

An Update on 50 Church Street



The historic 1905 Quincy Elementary School located at 50 Church Street in Quincy was used to teach students for almost 50 years until the California Earthquake Standards Act came into place, at which point it was adapted into offices for the staff of Plumas County Office of Education (PCOE) and Plumas Unified School District (PUSD). In 2014, the old schoolhouse and district office was vacated due to waste plumbing and flooding issues. The previous administration at the time of the flooding, decided not to go forward with repairs or plans for the building after the initial mitigation was addressed. This left the historic building vacant and deteriorating for three years.

In the spring of 2017, A “Save 50 Church Street ” campaign and “Friends of 50” committee was launched to bring the community together to brainstorm, dream, and organize around the building’s preservation. Efforts were and continue to be made to garner outside grant funding for the building’s rehabilitation. Additionally, multiple options were explored to lease or rent the building to local or outside community organizations. Plumas Unified was and is still willing to rent or sell the building to anyone interested. Though a few different organizations did come

forward to consider the possibility of leasing 50 Church, the cost of necessary repairs to safely inhabit the building ultimately deterred anyone from committing. This redirected the fate and responsibility of 50 Church back into Plumas Unified's hands.

In the Fall of 2017, the Plumas Unified School District Governing Board explored the important question - "What is the future of 50 Church Street?". They committed to making a decision about the building by the end of October 2017. Completely demolishing the building would still cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, and would destroy an important cultural and historical resource, that holds both economic and community value. With winter fast approaching, a decision for a new roof was made to stop further damage to the building. As promised, in October, the Plumas Unified School board approved financing a new roof for 50 Church out of unallocated state reimbursement funds from Fund 35. This decision ultimately made any future for 50 Church Street possible.

After the completion of the roof in December, with the final cost from Rua and Son totaling \$232,459.00, the PUSD School Board approved another \$680,000 for abatement costs. This money is also coming from Fund 35, which has available and unallocated district funds. These funds were reimbursed from the state for other facility projects paid out of the general fund and are completely unconnected to Measure B bond funds. The decision to continue with abatement was made, as school board member Dwight Pierson explained, "to allow the building to be repurposed, as no matter the future of 50, these initial repairs are necessary to make the building viable." Interior and exterior abatement is currently being done by the firm WIKE. After abatement is complete, drainage options including the possibility of a French Drain system will be determined by engineers from Nichols Consulting Engineers.

Once this third phase is complete, project manager Kevin Nolan will determine the viability and bottom line cost of further rehabilitation of the building based on the findings during abatement. Pierson stated, "so far, the results have been very pleasing, there have been no huge surprises found during abatement, the building is in remarkably good shape." Oestreich added, "As we know from other projects, once you start opening up a wall or roof you never know the ultimate damage that you will find." The Board will not make any future decisions or allocate any further money without knowing the final results from all three phases of repairs.

Plumas Unified is not done exploring outside options for the building, but is now also exploring the viability of moving back into the space and utilizing 50 Church for the centralized staff of PCOE and PUSD once again. However, this decision will still be made one step at a time as the Governing Board determines the ultimate cost after abatement is complete. Options for financing the complete rehabilitation of 50 Church are being explored through various loan options.

If Plumas Unified does ultimately move back into the building, every effort will be made to create and open up opportunities for the community to utilize the grounds and the building for community events, education, and collaboration. Currently, Kevin Danaher, Friends of 50 Committee member, is applying for two grants to garner money to use part of 50 Church for youth development, community resilience, and green enterprise.

The “Friends of 50” is an active community committee that cares about the viability and future of 50 Church street. The group is split into two groups - one large group, and a Friends of 50 Board, which meets regularly to discuss and plan. The board is comprised of community members Chris Murray, Lori Simpson, Dwight Pierson, Leslie Edlund, John Sheehan, Kevin Danaher, Nancy Gambell, and Terry Oestreich. The large group is open for anyone to join and the community is encouraged to join the large group committee. Contact Patty McCutcheon pmccutcheon@pcoe.k12.ca.us, to find out more information and get on an email list to stay up to date with the continued progress and our next large group meeting.