

Patriot

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and Free Press

Allegheny County's community newspaper since 1862



Letters to the Editor

PATRIOT, 34 Water St., Cuba, NY 14727

e-mail: mail@cubapatriot.com

Palmer Opera House restoration is an essential project for our downtown

To the Editor:

As you may have noticed, many of our village and small city Main Streets are turning from vibrant productive areas of commerce to dingy "For Rent" sign showcases. In Cuba, we even have a central three unit commercial edifice, the Palmer Building, collapsing in on itself! This building is not currently helping our community's economy or aesthetic pride. In fact, many members of the village feel that the sad state of the Palmer Building is hampering recovery of the village's Main St.

We have heard some individuals from the community proclaim that the Palmer Building should simply be torn down. We are not sure that these individuals understand that the cost of demolition would have added a significant burden to the village's taxes. Projected demolition costs were over \$100,000. We doubt that these folks really see a vacant lot or cavity in the middle of the village as an improvement.

The Cuba Friends of Architecture has taken on the tremendous task of supporting the recovery of the Palmer Building and the economic history and beauty of the village. No one gets paid. No one is trying to make a personal profit. Due to their efforts, the severely damaged roof of the Palmer Building was repaired. Grants to repair the roof of the Palmer Building were obtained from federal and state agencies that believe that village commerce is important and that rural recovery may require assistance.

A new grant was recently won by the Cuba Village and the Cuba Friends of Architecture titled "Restore New York Communities Initiative". The grant evaluators deemed the restoration of the Palmer Building important priority for our area. The grant provides for major reconstruction and/or restoration of a community theater area upstairs, and three commercial units on the ground floor.

As a community, we have a willing, well educated, but under-utilized work force.

Together, we can have the vision to strategically expand our community and its economy. Already, even before the Palmer Building has been restored, there is private sector in-

terest in purchasing other buildings on Main St. We are certain that the village of Cuba can once again be a viable commercial entity. We are not talking about Cuba becoming a bustling, traffic clogged metropolis. However, we will work for the village's vibrant future. We hope to once again see people on attractive streets and shopping or receiving services in local establishments. We should be able to mail a letter and tend to village and town business in the center of the village. The era of village shops and prosperous Main Streets is not dead everywhere. Other villages have brought back their viability. We are proud of our community, but we need to sustain our effort and seek the help that is required or offered. The community of Cuba has a stake in it.

Michael and Connie Doyle
Cuba