



Efforts to save Edwards House continue

Published: Monday, Feb. 16, 2015 7:52 p.m. CST

[DOWNERS GROVE](#) – A new plan arose at the village council meeting Feb. 10 that may rescue the historic Edwards House from the wrecking ball, and save a few trees along Maple Avenue as well.

Downers Grove resident John Tillotson, who stepped forward to move the house from its current location at 942 Maple Ave. to his property at 743 Maple Ave., requested the council provide approval for he and his team of industry professionals to work with the village forester on a revised map of trees affected by the move, and for the council to vote on the new proposal at its meeting Tuesday.

The council agreed to Tillotson's request to move forward in working with village staff.

According to a village manager's report dated Friday, Tillotson and his house-moving professional and consulting arborist will meet with staff this week to prepare an updated structure relocation route and tree removal and pruning plan. Staff are also working with Tillotson on a revised term sheet for the proposed three-party agreement.

The review and discussion of these items is now tentatively scheduled for the council meeting March 3.

[At the Jan. 20 council meeting](#), a map developed by staff indicated more than 20 trees would have to be trimmed, temporarily removed and replanted, or permanently removed were the house relocated. Residents and commissioners voiced concerns over the potential tree loss.

One of the requirements for the move would be for Tillotson to gain approval from the five residents whose trees would need pruning.

Not having access to the village forester, Tillotson worked with a certified arborist and the moving company to devise an alternative plan to preserve some of the trees.

"I have to say that going into that activity I personally didn't know where I stood on the whole initiative, and the reason is, I really like trees," Tillotson said. "Our intent is to live in the home and we don't want to be the people responsible for upsetting the neighborhood and having this impact on the trees. ... At the end of that exercise, I had a different feeling, which was we really can do this with minimal tree impacts based on opinions by experts ..."

Tillotson said that by turning the home into 743 Maple Ave., the trees at 802 Maple Ave. would not be affected. The original plan required them to be pruned, and the neighbor had expressed disapproval, he said.

The new plan also involves moving some dirt in the parkway near the Downers Grove Historical Museum to avoid a large parkway maple tree and two private trees at 826 Maple Ave., where the

homeowner has not given approval for tree trimming or removal, he said.

In discussing Tillotson's request, commissioner Greg Hose said staff would not be starting with nothing, since there is already a staff report on the matter, and additional information from the arborist.

"We are not making a commitment one way or the other," Hose said. "If the ultimate product is 10 trees removed instead of 15 I don't know if that is going to move the needle for me, but I think it is worth it to find out."

In addition to the tree impact, another concern is financing. The village stated it would waive the building permit fees of \$140,000 for the condo development where the Edwards House currently sits, and disburse the funds held in escrow to Tillotson after the relocation.

"I think tree impact will still be significant," said commissioner Geoff Neustadt. "I can't outlay any dollars that are public dollars. The tree impact is important, the dollars are becoming more and more important."

Downers Grove resident Denise Lazar spoke against the use of village money for the Edwards House.

"I want the council to know that it's not appropriate to spend public dollars and I appreciate you speaking out for taxpayers in terms of protecting our money," Lazar said. "This is not an emergency. ... You need to do your job and get information to make a thoughtful decision."

Tillotson said that since the Jan. 20 meeting, he took steps to seek alternative funding.

Copyright © 2015 Suburban Life Media. All rights reserved.
