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## Train station refurbishment hits snag

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Waldwick - It was a short sigh of relief for members of the Waldwick Community Alliance after a three-year struggle to lease the historic train station from NJ Transit was formally resolved by the signing of a 25-year lease.

The group of local business owners and residents thought they could begin work on the station this spring but are now tangled up in more paperwork, and a request for details, that could cost the group as much as \$30,000.

The Alliance, which once waited three months just for permission to put a tarp on the station's leaking roof, will now have to provide the specifics of its restoration plan to the Department of Community Affairs and State Historic Preservation Office before any work can begin on the deteriorating building.

Restoration of the train station has been the



sole focus of the Alliance's fund-raising efforts since 2005.

"It's not so much that we're being told we can't do this or that," said Doug Cowie, vice president of the Alliance. "Because this is a state-owned facility, there are just so many hoops we have to jump through."

The Alliance has NJ Transit approval to start the restoration, but the Department of Community Affairs requires a plan detailing mechanical, electric and heating elements.

To comply, the Alliance may have to spend as much as \$30,000, although Cowie said he is going to "give and do as little as possible to move forward."

The high cost would be for HQW Architects in Newton to put together a comprehensive list of everything that has to be done to the building including all engineering plans, electric, heating, cooling and all utilities.

Cowie said he will be asking the DCA for the bare minimum of requirements so the

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Alliance doesn't waste money paying for details of things they don't need.

He thinks a more reasonable price would be between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

"We're trying to [restore the building] in stages and they want everything up front," Cowie said. "They're treating it like commercial construction, but this is going to be a piecemeal operation. It's [the state's] building, so they get to decide how it's done."

Obtaining approval from NJ Transit has already cost the Alliance over \$17,000, as it had to produce a historic structure report in 2009 detailing the materials used, the changes over the years and a painting analysis.

"It talked about what it used to have, but not what we're going to put in," Cowie said.

The first phase of restoration will be to raise the building and replace the sill plate and install a new roof.

"The base of that wooden structure is completely rotted — that's going to use up a lot of our money in the first year," Cowie said.

Cowie is hoping the Alliance's car show on



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June 6 will bring it one step closer to bringing the project to fruition.

In anticipation of the huge turnout they experienced last year, the Alliance is blocking off the parking lot of the train station as well as Hewson Avenue and West Prospect Street from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This is only one of several fund-raising events the Alliance has held, each of which has brought in anywhere from \$9,000 to \$13,000, Cowie said.

The event is free and relies on sponsorships and donations. The Alliance will also sell framed photos of the cars taken in front of the station as owners drive in to register. Refreshments and shirts will also be available to purchase.

Last year the Alliance expected 50 to 75 cars and 200 came, filling the parking lot and spilling onto Hewson Avenue.

"People who have nice cars want to show them off," Cowie said, adding that turnout

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also depends on the weather. "If the sun isn't shining, cars aren't coming out."

The Alliance charges \$15 for preregistration and \$20 the day of the show. Although Cowie said the Alliance's registration fees are higher than those charged at other car shows, the Alliance stresses that the money is going to a good cause and "once they hear that, they have no problem paying."

The Alliance is also relying on grants from the county to fund the restoration, which Cowie said will cost around \$400,000. The county will match 3-to-1 every dollar the Alliance needs to spend, said Cowie.

"If the overall project is around \$400,000, then we only need to raise \$100,000," he said.

The Alliance has already raised \$50,000, he said.

The historic train station has been in the borough since the 1870s when the borough's name was Orvil Township, but has been vacant for the last 30 years.

"We're ready to get going tomorrow, but can't start swinging the hammer until they give us the OK to go," Cowie said. "I thought after the lease was signed there would be no reason



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we couldn't start in the spring. I'm hoping to start this year, but I'm very cautiously optimistic."

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