



## WINNEBAGO COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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### Winnebago Town Hall

The Winnebago Town Hall at 116 S. Benton Street in Winnebago was built by the Trustees of Winnebago Township and dedicated in December 1894. The building was home to a wide variety of activities through the years and served as the meeting place and office for Winnebago Township officials. Several years ago, the Township moved its meeting place and office to the Westfield Community Center building at the corner of Westfield and Montague Roads and the Town Hall stood vacant. The Winnebago Community Historical Society assumed ownership of the building and adjacent garden in 2018.

WCHS is committed to renovating and repurposing the Town Hall as a focal point for community activities.

#### **Our Vision—“Meet Me at The Town Hall”**

- The Town Hall is the centerpiece, the “gem,” of Winnebago.
- It is the place to be for entertainment and events, for exhibits and workshops, for community organizations and family gatherings.
- It anchors our heritage and helps us imagine the future.
- It is community owned, community supported, and community focused.

#### **Our Plan—One Step at A Time**

- Renovate and repurpose. Keep the great architectural features and modernize for 21<sup>st</sup> century uses.
- Complete work in phases, as funds are available.
- Raise funds for the renovation.
- Open and use the Town Hall as often as possible during the renovation process.

#### **Work to Date**

The Town Hall building has been inspected by an architect and a structural engineer and found to be fundamentally sound. The original interior was a large hall with a raised stage and a balcony and a kitchen area. Bathrooms were added upstairs in the balcony space. At some point the large windows on the north and south sides were covered over. The stage was closed off to form office space for Township officials, the ceiling was lowered, and all the interior features were covered with paneling. As we have gotten to know the building, we have been pleased to discover that many of the original decorative features are still there under the paneling.

Over the years, the building has sustained significant water damage, primarily from water coming down the exterior walls, eroding the brickwork and penetrating the basement area. Our priority was, therefore, new roofing, fascia, gutters, and downspouts. We completed that work in 2018, along with a new sump pump in the basement.

Our 2019 priority was installing ADA compliant, handicap-accessible restrooms on the main floor in the space formerly occupied by the kitchen. We ran into a snag when we uncovered the floor area at the front of the building and found that the floor joists were water damaged where they tie into the foundation. After the floor joists were repaired and plumbing and electrical work completed, the new hall area and restrooms were framed in and finished and new flooring installed in the main entrance area. Trim work and paint will be finished in 2020 and the entire entrance area will have been refreshed.

***Preserving the Past    Informing the Present    Inspiring the Future***

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In 2019, we received a grant from Project Home Start to renovate the garden area. Trees that had outgrown their space were removed, new benches ordered, and planting areas planned for spring. A new flag ran up the flagpole and it was again lit at night.

### **Next Steps**

We have two structurally and financially significant projects to tackle. We need to inspect and probably repair the floor joists around the entire interior perimeter of the building. And we need to repair and/or replace eroded brickwork on the exterior. Completion of these projects depends on our fundraising outcomes.

Meanwhile, in 2020 we are working to put in drainage tile around the exterior perimeter and tie it into the Village storm sewer. On the interior, we hope to complete installation of a galley kitchen that will include counter and storage space, a sink, a microwave, and a commercial refrigerator.

2020 garden work includes placement of new benches, resetting the veteran's memorial at the end of the brick path, replanting the rose beds, relocating the bulletin board, and adding new plantings.

### **How You Can Help**

Contribute to the Town Hall Renovation Campaign! Our 2020 goal is to raise \$50,000, primarily targeted to the floor joists and brickwork. Donor form [here](#)

Check out our Wish List for other ways to contribute.

5/2020