

Kasson Alliance for Restoration

KARE Email: KassonAlliance@Kmtel.com

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

KARE on Facebook: Link from KARE's Website

KARE on YouTube: Link from KARE's Website

Donate or Join KARE Online at:

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

January 22, 2012, Kasson, MN

Dear Friends, Members, and Supporters of KARE,

1. KARE's First Meeting of 2012: The Kasson Alliance for Restoration (KARE) held its first meeting of 2011 on Saturday January 21, 2011 at 9:00 AM. A great time was had by all.

a. Featured Speaker: Thank you to John Kruesel, owner of **Kruesel's General Merchandise (antiques) & Auction Company** in Rochester, MN for being our speaker. He shared some valuable insights regarding reusing historic buildings and citizen advocacy based on his experiences in Rochester, MN.

b. Annual Board Election: All of the board member positions were on the ballot. Thank you to those who agreed to run. The board members are:

- i. Bruce Prescher (President, 3-yr term),
- ii. Don Ness (Vice President, 2-yr term),
- iii. Cindy Luepke (Secretary, 2-yr term),
- iv. Mary Beth Harmon (Treasurer, 3-yr term),
- v. Margaret (Maggie) Lien (Board Member at Large),
- vi. Fred Spading (Board Member at Large),
- vii. Lorraine Spading (Board Member at Large)

Bruce owns the stately historic 1917 Hotel Kasson which is now known as Corner Plaza Apartments. Bruce brings many years of project management and professional experience to the board. Don championed the "Save The 1918 Kasson School" banner that flew over Dodge County during Marigold Days. Cindy works at the Kasson Dental Clinic. Mary Beth works at the St. Mary's Hospital, Mayo Clinic. Maggie is retired from the Mayo Clinic. Fred and Lorraine own Kasson's Second Street Storage and are actively involved in Habitat for Humanity.

"The talent and diverse expertise of our board has always been one of KARE's key assets, as witnessed by our ability to attract stellar citizen board members" said Nels Jacobson. "The new board members are a critical addition to our team. They broaden our board's professional expertise and overall support to our citizen base which will allow KARE to continue to work toward its long-term historic preservation mission, growth objectives and citizen advocacy."

c. 1918 Kasson School: There were many questions about the ongoing negotiations between the City and Sherman Associates regarding the sale of the school. Thank you for all of your questions and support. The addresses and phone numbers of the council members are listed below. You are encouraged to contact them and express your support for reusing the school.

2. The following is a summary of KARE's activities in 2011

Jan. and Feb. 2011: The **Kasson Library Building Committee (KPLBC)** started to investigate how to incorporate a library facility into the National Register Listed Historic 1918 Kasson School site.

March 2011: KARE elected board members. The meeting was held in the Historic Kasson State Theater on Main Street. The KPLBC was invited but declined to attend. KARE hosted its second annual Kasson historic preservation booth at the Dodge County Expo in Dodge Center. An architect presented three preliminary design proposals to the Library Building Committee related to the 1918 School site.

April 2011: The City of Kasson released three library options: Option No. 1 utilizing the existing 1918 school building in its entirety, Option No. 2 utilized the school but removing the second floor and gymnasium from the existing school building, Option No. 3 demolished the existing school building and replaced it with a 20,000 square foot new library building.

May 2011 (National Preservation Month): KARE hosts an activity each year in honor of this. KARE's 2011 event involved interviewing and recording American veterans to preserve their memories which were published in the Dodge Co. Independent. The Kasson American Legion

started raising the American flag in front of the school during American holidays starting on Memorial Day.

June 2011: KARE volunteers planted flowers in front of the 1918 School. **See the attached picture.** Many enthusiastic volunteers watered the plants all summer long. On June 1, 2011 the KPLBC published the first weekly library related articles in the DCI. Some of these articles unfortunately suggested demolishing the historic school.

July 2011: KARE hosted its 5th annual Historic Preservation information booth at the 154rd Dodge County Fair. Thank you to all the volunteers who worked at the booth. KARE hired an architect to create a 3-D virtual computer model movie of the school. The “movie” illustrated the school as a library and community center. Go to KARE's website and click on YouTube <http://www.kassonalliance.org/> **See the attached picture.** Mayor Tjosaas requested improved communication between himself and school supporters.

August 2011: The Kasson Public Library Building Committee (KPLBC) presented a plan to the City Council on Aug. 10 that proposed replacing Kasson's historic 1918 school with an expansive \$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 size and cost of the proposed library. 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 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. KARE hosted a Historic Preservation information booth at the Festival in the Park. **Thirty-four**

citizen volunteers fanned out across Kasson to collect signatures on a petition related to reusing the 1918 school. Hundreds of signatures were collected and are on file. Many myths about the school were dispelled thru one-on-one citizen contact.

The council votes to start Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) process in case they decide later to demolish the school.

Sept. 2011: During the **first week of September** school supporters met individually with four of the five council members (one refused) to discuss how the school could be reused. Each council person was shown a 3-D movie of 1918 school that illustrated how beautiful it would be as a library or for that matter many other reuses. The subsequent discussion led to a suggestion to the city to request proposals from developers for rehabilitating the school. KARE hosted an information booth at Mantorville's Marigold Days Sept. 9 thru 11. 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". **See the attached picture.** Subsequently, 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 board's unfortunate 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.**

Oct. 2011: On **October 12** the City Council awarded the 1918 school real estate contract to Kathy (Kunz) O'Malley. The school was 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 new library building.

Nov. 2011: The 1918 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 at this point that 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 while meeting all of the libraries' needs.**

Dec. 2011: On **December 14, 2011** a proposal from the developer Sherman Associates (an award winning developer from Mpls.) to rehabilitate the school was presented to the city council. On **December 21** the city voted to sign a letter of intent from Sherman to purchase the school for development as a senior housing project. A short forty four (44) days after the city advertised for developers on Nov. 1 the city received an offer (on Dec. 14) to pursue a letter of intent to purchase the property. Numerous other developers are currently waiting in the wings. The Preservation Alliance of MN and the Minnesota Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office sent letters to the City advising them to, in light of the interest from developers, to suspend the EAW process.

3. Dodge County Expo, March 31, 2012: KARE will host an information booth at the Expo. More information to follow.

4. 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/>

5. KARE on YouTube: You can link to KARE's YouTube site from KARE's website: <http://www.kassonalliance.org/> Check out the local TV news stories (see the Mayor and others) and other information.

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. The fund has grown to over \$2,000.

Thank You to everyone for your ongoing support.

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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Attachments



