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Elevator move on hold until autumn

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The planned move of the landmark Rochester Elevator on June 17 has been postponed to the fall.

Liz Golding, spokeswoman for the Rochester-Avon Historical Society, said the current owner, Lawrence Smith, and the buyer of his East University property, Sunrise Condominiums, have agreed to delay the date by which Smith must vacate the property to early to mid-June.

"There are a lot of business things that have occurred in the last few days," Golding said Wednesday.

Smith last year said he would close the longtime grain elevator and consolidate his business at another elevator he owns in Oxford. Now, Golding said, he's planning to open a new location near the northeast corner of Rochester and Tienken so he can continue serving his customers locally.

Smith said last week that he will have more information about his new location soon, but declined further comment.

He is expected to vacate the elevator by mid-June, Golding said.

"Once he is out it will be a minimum of 10 to 12 weeks before we can move (the building) because there are so many things that come into play," Golding said. "The thing I want the public to know is this is still going on. We are still looking for money, we are still looking for in-kind donations."

Golding said although she's disappointed by the delay, there are some benefits.

"We will have time to dig the basement and possibly pour the basement," she said. The society will go before the Rochester Planning Commission June 5 seeking site-plan approval for the structure's new location off Mill Street near the Clinton River.

At last Monday's Rochester City Council meeting, RAHS president Greg Doyle said \$15,000 cash is still needed to complete the move. He said Frank Rewold & Son has agreed to dig the basement. A donor is still being sought to pour the basement.

So far, \$20,000 cash and \$100,000 in in-kind donations have been raised, Doyle said.

Rochester City Council may be considering a loan to cover all or part of the remaining cash needed. The council has asked Doyle to come to its May 22 meeting with a firm number. The city has already donated the land the elevator will occupy, a vacant spot east of the south bridge near the Clothes Closet.

At last week's council meeting, Councilman Tom Werth suggested a grant but found no supporters. Mayor David Katulic said, however, that there is precedent for a loan.

Though some are sad the elevator is moving out of downtown, all agree that's better than losing it all-together.

"We have to save this building," said Councilman David Becker.

"We can't see it demolished or destroyed. ... I have full faith that you'll pay (the loan) back to us."
