

IN THE NEWS



January 25, 2023
by Kyle Kotecki

Downtown Manistee could see boutique hotel in 2024 Hotel creators plan to bring 'back a piece of history'

MANISTEE — Plans are in the works for a new hotel to open in downtown Manistee sometime in 2024.

Manistee City Council took action on three items during a Jan. 17 meeting which allow River Street Hotel, LLC to take the next steps toward opening a hotel on 348 River St.

Following public hearings for each issue, council members approved resolutions to:

- Establish an Obsolete Property Rehabilitation District for the property;
- To approve an Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Certificate application; and
- To approve the brownfield plan for the redevelopment.

Each measure was passed with a 6-0 vote. Council member Erin Pontiac was absent from the meeting.

During the meeting, Jon Faber, co-founder of River Street Hotel, showed a picture of the property from the 1960s when it then housed the Cove Bar, which he said inspired the name for the hotel. River Street Hotel is a collaboration between Heritage Stays and Pinnacle Construction Group.

"River Street Hotel is our operating entity, but our actual ... brand will be Emerald Cove Boutique Hotel," Faber said. "... We think that's kind of cool: bringing back a piece of history and incorporating that into our new name and sharing that forward with Emerald Cove."

Faber said plans for project have been in the works for almost a year. He anticipates construction to start in the spring and the hotel to open in the summer of 2024.

"We're working with the (Michigan) Small Business Development Center on our business plan. We're about to submit our Community Revitalization Program grant application to the Michigan Economic Development Council," he said. "... We've submitted part one of two to the National Park Service for the historic preservation and all the applicable incentives that we're going to be going after for the facade work and all other historically significant renovation work."

Project overview

Plans for Emerald Cove call for five suites — four on the top floor and one in the basement — with sizes ranging from 450 to 1,200 square feet.

Faber said the entirety of the first floor would serve as a restaurant.

“We’re really expecting to collaborate quite a bit with our restaurant partner on the restaurant. We do have a signed lease for that, so we have a commitment there,” he said. “It’s a big restaurant, 5,400 square feet occupying the entire River Street level. It’s dine-in and to-go focused and it’s got frontage on both sides of the building that’s a really incredible opportunity.”

Faber said the building would house an elevator, which prompted council member Lynda Beaton to ask if the Stryker stretcher used by the Manistee Fire Department would fit in the elevator.

Mark Cameron, Manistee fire chief, said the elevator would be able to accommodate the stretcher.

“Our stretcher at full length is at 81 inches fully laid out flat. We can compress it down by folding it into a seated position up to 63 (inches),” Cameron said. “We run around 66 (inches) because we carry a few things on the head of it, but 66 is where we crunch it down to. It should be fine.”

Faber said River Street Hotel’s three operating goals are to provide an unparalleled family focused hotel experience, be a great place to start and end the Manistee Riverwalk experience and celebrate and give back to Manistee.

“We see all the entrepreneurship that’s happening in Manistee and the revitalization that’s underway, and we want to be a part of it and be helpful,” he said.

In addition to the hotel’s largest unit, the basement would also house the restaurant’s kitchen, with food going up via a series of dumbwaiters.

“When we did our analysis there was just so much public parking within even just an eighth of a mile, so we were happy with the amount of available public parking,” Faber said. “The building does not have its own parking so that’s going to be a collaboration that we’re going to have to work on together if there needs to be something different.”

Council member Seth Pratt asked how committed River Street Hotel was to getting a finished product, as the increased cost of labor and materials caused multiple local projects to be delayed, altered or even shut down. James Lewis, Pinnacle’s director of real estate development, said with a large portion of financing coming from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, construction would not begin until the entire financial package was lined up.

“(The MEDC has) a laundry list of things that you all would like to see and that we would like to see accomplished before they will close,” Lewis said. “That will be full bids, a (Guaranteed Maximize Price) contract, we’ll have our historic tax credits all lined up — we need the OPRA and the brownfield approved for that. We need our financing fully committed at that point.”

Lewis said working for a construction company means he is talking about construction costs on a daily basis,

and he does not anticipate them continuing to climb.

“We feel very confident right now that we have got to a construction number here that is not going to go up or sideways — we feel like we can only go down at this point,” he said.

Beaton asked if the hotel might take advantage of its flat roof by incorporating solar energy.

Lewis said Pinnacle Construction is no stranger to putting up solar panels, and with incentives such as the Inflation Rate Reduction Act, using solar energy is moving from “financially feasible to more of a no-brainer kind of situation.”

“I would anticipate that we would be putting in some rooftop solar on there,” he said. “... We’re still trying to figure out where the kitchen vent hoods come out, how big the fans are for that, where the condensers are and all those things. ... The footprint’s about 4,000 square feet and we’ll end up losing about 2,000 square feet to all that stuff, ... which would leave about 2,000 square feet for some rooftop solar.”