

Neal C. LaFever Trust
P.O. Box 20711
Billings, MT 59104

February 2, 2022

Montana Heritage Commission
Attn: Marilyn Ross, Chair;
Elijah Allen, Executive Director
PO BOX 338
Virginia City, MT 59755

Dear Ms. Ross and Mr. Allen,

As a representative of the Neal C. LaFever Trust, owner of the historic Stonewall Hall building in Virginia City, Montana, I am reaching out to you both to confirm our intent to transfer ownership of our building to the State of Montana through the Montana Heritage Commission in order to facilitate large-scale fundraising efforts and enable building stabilization and future building preservation and rehabilitation projects.

In the interest of trying to ensure the building's future preservation, I sent a letter to the MHC in June of 2020 requesting the MHC consider accepting our donation of the property. In that letter, I outlined the history of the building as well as my family's previous efforts to stabilize the building. A copy of that letter is enclosed for reference.

As I said my previous letter, our intent remains to transfer ownership of the Stonewall Hall building, including the one-story Dudley Garage addition, to the Montana Heritage Commission. Given the significance of the building in relation to Montana's territorial history and Stonewall Hall's direct relationship to the Content's Comer building across the street that is currently owned and occupied by the Montana Heritage Commission, as well as the guiding principles at the core of MHC's mission, it makes the most sense for this building to be owned and maintained by the State of Montana.

This building is very important to not only the community in Virginia City, but the entire state. Because of this, we have tried to make every effort possible within our abilities to avoid demolition of this building and we want nothing more than to see it fully restored and preserved for future generations. Because the needs of the building are significant, we strongly believe the building will have a better chance at a useful future with ownership and stewardship by the Montana Heritage Commission, due to the tools available to it as a government funded and preservation minded entity.

We are enthusiastic about the recent and ongoing fundraising efforts by the Montana Heritage Commission in partnership with the Montana History Foundation and the opportunities for careful preservation that those funds can provide. I wholeheartedly support the preliminary preservation project phasing and planning materials I have seen. As a preservationist with a Master's of Science in Historic Preservation from Columbia University, I am most encouraged and excited that the future preservation plan for the building includes interior restoration of the legislative chambers space on the second floor, arguably the most significant defining feature of the building. This further reiterates that ownership and stewardship by the MHC is the best option for the preservation and celebration of this significant piece of Montana's territorial history and further reinforces our decision to proceed with our donation.

In addition to donating the property, our objective remains to do what we can to facilitate long term preservation planning and to assist the MHC in taking on this challenging project, in whatever way we can. To that end, we are happy to provide any reports, photos, and additional information we have collected in order to support the MHC's continuing efforts to secure funding and undertake a full building restoration in the future. With my experience as a preservation professional, I am also happy to provide any guidance or advice as the stabilization and restoration work gets underway.

After many years of trying to find a way to save this building and bring it back to life, I am hopeful we have found a solution that will be beneficial to everyone involved, particularly the MHC and the greater Virginia City community. I look forward to working with the MHC and the MHF to continue to work toward preserving one of Montana's most important historic buildings.

Thank you again for your ongoing consideration of this proposal,



Alison LaFever

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