

# Legislators approve funds for Merestead

By VICTORIA SHERIDAN

The Westchester County Board of Legislators this week approved a \$2.05 million capital project to repair the mansion on the Merestead estate in Bedford and Mount Kisco.

"This property has so much potential," Kitley Covill, Westchester County Legislator was quoted in a Board of Legislators release announcing the funding. "We are saving this building and I look forward to seeing Merestead used by our communities."

Ms. Covill represents District 2, comprised of Bedford, Lewisboro, Pound Ridge, Mount Kisco, North Salem and Somers.

She has said that improvements at county parks are overdue, and pledged as part of her campaign platform in 2016 to pursue money for them. She also has singled out funding for Merestead as a county budget priority for this year.

Merestead is a 130-acre property, which the previous owners deeded to Westchester County in 1982. After the owner died in 2000, the county took full possession of the property. The estate features a 28-room Georgian mansion building built in 1907, which houses an art collection and library, as well as a dozen surrounding buildings — including a farmhouse, carriage house and barn.

Merestead formerly belonged to Margaret Sloane Patterson — daughter of W. & J. Sloane furniture company

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— COUNTY LEGISLATOR KITLEY COVILL

president William Sloane — and her husband, Robert Lee Patterson, a New York City orthopedic surgeon.

According to the Board of Legislators, in the last decade the roofs on the buildings have started to deteriorate, threatening the valuable artwork inside the structure. Also, the water and waste systems are not up to code, officials said. In addition, an entrance bridge requires repairs to make the buildings accessible to visitors.

Ms. Covill's aide, Erika Pierce, explained this week that the property is used by the public for its outdoor hiking trails. Once the repairs are made, the county intends to reopen the mansion to visitors.

"It's being hidden because it's not in good shape, instead of being a feature that's being highlighted," Ms. Pierce said of the mansion.

Ms. Pierce said that a start date and timeline for the project have not yet



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**Crumbling ceiling inside the mansion of the Merestead estate is one sign of the historic structure's disrepair.**

been determined. The county needs to issue a bid request for the repairs first, she noted.

She said that the project announced this week is a first step toward a larger plan to revamp Merestead. The legislators said they hope the park's buildings will serve educational and artistic uses once they are repaired and reopened.

A portion of the approved funds

will be used to move the contents of the mansion into storage so a new roof can be constructed, according to the Board's release.

Bedford Town Supervisor Chris Burdick was also quoted in the announcement, thanking Ms. Covill for her "perseverance and tenacity, which is responsible for securing the funding."