FORMER PUBLIC LIBRARY IN LEWISBURG INCLUDED ON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE ENDANGERED PROPERTIES LIST

[LEWISBURG, WV] The former Greenbrier County Public Library building in Lewisburg, has been named one of eight historical and significant sites on the 2010 Endangered Properties List designated by the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia.
New River Community and Technical College is partnering with the City of Lewisburg and community leaders to pursue grants to restore the building for use by the college.

The 2010 Endangered Properties List was announced in Charleston on Feb. 4. at an event attended by Lewisburg Mayor John Manchester, Historic Landmarks Commission member Carol Olson and New River representatives President Ted Spring, Libby Belcher, director of college relations and Bill Loope, vice president of institutional advancement.

Bob Conte, historian at The Greenbrier, is president of the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia. He notes that it is a truly grass-roots organization that is run by volunteers. The group got the idea for the Endangered Properties List from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which compiles a similar list each year. Although there were many entries, only eight properties were added to the list this year, he commented.

“Historic preservation issues are intensely local,” Conte said. “You may have warm fuzzy feelings about old buildings, but you really get galvanized into action when it is a building you can identify with. The old library is a very important landmark in this area.”

Belcher prepared the application for the Endangered Properties program. The library building has been vacant since 2007, when the Greenbrier County Public Library moved into a new building on a site adjacent to New River’s Greenbrier Valley Campus. The College made land for the new library available through an agreement with the library and the City of Lewisburg, which owns both the old and new library buildings.

“Receiving the endangered properties listing is an important first step that will allow us to pursue grants to restore this beautiful and very historic structure,” Spring said. “We look forward to continuing our partnership with the City of Lewisburg through this effort.”

The Endangered Properties designation gives the library project access to assistance from Lynn Stasick, historic preservationist with the Preservation Alliance.

“I work with each property and each community in an effort to rehabilitate and adaptively re-use these unique historic sites,” Stasick explains. In addition to an assessment of each property, Stasick helps with raising awareness, building local
support and capacity and providing preservation expertise to assist local preservation efforts.

The former library is an Adams style building constructed in 1834 that was significant as the “Library and Study for the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia” prior to West Virginia statehood in 1863. The building served as a Union hospital and barracks and still has soldier’s inscriptions on the interior walls. Bob Conte noted that when The Greenbrier was converted to a hospital during World War II, many of the resort’s archives were moved to the upstairs of the library for safekeeping.

Owned by the town of Lewisburg since 1935, the building was the Greenbrier County Library from 1941 until 2007. The building is reasonably stable, but interior floors have buckled due to water intrusion, and water pipes have burst from lack of heat. It needs a new roof and rehabilitation of windows and bathrooms.

Mayor Manchester commented, “This is a wonderful historic building in Lewisburg that we need to be sure to preserve for future generations. We are pleased that the college is actively involved in a partnership with the city to develop a creative re-use for it.”

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