

Feed and Grain lives on

Hardship claim is denied

By Rachel Carter

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

The Loveland Feed and Grain building will stand.

Loveland City Council members voted, 7-2, Tuesday night to deny Dean and Betty Anderson's appeal to demolish the 115-year-old building.

The council voted at 11 p.m., with Councilmen Walt Skowron and Steve Dozier voting against the motion, meaning they would have allowed the building's demolition.

Per city code, the Andersons had to prove that letting the building stand was an "economic hardship" for them.

After hours of comments from the Andersons, the developer who wants to raze the building and more than a dozen residents who want to save it, the council got down to debating Loveland's own city code.

"For me, I do not think there is an economic hardship," said Mayor Larry Walsh, adding, "It became apparent tonight that there are other offers (to buy the granary) out there."

The Andersons, who own the property at 130 W. Third St., applied for historic designation with the city in February 2005.

They applied at the urging of Gary Hassenflu, a Kansas developer who originally planned to transform the building into apartments.

Hassenflu needed that historic designation to apply for tax credits and grants to help fund his \$6.7 million project.

But when tax credits and grants fell through, Hassenflu said, renovating the Feed and Grain was not financially possible. He now wants to buy the property — his option to purchase the site expires June 1 — and raze the granary to build apartments from the ground up.

"Our intent was to save this building," Hassenflu told the council. "There just wasn't any way to make the project work."

The Andersons applied in late January to tear down the 1891 granary based on city code that allows for exemptions based on "economic hardship."

The Loveland Historic Preservation Commission unanimously denied the Andersons' demolition request March 23.

The Andersons appealed the commission's decision to the Loveland City Council.

Walsh said the Andersons knew what they were getting into when they applied for historic designation last February. He also pointed to testimony that the Andersons have other offers if Hassenflu walks away.

A group of residents wants to buy the property. They have spent the past two months rallying to save the building: They created a nonprofit organization, applied for a state historical grant, and raised nearly \$30,000 in pledges, all in hopes of buying the property to save it from the wrecking ball.

Bonnie and Daniel Skaggs and Barry Floyd, a downtown developer and property owner, even submitted an offer last month to buy the site. The Andersons turned them down because of Hassenflu's option.

"Once the property was designated (as a historic landmark), I do believe the community of Loveland became, in some small way, part owners of it," said Erin McLaughlin, who has led efforts to save the building.

McLaughlin and several other residents argued that the building does not meet city code for demolition — and the Andersons have not proved, to the letter of the law, their request for an exemption.

Residents urged City Council members to set aside their personal feelings and vote based on city code — which is what City Council members did, although they each interpreted city code differently.

"I just want you to know that I'd like to see the building saved and redeveloped, but I'm at odds, I have a difference of opinion with how to read the code," said Dozier.

Councilman Glenn Rousey said city code requires "adequate evidence and testimony" to prove economic hardship — which he didn't hear Tuesday night.

"I can't vote on this issue based on a vision that you may have of what the building can become," Rousey said. "I can only vote on the merit of the appeal."