

Kasson Alliance for Restoration

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KARE Website: <http://www.kassonalliance.org/>

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<http://givemn.razoo.com/story/Kasson-Alliance-For-Restoration>

Dec. 13, 2011, Kasson, MN

Dear Friends, Members, and Supporters of KARE,

Hello to everyone. We are writing to update you on the events that have occurred since our last newsletter on July 14, 2011.

1. 1918 Kasson Public School Update:

On **August 10, 2011** the Kasson Public Library Building Committee (KPLBC) presented a plan to the City Council that proposed replacing Kasson's historic 1918 school with a \$4.5 million dollar 20,000 square foot library facility. The existing library has 2,294 sq. ft. The plan would have been implemented after demolishing the historic school. The council did not vote to demolish the school however they did vote to have the KPLBC continue with their planning effort. The chambers were full of school supporters. One council member expressed concern about the cost. Letters to the editor soon started appearing supporting the reuse of the school building.

On **August 12**, the Rochester Post Bulletin editorial board stated (quoting): "don't demolish the school until a firm decision has been made-and funding obtained for whatever structure will replace it".

A "Save The School" donation account was set up on **August 22** at the Kasson State Bank which soon had approximately \$2,000 on deposit.

At the **August 24** council meeting two Kasson business owners gave presentations to the council. They expressed concern about the scope and cost of the library plan and the potential loss of the school in the process especially given the fact that no funding exists for a new library or clear support for the 20,000 sq. ft. plan. KARE's membership, in the meantime, is well over 400 all of whom support reusing the school. The chamber was once again full of school supporters. School Supporters continue to water the flower garden they planted in front of the school.

During the **first week of September** school supporters met individually with four of the council members to discuss how the school could be reused. Each council person was shown a movie of 1918 school that illustrated how beautiful it would be as a library or for that matter other reuses. The subsequent discussion led to a suggestion to the city to request proposals from developers for rehabilitating the school.

On Sunday **September 11** school supporters paid for an airplane to fly a banner over Kasson and surrounding communities that read: "Save The 1918 Kasson School". The

Kasson Alliance sponsored an information booth at Mantorville's Marigold Days. **See the attached picture.**

The Kasson City Council voted on **September 14** to offer the 1918 school for sale in an effort to attract interested developers. Council members once again expressed concern about whether or not the city could afford \$4.5 million for a new library. A smaller library plan was suggested however it is expected that developers will propose other reuses for the school given the library boards disinterest in the school building.

On **September 21** the City of Kasson published an advertisement in the Dodge County Independent newspaper requesting proposals from licensed real estate agents interested in listing the 1918 School for sale. Letters to the editor continue to appear in September supporting the reuse of the school building. A school supporter purchased hundreds of "Save The School" signs which are in yards all over town. **See the attached picture.**

School supporters toured the reused 1932 Glencoe, MN School on **October 6** to gather lessons learned. Glencoe is the same size as Kasson. \$2.5 million dollars was donated by citizens to save the school which is now a combination city hall, chamber of commerce, library, community center and much more. It is beautiful!!

On **October 12** the City Council awarded the 1918 school real estate contract to Kathy (Kunz) O'Malley. The school will be listed for sale from November 1, 2011 thru January 31, 2012. The asking price is \$400,000. School supporters presented info to the council regarding reusing the school. Save the School Letters to the editor continue to appear in October. The council voted to pay Crescendo Consulting \$20,000 to conduct a Community Assessment Study to determine the willingness of the residents of Kasson and surrounding area to financially support a library.

The school was listed for sale on **November 1**. On **November 9** Kathy O'Malley reported to the city council that there was a lot of interest from developers due to the building being on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). She explained that the NRHP makes the school's rehab eligible for the 20% federal and 20% state tax credit which reduces the rehab cost by almost 40% up front. Additional grant funds are also available which further reduces the cost depending on the reuse selected. Kathy announced an open house for November 30.

On **November 30** the 1918 school open house kicked off with a presentation by Bonnie McDonald, Executive Director of the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota on the value of reusing historic buildings. Over 30 people attended to include at least half a dozen developers and many Kasson/local citizens. The presentation was followed by a tour of the school building. All of the developers were excited about the school's potential to be reused and the many financial incentives outlined by Bonnie. **It is clear the library could be incorporated into the reused school and leased to the city at a fraction of the cost of building a new library building.**

As you can see a lot of exciting things have been happening! We will keep you updated on the process of identifying a reuse for the historic school. Thank you for everyone's support!

2. The Flo and Joe 1919 School Column: Every week since earlier in 2011 various School supporters have written the Flo and Joe "What's Happening Around Town" column in the Dodge County Independent newspaper. The weekly stories revolve around saving the 1918 School and historic preservation in general. You can read the Flo and Joe columns and blog about the school at the DCI's 1918 School Blog at: <http://dctween.blogspot.com/search/label/Old%20Kasson%20School> See the links on the left side.

3. 3-D Computer School Movie/Model: You can view a movie of the school showing it rehabilitated on KARE's YouTube Channel. The movie takes you on a virtual tour of the school...in thru the front door...and into the rooms. You do not want to miss this! Link to YouTube from KARE's website: <http://www.kassonalliance.org/>

4. Flower Garden and Flag at the School: See the attached pictures of the **flowers** that graced the front of the school all summer. Thanks again the Kasson American Legion for flying the American flag over the school during all the holidays.

5. KARE on Facebook: KARE's Facebook site is very popular. We receive almost 200 visits per week. Thank you to all the visitors who have "Liked" us. You can link to KARE's FaceBook site from KARE's website: <http://www.kassonalliance.org/>

6. Save The School Fund: If you are interested in donating money to help save the school, **please call the Kasson State Bank at 507-634-7022** or send your check to: Kasson State Bank, Save The School Fund, 203 West Main Street, PO Box 187, Kasson, MN 55944.

Thank You to everyone for your ongoing support. Thank you to those of you who reminded us that many of you have family-memberships which pushes KARE's membership to well over 600 members and climbing.

KARE's mission is to preserve Kasson's history, historic buildings and historic structures to serve as landmarks to Kasson's heritage while being a source of education in the importance of historic preservation. The Kasson Alliance for Restoration (KARE) is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization formed in January 2007. KARE's membership includes both citizens and supporting businesses.

Kasson Alliance for Restoration
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KARE is a non-profit membership organization bringing people together to protect, enhance and enjoy the places in Kasson that matter to them. By saving the places where great moments from the cities' history - and the important moments of everyday life - took place, KARE helps revitalize the community, spark economic development and promote environmental sustainability. The Kasson Alliance provides leadership, education, advocacy and resources to citizens and organizations committed to saving historic places, connecting them to Kasson's history and collectively shaping the future of the communities' stories. Note: The media is welcome to use all or portions of this announcement and any attachments.

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