



State funds proposed for Roland Park firehouse

Legislators to seek \$110,000 for renovations

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Posted 2/18/09

A bill to create a \$110,000 grant to rehab the engine No. 44 firehouse in Roland Park is being considered by the General Assembly.

The legislation requires the city to spend \$20,000 in matching funds.

House Bill 744, sponsored by the entire 41st District delegation, is the latest round of proposed funding intended to bring the firehouse into the 21st century.

It was built in 1899 and is technically the oldest still in service in Baltimore, but is not recognized as such because it was built in what was then Baltimore County before it was annexed into the city.

The station's coverage area extends south to Interstate 83 and north to the county line. It serves from Park Heights Avenue in the west to Loch Raven Boulevard in east Baltimore.

Any state funding would go toward fixing structural problems with the firehouse.

Last year, James Bellamy, maintenance chief for the city fire department, estimated that it would cost \$250,000 to fix all the problems with the Roland Park station.

The city has already spent \$70,000 to fix the roof, correct some electrical problems and install rollup doors. Until last year, Roland Park was the last firehouse in the city not to have rollup doors, which facilitate a quick exit for trucks and ambulances on calls.

The community has raised money for new lockers for firefighters. The old lockers were a danger because firefighters' gear didn't properly dry. If the gear isn't dry it can cause steam burns when they're fighting a fire, firefighters said.

The firehouse still needs its living quarters upgraded. It has no bathrooms or separate changing facilities for female firefighters.

The community raised \$4,057 for the restoration on Dec. 13 and raised an additional \$2,500 throughout the summer and fall of 2008.

The Roland Park Civic League and the Roland Park Foundation each donated \$7,000 last year to help with restorations.

The community is now trying to raise \$25,000 to \$30,000 to renovate the kitchen.

"It's pretty shabby," said Bill Sharpe, a Roland Park resident who is helping the league raise funds for the station.

The community will host a chili cookoff at St. David's Episcopal Church on Feb. 28 as a fundraiser for the firehouse.

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