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Cooper shop deadline looms

By Sara Pratt

Hollis Brookline Journal staff

HOLLIS — Plenty of volunteers pledged to help disassemble the Noah Dow Cooper Shop, but trying to coordinate everyone on the first step, the paperwork, has kept the work from starting.

The Billingsley family, which owns the small historic building at the intersection of Van Dyke and Broad streets, donated

ed the shop to anyone willing to take it away by Dec. 1. After that, they will tear it down themselves, said Brandon Billingsley, because it is a safety hazard to children who use a nearby bus stop.

Efforts to coordinate the removal of the ramshackle shed from the Billingsleys' property, however, have slowed while the owners, the heritage commission, selectmen and

volunteers discussed liability waivers.

"It's just the smart thing to do," said Honi Glover, chairwoman of the heritage commission, of the Billingsleys' desire to have volunteers sign waivers relieving them of liability should a volunteer be injured on their property. **"It's their land, it's their building."**

At the Nov. 6 selectmen's meeting, town administrator Cath Hallsworth said the town could provide \$10,000 of medical insurance coverage to each volunteer, above and beyond their normal medical coverage.

"The homeowner had also asked for some other things to be stipulated in addition to the insurance waiver," said Hollis Selectman Melinda Willis.

The selectmen called an emergency meeting on Friday, Nov. 10, to try to get volunteers onto the property over the weekend to begin measuring

and documenting the building. After reviewing a document drafted by the town attorney,

however, selectmen decided that any waiver would open the town up to too much potential financial risk, Willis said.

At the selectmen's Nov. 6 meeting, Kristen Moriarty, of Silver Lake Road, volunteered to take the shop after the town

declined the donation. Moriarty had hoped to renovate it and use it as a garden shed.

However, without the town's assistance on the insurance or other waivers, and with four small children at home who were recently sick, Moriarty said the project seems too difficult and time consuming.

"The town's not going to get involved at all, and it's just so much more complicated than I thought," she said in a phone interview. "It's just a huge undertaking," she added, noting that she too had been sick.

With just two weekends left before the demolition deadline, the possibility of saving the shop may be diminishing, says Glover.

"Things were looking up until the insurance thing," she said. "However, we were very pleased with the amount of volunteers."

Anyone interested in volunteering should call Honi Glover at 465-2262.

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