

Stabilizing the Assembly Rooms

A member's briefing — one hundred fifty-five years standing, and the next hundred is the work in front of us.

ANNUAL MEETING
Monday, 15 June 2026
6:30 pm · Potluck supper
6090 Lawyers Hill Road, Elkridge MD

THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS	2026 EVENTS	ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS	PROJECT SCOPE	TOTAL PROJECT COST
155 years standing	1,000+ annual visitors	20 members on rota	14 trades	\$136,874 grant + match

WHAT'S STANDING



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

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

Designed by Washington architect **Robert Stead** (who lived two doors down on Lawyer's 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 Assembly Rooms has held meetings, performances, picnics, and weddings. It still does — and in 2025 began hosting Farm & Coffee Pop-Ups, concerts (including Grammy-nominated lutenist Ronn McFarlane, who returns for the natural acoustics), art exhibitions, and meetings of the Rockburn Land Trust. 2026 is projected at 1,000+ visitors.

WHAT'S FAILING



Rotted sills, east entrance interior — daylight where structure used to be.



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



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



Interior west corner — two blue steel jacks are currently holding load.

Diagnosis (Fitzgerald's Heavy Timber

Construction, Feb 2026): wood structural members are bearing directly in soil and moisture-prone conditions. The 2008 stabilization addressed the urgent symptoms — failing girders, foundation movement, threatened occupancy — but did not lift the timber off the ground. Moisture has continued to wick into sill plates ever since. Targeted areas: wood sills, stage framing (SE / SW corners), eastern deck, east stage door, site drainage on the east and west, gutters and downspouts, shingle and flashing details, north window shutter.

Without intervention, piecemeal repairs continue to cost more in total than a single root-cause stabilization. The east deck is already past safe public use. Programming that now draws 200-person crowds would face an emergency shutdown.

THE FIX, IN ONE SENTENCE · Lift vulnerable timber out of contact with soil, give it a defined foundation, move water away from the building, and reconstruct the eastern deck with historically appropriate detailing — all under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The plan, the money, the ask.

Funded by a Maryland Heritage Areas Authority grant matched dollar-for-dollar by the Assembly Rooms.

PROJECT WINDOW
July 2026 — May 2027
 Construction Dec 2026 -
 Apr 2027
 Closed during
 construction

SCOPE OF WORK — SORTED BY PROJECT COST

TRADE	DESCRIPTION	PROJECT TOTAL	RELATIVE COST
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	
Electric	100A → 200A · heater circuits · 4 heaters	\$8,719	
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	
All trades	+ \$3,356 volunteer time, valued at MD nonprofit rate	\$133,520	

THE MONEY

\$68,437 requested from MHAA

\$68,437 matched dollar-for-dollar by the Assembly Rooms

\$136,874 total project cost

WHERE THE MATCH COMES FROM



Match must come from non-state sources: cash, contractor discounts, donated materials, volunteer time. We have enough in cash reserves to cover the full match if needed; we'd rather not.

TIMELINE



Jul - Dec 2026: bid documents, procurement, permitting, material sourcing. The 2026 event season runs concurrent — Assembly Rooms stays open. Annual meeting, July 4th picnic, art opening, Farm Pop-Ups all go forward as scheduled.

Dec 2026 - Apr 2027: demolition, sill and framing repair, new foundation, drainage, deck, electrical. Assembly Rooms is closed ~4 months.

May 2027: punch list, cleanup, 2027 season opens on schedule.

HOW MEMBERS CAN HELP — THREE CONCRETE ASKS

Give

We need to raise about **\$21,000 in new community gifts** to cover one-third of the match. Anything beyond that reduces the draw on reserves.

- Venmo: [@Elkridge_Assembly_Rooms](#)
- PayPal Giving Fund (link on the website)
- Membership: \$25 individual · \$50 family
- Larger gifts — talk to a board member tonight

Volunteer

Volunteer hours are valued at **\$35.53 / hr** (Maryland nonprofit rate). Every committee hour is real match dollars on the grant.

- Fundraising committee
- Document archiving
- Event planning & hosting
- Landscaping & grounds
- Construction-period site monitoring (Dec '26 - Apr '27)

Show up

Bringing one new person to an Assembly Rooms event is the highest-leverage thing a member can do.

- Annual Meeting — tonight
- Farm & Coffee Pop-Ups — 2026 season
- Concerts incl. Ronn McFarlane
- Art exhibits incl. The Birds & The Bees (Alicia Thacker, June 5)
- July 4th Picnic — hayride, lawn games



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 Assembly Rooms.

THE PEOPLE ON THIS

BOARD PROJECT TEAM

Debra Roth · **President** · **Project Manager**. 25+ yrs program management; contractor coordination, fundraising, stakeholders.

Dustin Thacker, Assoc. AIA · **Volunteer Architect**. Architect and structural consultant; former Howard Co. Historic Preservation Commission.

Nessly Craig, Ph.D. · **Project Advisor**. Retired UMBC Biological Sciences; educational and interpretive lead.

Burnet Chalmers · **Project Advisor**. Retired President, The Milby Company; financial oversight and sustainability.

Wendy Ng · **Board (former Treasurer)**. Bowstring Art Studios; Howard Co. Arts Council; programming and community.

CONTRACTORS & CONSULTANTS

Fitzgerald's Heavy Timber Construction · **Structural assessment & scope**. Thurmont, MD; in business since 1992. Traditional joinery, heavy timber systems, preservation-sensitive repair. Authored the 19-photo conditions assessment that drives the scope of this project.

JEM Electrical Co. · **Electrical scope**. Woodbine, MD. 100A → 200A service, dedicated heating circuits, 4 Bromic infrared heaters for extended-season comfort.

Secretary of the Interior · **Standards of compliance**. All work performed under the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation, reviewed under MHAA grant terms.

SAVE THE DATE — 2026 — 2027

SUMMER 2026 — OPEN

15 Jun · Annual Meeting + potluck (tonight)

20 Jun · Father's Day Farm Stand (Morningside Farm + Dive Coffee, 9 am – noon)

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

Aug - Nov · Concerts, Farm Pop-Ups, art exhibits

WINTER 2026-27 — CLOSED

Jul - Nov 2026 · Bid documents, contractor procurement, permitting, fundraising

Dec 2026 - Apr 2027 · Construction. The Assembly Rooms is closed for ~4 months.

Volunteer ask: site monitoring shifts, materials sourcing, photo documentation of the work

SPRING 2027 — REOPENING

May 2027 · Punch list, deep clean, signage refresh

Late spring 2027 · Reopening celebration — first Farm Pop-Up of the new season

Summer 2027 · Full programming calendar resumes on a structurally sound foundation, with extended-season comfort from the new electrical & heaters