

## Officials seek historic nod for city clock tower



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Emphasis has shifted from bringing the city's historic clock back to life to getting the entire Clock Tower Complex on the National Historic Register.

"About a year ago, I met with the owners of the complex and other officials and we talked about the restoration of the clock itself," Historic Amsterdam League President Jerry Snyder said Friday. "One of the topics we discussed at that time was the possibility of getting the building on the register and that was kind of a secondary item at the time -- now it's our priority."

Snyder said the clock was evaluated for restoration last year and when officials involved in the project heard the pricing for the project, the process slowed down.

"It became apparent that the project would be much more expensive than we had anticipated," he said, "and in order to take on a project like that, it became much more important for the complex to get a national register listing because that would help with getting grants to fix the clock."

The clock, which was erected in 1922, hasn't run consistently in years.

City Historian and Community and Economic Development Director Robert von Hasseln said the cost of the

clock's restoration is "tens of thousands of dollars," which HAL and the city don't have.

However, if the complex was put on the national register, it would be worth spending money to rehabilitate the clock.

"If you're on the national register, and you do the rehabilitation to preserve the historical appearance of the building, you qualify for up to 40 percent tax credits, state and federal," von Hasseln said.

With the project's new shift, von Hasseln and Snyder met with the state's Historic Preservation League and the State Historic Preservation Office earlier this month to discuss ways to get on the register and where to go once the building is on the list.

Snyder said one factor that will help the complex make the cut is to get a thesis done on the complex by one of HAL's members.

"One of our HAL members who retired went back to college and he was getting his master's degree in historic preservation from the University of Virginia," Snyder said.

"He ended up doing his master's thesis on the Sanford Complex. He's very active down in the Washington D.C. area and he knows a thing or two about getting buildings on the national register and historic preservation; he's done several applications and he's familiar with the process."

The HAL member was in the city at the time of the meeting with state officials and offered his advice to the group as well.

Von Hasseln said getting on the register will speed up the rehabilitation process which will open up space in the complex and attract more tenants.

"The state looking at industrial-type buildings to see how they can be renovated and re-used especially in this area," von Hasseln said, "because of the possibilities of tying it to the high-tech triangle between Malta, Utica and Albany -- this is a great place for somebody who wants to do business in all three locations, because it's 45 minutes in every direction."

Snyder said he's in the process of helping to get all of the information necessary to be on the list. Within the next two weeks the information will go to the state to be reviewed and evaluated, and if the state needs more information, Snyder will be contacted.

He said HAL's position in the process is to help in any way possible.

"If there's anything we can do to help move the process along in terms of paperwork or anything, that's what we're doing," he said. "Our only stake in this is to try to make this work and help get the complex on the list. We're offering ourselves as a liaison."

Von Hasseln said once the complex is on the register, the restoration process of the clock will be done in increments due to the cost of the project.

"Unless a benefactor comes forward with a blank check for us to rehabilitate the clock, the money will be raised and the process will be done in steps," he said.

Snyder said the complex should be on the register regardless of the clock project because it's "a symbol of the city."

"Anybody from Amsterdam knows the clock tower building," he said, "you can tell people you're near the clock tower and they know immediately where you are."

"The complex is still part of our city -- it's a part of our history that hasn't gotten torn down or removed," he continued. "It's unique with the clock and it's unique from the standpoint that it was corporate headquarters for the Sanford Mill Operation and Sanford was a huge part of the city's history. It's a building here in Amsterdam that we're working very hard to bring back. It's beautiful, unique and has a long history, it would be wonderful to have on register. It deserves the recognition."