



## Officials search for funding to keep Herkimer Home open

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DANUBE — Operators of the Herkimer Home historical site again are fighting Albany for the roughly \$320,000 needed to keep the site open this year.

About 40 people, including state officials and those from area municipalities and chambers of commerce, met Wednesday to brainstorm how to keep the site operating.

"The Gen. Herkimer site is very, very important to this country, to the state and to the Mohawk Valley," Sen. Sen. James Seward, R-Milford, said. "It's a real gem in terms of its history, and it would be a shame to lose such a site."

The Herkimer Home is just outside of Little Falls on Route 169 and was the home of American Revolutionary War hero Gen. Nicholas Herkimer. It sits on 165 acres and includes 7 miles of trails throughout property.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo's 2011-12 budget proposal cuts Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation spending by more than 8 percent. The department's budget would fall from \$228 million to \$209 million, according to Parks & Trails New York, an Albany-based advocacy group.

Cuomo's plan does not include any funding for the Herkimer Home. Funding also was eliminated for three state parks — Knox Farm in East Aurora, Woodlawn Beach in Hamburg and Joseph Davis in Lewiston.

"We're getting a clear sense that Albany wants to find new ways to do things," Assemblyman Marc Butler, R-Newport. "It looks like this is a response to that."

Butler and others said the state is putting local municipalities on the hook for the upkeep of sites such as the Herkimer Home. That would mean groups such as Friends of Herkimer Home would need to raise money to keep the site secure and to maintain it.

The non-profit group or surrounding municipality also could sign a lease with the state, essentially forcing the local entity to maintain the site while the state maintains ownership. The local group then could keep any profit generated from the site.

Butler said the site has a roughly \$320,000 budget, with just \$30,000 of that going toward operational expenses — the rest pays for salaries. Visitors only generated about \$6,800 in revenue in 2010.

People who attended the meeting asked state representatives to again approach the state with hat in hand to request funds.

"We can not turn the heat off and leave the place unattended," Friends of Herkimer President Barbara Mielcarski said.

The Assembly unanimously passed a bill earlier this month that essentially slows the process to close a park or historical site by forcing the state to conduct public hearings prior to such a closure. The Senate has not yet considered the legislation.

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