

LAKE STATION

City Hall could reopen in November

By Carole Carlson

Closed since early June when a burst fire sprinkler pipe flooded most of the building, Lake Station City Hall could reopen around Thanksgiving.

Chief of Staff Adrian Vera said a lengthy insurance claim process has slowed progress, but he said the faulty pipe will soon be replaced.

Once that's completed, he said there will be an inspection of the rest of the system, which will be repeated every five years, and it will be pressure-tested to make sure there are no more issues and it's safe.

After those assurances, Vera said construction and repairs can begin.

"Our goal is to push the insurance company and push the contractor to get in there before Thanksgiving.

Meanwhile, the city has an array of white trailers in the city hall parking lot. Vera said Internet, phone lines and software have all been installed in each of the five trailers.

"It's just like we're in the building," he said.

He said a trailer is designated for each department, including the mayor, clerk-treasurer, sewage, building, and courts.

The city council has been holding its meetings at Lake Station Edison High School's community room.

City hall flooded June 7 after the pipe burst, leaving water damage across the building and ruining technology equipment.

The police department, on the building's west side, was not damaged.

Carole Carlson is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.



Portable trailers will house city workers until repairs are complete at Lake Station City Hall, which flooded June 7 after a pipe burst. CAROLE CARLSON/FOR POST-TRIBUNE



Sharon Nault, left, leads visitors Alicia Savoy and her husband, Scott, on a tour of the Lake County Historical Society Museum in Crown Point on Tuesday. Nault is board secretary of the Lake County Historical Society. ANDY LAVALLEY/PHOTOS FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

Lake County museum looking for new home

Must vacate old courthouse by Dec. 31

By Deborah Laverty Post-Tribune

Time travel is a possibility at the Lake County Historical Society Museum.

The museum, housed in 4,000 square feet on the second floor of the Old Lake County Courthouse in downtown Crown Point, is filled with donations that go back to the 1800s when both Crown Point and Lake County were in their infancy.

Finding new homes for these museum treasures, including diaries from Civil War soldiers, an 1821 Gutenberg printing press and a symphonion music box and cabinet from 1890 that still plays, is now the job of Executive Director Diane Gora and some eight volunteers.

Gora herself is an unpaid volunteer.

"We were given notice on July 31 that we have until Dec. 31 to vacate the space," Gora said.

Notice was given from the Lake Courthouse Foundation, owners of the courthouse, who couldn't



Diane Gora sits among some of the items at the Lake County Historical Society Museum on Tuesday. Gora, executive director of the Lake County Historical Society for the past two years, is unsure of the museum's future as its lease for space on the second floor of the Old Courthouse expires at the end of the year and will not be renewed.

be reached for comment.

"We can't afford the rent right now," Gora said.

The museum has been housed in the courthouse for 43 years this month.

"We've had a good 43 years," she said.

Gora said the Lake County Historical Society, which operates the museum, is one of the oldest continuously operating historical societies in Indiana.

It's still gearing up to celebrate its 150th anniversary with an open house from 1 to 4 p.m. on Sept. 27.

"Our goal is to maintain the society and keep it going for another 150 years. The elephant in the room is taking care of people's treasures," she said.

Gora said the society knew two years ago that they would be asked to move the museum out of the courthouse.

During that time period, Gora and volunteers have tried to inventory everything.

"We have been working diligently to do an inventory; none had been done before," she said.

So far, 5,000 items have been logged and can be accounted for.

"We are struggling to get through all the items," she said.

She said part of her group's tedious process, in addition to logging everything, is trying to connect items with their donors.

"It's not a matter of putting things out in a dumpster. We're trying to find paperwork that links items with the family. Do they want the item back or donate it to another place?" she said.

Her group is also able to loan or gift items, if pertinent to that community, to other cities or

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2 priests at Evanston church could be forced to leave US, parish fears

Paperwork backlog regarding immigration status creating uncertainty for clergymen

By Richard Requena Pioneer Press

Walking out of Catholic mass at St. John XXIII parish in Evanston, Illinois on Thursday morning, Lois Farley Shuford expressed alarmed that the parish's two priests, who both came to the United States with a mission to serve the poor, might be forced to leave the country.

The possibility of losing the immigrant priests intensifies the worry for people in the parish, where about half the congregants are immigrants from Mexico. They're facing heightened fears as they see news reports about U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement seizing immigrants on the streets.

The priests, the Rev. Koudjo K. Jean-Philippe Lokpo, of the west African nation of Togo, and the Rev. José Manuel Ortiz, of Mexico,

are here on R1 religious worker visas that permit them to serve in the United States. But the federal government is so backed up in processing paperwork that the Rev. Lokpo might be forced to leave in October, and only an attorney's intervention saved the Rev. Ortiz from having to leave the country by the end of July.

That has upset parishioners, who say the two men have devoted their lives to serving others, and have done tremendous good for the people in the parish.

"We were scared," Shuford said after leaving the church service. "I mean, in this (President Donald Trump) administration, we're scared about everything."

"We're scared for many of our parishioners," added Bob Shuford. About half of the St. John XXIII's parishioners are Hispanic in the

multilingual parish, which offers mass in English, Spanish and French Creole.

"We're aware of what's happening with our priests," Bob Shuford said. "It's a part of a larger concern that we have, and we've all been through training on how we can best support our fellow parishioners."

The Archdiocese of Chicago consolidated the parishes of St. Nicholas and St. Mary to form St. John XXIII parish in early 2022. By the end of that year, Lokpo led the parish as its pastor, assisted by Ortiz as the parish's associate pastor.

"The core of this place, particularly at St. Nick, but the core of the whole parish has been that all are welcome. That's a critical thing here in this parish home, and so I think that has been extended to Jose and Jean-Philippe as well," Lois Farley Shuford said.

Ortiz remains philosophical about the possibility of being forced to leave St. John XXIII and return to Mexico.



Priests at St. John XXIII Parish in Evanston face challenges in their immigration status as they have spent years waiting for residency and may have to leave the U.S. before it comes through. St. Mary's Catholic Church is part of the parish, which welcomed the Rev. Jose Manuel Ortiz and the Rev. Koudjo J. Jean Phillipe Lokpo in 2022. RICHARD REQUENA/PIONEER PRESS

"It is what it is," Ortiz said. What really matters to him is his connection to the members of his parish, he added. "You try to do what's best for the parish and for the people."

In an April letter to the parish, Lokpo wrote of his initial concerns that his and Ortiz's green card appli-

cations for continued residency had yet to be processed by the federal government, despite submitting his required documents to the government in 2022.

At the time, he anticipated that

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