

Renovations lag at Governor's Mansion

Fundraising effort is well short of goal

By Tom Loftus
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FRANKFORT, Ky. - When first lady Glenna Fletcher began raising money in April 2005 to renovate the Governor's Mansion, she estimated the job would cost about \$5 million and be done by mid-2006.

But as of yesterday, the Governor's Mansion Preservation Foundation had raised just over \$1.47 million, according to a list of contributors from the governor's office.

And no foundation-funded work has begun, although a significant taxpayer-funded project to replace the heating and air-conditioning systems is nearly finished.

A review of a list of foundation expenses to date provided by the governor's office shows \$167,755.59 has gone for catering, printing, entertainment and other expenses related to fundraising.

Still, the first lady said she's pleased with fundraising so far for the mansion, which has been the residence of Kentucky governors since 1914.

"We're almost to \$1.5 million. I think that fundraising is going along quite well. I'm really not discouraged at all. I'm completely encouraged," she said in an interview. "If the fundraising falls off we will spend the money as best we can to take care of the initial first problems that we have tried to address."

As for the original hopes of finishing by about now, she said, "We're a little off on that completion schedule, aren't we? ... But as you know, some things take longer to get going and to make happen than you'd like."

Fletcher said fundraising has not been affected by the state hiring investigation that has resulted in three misdemeanor charges against her husband.

"The only thing that the investigation affected is the time I had to spend on it for a little while, but it really had no effect whatsoever," she said.

The fundraising campaign started less than a month before the attorney general's office began its investigation of the hiring practices of Gov. Ernie Fletcher's administration.

A list of donors released yesterday shows many big givers are highway builders, engineers, attorneys and others who do business with the state.

Hinkle Contracting, a Paris road builder, has given \$15,000. Its president, Henry Hinkle, said, "We were asked and felt the cause was worthwhile. But, no, giving to this doesn't help us get state business."

Former Gov. Paul Patton and his wife, Judi, gave \$1,000. "We had the benefit of living there and there is work that needs to be done," Patton said.

Patton declined to say whether he thought the investigation would have hurt fundraising efforts last year. "But I think raising \$5 million is an overly optimistic goal. I think raising nearly \$1.5

million is impressive," Patton said.

Glenna Fletcher said no written schedule exists for work to be done by the foundation. However, she said that from the outset the plan has been to use the money to make plaster repairs and replace hardwood floors on the public first floor. She said both the state and foundation will pay for renovation of a sinking patio in the backyard.

"We'll probably be doing some interior furnishings such as draperies and such as well," she said.

Taxpayers' share

From the start, the renovation project was planned to be partly funded by taxpayers.

The 2005 General Assembly appropriated \$800,000 and this year it provided \$90,000 more, said Paul Gannoe, director of the state Division for Engineering and Contract Administration.

Gannoe said that money is intended to fund replacement of heating and air-conditioning systems. He said the remaining funds will go to repair windows and doors and replace the single-pane glass with double-pane glass that provides protection from ultraviolet light.

These projects combined, Gannoe said, will eliminate problems that have been harming the interior of the building and its furnishings -- damaging light and an inability to regulate humidity and temperature.

"When this work is finished, we'll get a tighter seal on all of the envelope penetrations and proceed with the work the foundation will do," Gannoe said.

Cost of fundraising

Fletcher said she was proud that only about \$167,000 had been spent on costs related to raise more than \$1.4 million. "So we have had very, very low expenses. I would imagine that our foundation would rival most others -- if not all others as far as keeping the cost down," she said.

Rick Cohen, executive director of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy in Washington, said spending 11 percent of donations on fundraising is well under a rule of thumb that charities should spend less than 35 percent on fundraising.

"But in this case it's too early to make a judgment on that because they've not started to spend their money on the purpose of why they were created. So far, 100 percent of what they spent is on fundraising," Cohen said.

Fletcher declined to update estimates of how much she hopes to raise or when work funded by the foundation will begin.

"It just took us a while to get things going here. But now that things are rolling, I think you'll see quite a bit of progress over the next few months," she said.

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