

GMVLB DEMOLISHES DILAPIDATED STRUCTURES ACROSS THE COUNTY

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Joshua Thomas - The former kitchen and bar of the old Stone Lodge at 132 W. Grand St., Palatine Bridge, was demolished this week and last by the GMVLB.

By JOSHUA THOMAS

C-S-E Editor

PALATINE BRIDGE — The Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank is in the process of removing dilapidated buildings throughout Montgomery County, with removal of the old Stone Lodge's former kitchen and bar wrapping up last week and several local demolitions scheduled for the near future.

Recently, the GMVLB demolished properties at 3 and 11 Ann Street in Fultonville and 110 Charleston Street in Sprakers, with future demolitions taking place at 153 Erie Blvd., Canajoharie and 70 Center St., Fort Plain, along with two more in Palatine Bridge and another in Little Falls.

Said Project Manager John Mazzarella III, "It was amazing how things came together on these demos. Both Fultonville properties are now listed for sale and we expect to have them back on the tax rolls this summer. We could not have moved this quickly without the help and cooperation of the village and neighbors."

"We're making a pretty big impact and helping a lot of communities," commented Executive Director Tolga Morawski of the GMVLB, explaining, "In this quarter ... we have 13 demos planned."

A house located behind the old Stone Lodge will also be removed, having been abandoned for decades after a fire broke out there. The demolitions were bid separately, each project having different considerations, including the fact that abatement isn't possible in the house still-to-be removed, as it's unsafe for anybody to enter.

As such, that building will have to be demolished (with the project likely starting within the next few weeks) differently, utilizing safety gear and equipment

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ensuring that asbestos can't get into the air.

Explained Morawski, "Basically, with every project, you're trying to figure out what's savable — what's reusable." The kitchen area of the old Stone Lodge had been in rough shape for so many years — with both the roof and floor having rotted out — that demolition remained the only option.

The house behind the old Stone Lodge, said Morawski, "Should have been demolished 40 years ago," after being irreparably damaged.

Demolitions such as the ones taking place throughout Montgomery County are the reason the GMVLB exists, Morawski said, explaining "There's not many people out there that are going to buy a building and demolish it properly — get the asbestos abated and tear the building down — at a loss, for the good of the community."

Because citizens don't generally have the resources to fund demolitions of dilapidated properties, they usually just become accustomed to the eyesores.

"It's not many property owners that can afford the luxury of dealing with a house next to them,"

Morawski continued. As such, the GMVLB works with towns, villages, county and property neighbors to acquire contributions to put toward each project "for the good of the community."

The Village of Palatine Bridge Board has allocated \$5,000 toward each property demolition in Palatine Bridge, with Morawski explaining that the GMVLB will spend about \$75,000 taking down the three village properties, with \$20,000 already having been spent toward asbestos abatement in the old Stone Lodge's kitchen and bar (located at 132 W. Grand St.) prior to its removal.

Sharing the cost of removing or dealing with problem properties, Morawski said, "helps make it more palatable to any one of those parties."

The property at 71 West Grand Street is also scheduled for future demolition by the GMVLB, with

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the structure there currently receiving asbestos testing, with mitigation being the next step toward that goal.

Stated Palatine Bridge Mayor James Post of the GMVLB, “We, the village board, are very pleased with the progress they’re making,” noting that the council is appreciative of the GMVLB’s continued support. “They’ve always kept the village informed and their best interest at the plan, and we hope with the work being done at the Stone Lodge that somebody will come along and purchase it,” added Post, adding that the location could someday be used in a variety of ways, potentially including as rental space for events. While the community-improvement-focused actions of the GMVLB are definitely having a positive impact locally, Morawski explained of the organization’s future, “What I’d like to be doing is investing more money into getting the county’s demolition team going again,” as it would be a more cost-effective route to cleaning up blight, though that option remains up to County Executive Matthew Ossenfort and the Montgomery County Legislature, who have been approached by the GMVLB with ideas regarding that possibility.