

Hawley Silk Mill Seeks Clients

By FRITZ MAYER

HAWLEY, PA — When the interior of the Hawley Silk Building was totally destroyed by fire in 1894, just 14 years after it opened, it took workers 10 months to rebuild it and put it back into production. Now, according to Troy Bystrom, the project executive for Hawley Silk Mill, LLC, “We couldn’t even get the work permitted in 10 months.”

Fortunately, the promoters, who are pushing the building’s most recent incarnation, have more to work with than an empty shell. The floors, for instance, are made of maple and the investors are hoping the wood will be refurbished and used by the new tenants.

The investors invited legislators and other members of the community for a walk through on August 14 to take a look at the project, which features 70,000 square feet on five floors.

Investor Justin Genzlinger told the 30 or so guests that one of the prime goals was to have education become a big part of the mix of organizations that will ultimately use the building. He said the group has talked to six community colleges and two were “highly interested.”

The investors are also hoping to find at least one business that would provide a significant number of local jobs, in the area of 100 to 150, to become tenants of the building.

Finally, the investors are looking for companies that will enhance the area’s lifestyle. For instance, they envision a textile museum on the first floor, as well as a farmer’s market and a sports outfitter.

Bystrom said the investors had secured funding of up to \$7 million for the main renovation, and that they will be looking for other funding in the form of grants or other public monies to pay for the many additional elements they would like to add, such as a solar installation on the roof.

And there are a few wrinkles that need to be ironed out for the project to succeed. For instance, the road that runs right in front of the building needs to be partially closed in order to provide enough parking spaces to accommodate the building. But, said Genzlinger, local officials have been very accommodating so far.

The project is moving forward slowly and the cocoon building—so named because the cocoons of the silkworms were stored in it when the facility was a functioning silk mill— has already been spoken for and will house a coffee shop.

