Francis Embrey noted.

"It is a historical area and it would probably fit right in," Embrey said.

The club has looked after the house for several years, running the collection service in order to raise money for the restoration of the project. However, the club has decided to close down the collection center and donate the funds which have been raised so far to the city.

As to how the implementation of the project study's recommendations will be financed, the council said there were several options to consider.

"Federal funds are possible for the rest of the project," Councilman Ernest Evans noted. "There are a number of ways to finance the project."

Rep. French Slaughter, R-7th, has pledged his support in finding the necessary funding for the remainder of the project when the time for the actual restoration arrives, Evans said.

"But first we have to fund the study," he added.

The Conner house has been a topic of discussion among Manassas Park residents and leaders ever since the city purchased the site in 1973. In early 1976, the city began considering demolition of the structure, suggesting the property was unsafe. However, public opinion favored working to preserve the property and the house came under the protection of the Manassas Park Woman's Club.