Stabilizing the Elkridge Assembly Rooms

A briefing for members. One hundred fifty-five years standing, with the next hundred ahead of us.

Annual Meeting
Monday, 15 June 2026
6:30 pm, potluck supper
6090 Lawyers Hill Road, Elkridge MD

The building	2026 season	Stabilization	Electrical
155	15+	$124.8K	$8.7K
years standing	events planned	real cash cost	real cash cost

The Elkridge Assembly Rooms



The stage and barrel-vaulted ceiling, looking south toward the assembly room.

1870 to 1871. Judge George Washington Dobbin gave neighbors land to build a hall as a deliberate gesture to heal a community split by the Civil War. The Elkridge Assembly Rooms opened with a production of The Rivals, popular enough that B&O printed train schedules from Baltimore to Elkridge for the run.

Designed by Washington architect **Robert Stead**, who lived two doors down on Lawyers Hill, the building later burned and was rebuilt to the same form. Maryland Historic Trust calls it "of national significance." It is a contributing resource within the **Lawyers Hill Historic District**, listed on the National Register in 1993.

For 155 years the Elkridge Assembly Rooms has been a community gathering place. Wine tastings, lectures, parties, concerts, plays, dances. The cultural life of Lawyers Hill, hosted in one room. In recent years the board has added new programming: art exhibits, Farm & Coffee Pop-Ups with local vendors, a Small Business Saturday market, and additional concerts. 2026 is on track for more than 1,000 visitors across the season.

Why we need to act



Rotted sills, east entrance interior.



West window at foundation level; moss has colonized the lower cedar shingles.



Crawlspace under the south stage wall: bare earth, no vapor barrier.



Interior west corner. Two steel jacks are currently helping carry load.

Diagnosis (Fitzgerald's Heavy Timber Construction, Feb 2026). Wood structural members are bearing directly in soil and in moisture-prone conditions. A structural assessment was first commissioned in 2008. Targeted stabilization work then happened piecemeal as funds allowed, including foundation work in 2011, projects in 2015–16, and additional repairs in 2023. Those addressed urgent symptoms but did not lift the timber off the ground or solve site drainage, so moisture has continued to wick into the sills.

Areas of concern this round: wood sills, stage framing at the southeast and southwest corners, the eastern deck, the east stage door, site drainage on the east and west sides, gutters and downspouts, shingle and flashing details, and one north window shutter.

Without a root-cause fix, the next round of piecemeal repair will come sooner and cost more than this one. The longer we wait, the bigger the eventual scope.

The fix. Lift vulnerable timber out of contact with soil, give it a defined foundation, move water away from the building, and rebuild the eastern deck. Competitive bid for the final contract.

The work and the money.

Contingent upon a Maryland Heritage Areas Authority grant award, matched dollar-for-dollar by other sources.

Project window
July 2026 to April 2027
Construction Dec 2026 to early April 2027
Reopen third Monday of April 2027

Scope of work, by project cost

Item	Description	Project total	Relative cost
Core stabilization			
Framing	Repair sills and stage framing	$33,428	
Rigging	Support load-bearing walls during work	$19,605	
Cladding	T&G boards, cedar shingles at repair points	$16,074	
Concrete	Footers for south wall and deck piers	$10,280	
Demolition	Selective removal: walls, shingles, concrete	$9,882	
Site	Trenching, grading, subsurface drainage	$8,985	
Mobilization	Staging, haul-in, tear-down	$7,554	
Masonry	Block foundation and pier construction	$6,990	
Doors	Remove, install new sills, reinstall (3)	$3,303	
Paint	Touch up: doors, window, shutters	$3,196	
Milling	Rough-sawn boards and timbers	$3,122	
Gutters	Reconnect to drainage improvements	$1,215	
Windows	Rehang one pair of shutters	$1,167	
Subtotal	**Core stabilization**	**$124,801**	
Electrical (more optional, season-extension)			
Service	Main service upgrade 100A to 200A	$3,800	
Circuits	Dedicated circuits for heaters	$1,200	
Heaters	Four Bromic infrared heaters	$3,719	
Subtotal	**Electrical**	**$8,719**	
Real cash cost	**What we actually need to raise and spend**	**$133,520**	

The money

$68,437 requested from MHAA (if awarded)

~$65,082 cash match we need to raise

~$133,520 real cash project cost

The 1:1 match requirement is **$68,437**. About **$3,356** of that gets met with qualifying volunteer time, and donated materials can reduce the cash need further if the contractor can use them. So the actual cash we have to raise lands at **$65,082 or less**. The grant application headline of **$136,874** includes the in-kind credits and inflates the number, but does not change the cash to raise and spend.

Where the match comes from (ranges, not certainties)

Fundraising	$20K to $65K	
Reserves	$0 to $65K	
Contractor	$0 to $20K	

The contractor may or may not extend a charitable contribution. Reserves can cover the full cash match if it comes to that, but we would rather not draw them down. Fundraising is the most actionable lever: the more we raise from the community, the less we have to pull from reserves.

Timeline



Jul to Nov 2026. Competitive bid process, contractor procurement, permitting, materials sourcing, fundraising.
Dec 2026 to early April 2027. Demolition, sill and framing repair, new foundation, drainage, deck rebuild, electrical work. The building is closed during this period.
Third Monday in April 2027. Reopen for the 2027 season.

How members can help

Give

Cash fundraising for the match lands somewhere in **$20,000 to $65,000**, depending on whether the contractor contributes and how much we want to preserve reserves.

- **www.elkridgeassemblyrooms.org**, where both Venmo and PayPal are linked
- Venmo handle directly: **@Elkridge_Assembly_Rooms**
- Checks to: **Elkridge Assembly Rooms, Inc.**, 6090 Lawyers Hill Road, Elkridge, MD 21075

Help

Two project-specific places where extra hands meaningfully change the outcome:

- Fundraising. Donor outreach, follow-up, asks to people you know who care about historic buildings.
- Construction oversight during the build, December 2026 through early April 2027.
- Materials donation, if you happen to have rough-sawn timber or cedar shingles the contractor can use. (Subject to contractor approval.)

Show up

Money is the most direct impact, but a full house at our events builds the donor and member base that makes the next ten years possible.

- Farm & Coffee Pop-Ups across the 2026 season
- Concerts, several scheduled this year
- Art exhibits, including The Birds & The Bees (Alicia Thacker, opened June 5)
- July 4th Picnic with hayride and lawn games
- Small Business Saturday market



The assembly hall looking north toward the stage. The poster collection on the walls documents 150 years of performances, dances, and community life at the Elkridge Assembly Rooms.

The project team

The project team combines expertise in project management, architecture, operations, education, finance, and community engagement to support successful execution and long-term stewardship of the Elkridge Assembly Rooms.

Board project team

Debra Roth · Volunteer Project Manager. President of the Elkridge Assembly Rooms. Over 25 years of experience in program management, operations, and strategic planning across corporate, nonprofit, and community settings. Oversees project planning, contractor coordination, fundraising, and stakeholder engagement.

Dustin Thacker, Assoc. AIA · Volunteer Architect. Associate Architect, structural engineering consultant, and Principal of Unlikely Professionals in Elkridge, Maryland. M.Arch with Honors, Pratt Institute School of Architecture; active member of the AIA. Previously served on the Howard County Historic Preservation Commission. Current member of the Board of Directors; contributing professional architectural expertise on a volunteer basis.

Nessly Craig, Ph.D. · Volunteer Project Advisor. Longtime Board Member. Retired Associate Professor of Biological Sciences, formerly at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Supports the organization's educational and interpretive efforts, connecting the building's history with broader cultural and community narratives.

Melonie Martiniano · Volunteer Project Advisor. Secretary of the Board of Directors. Registered nurse and Chief Operating Officer of a case management organization providing services to vulnerable populations under large state contracts. Contributes operational expertise, organizational coordination, and execution support.

Burnet Chalmers · Volunteer Project Advisor. Longtime leader and contributor; previously served in various Board roles including Treasurer. Retired business executive, formerly President of Milby Company. Strategic planning, financial management, and long-term stewardship.

Contractors & consultants

Fitzgerald's Heavy Timber Construction · Structural assessment, plans, and conditions documentation. Thurmont, MD; in business since 1992. Traditional joinery, heavy timber systems, preservation-sensitive repair. Produced the full structural assessment, photographic documentation, and architectural plans that this project is built on.

JEM Electrical Co. · Electrical scope. Woodbine, MD. 100A to 200A service, dedicated heating circuits, four Bromic infrared heaters for extended-season comfort.

Final contractor selection · Competitive bid process. The Elkridge Assembly Rooms will run a competitive bid process for the final construction contract, in accordance with MHAA grant requirements and standard preservation practice. The firms listed above contributed the design and scope; bidding for the build happens once funding is in place.

Save the date, 2026 to 2027

Summer 2026, open

20 Jun · Father's Day Farm & Coffee Pop Up (Morningside Farm and Dive Coffee, 9 am to noon)

4 Jul · July 4th Picnic (hayride, lawn games, 11:30 am)

Aug to Nov · Concerts, Farm Pop-Ups, art exhibits, Small Business Saturday

Winter 2026 to 2027, closed

Jul to Nov 2026 · Bid process, contractor procurement, permitting, fundraising.

Dec 2026 to early Apr 2027 · Construction. The building is closed for the duration.

Where we'll ask for help.
Fundraising during the lead-up; donor outreach throughout.

Spring 2027, reopening

Third Monday of April 2027 · The Elkridge Assembly Rooms reopens for the season.

A full calendar of programming follows, on a structurally sound foundation.