



Former Firehouse Cafe to show off at Thunderfest

ADAMS -- A town native, currently living in Ohio, bought the former Gringo's Firehouse Café on Park Street this January and visited home this past weekend to begin work on restoring a space he believes could become a future "destination."



Bill Kolis, a 1973 graduate of Hoosac Valley who's practiced law in Ohio since 1981, said his plan was several years in the making.

"I had been looking at the Firehouse and a couple other places in Adams for the last five, six, seven years, intending to retire from the practice of law and come back home," Kolis said.

Ideally, Kolis added, he would like to open a restaurant, but he is open to other possibilities and would like to involve the community.

For instance, in addition to working 12-hour days to ready the building this weekend, Kolis made arrangements so he could open the Firehouse doors for Thunderfest and operate as "a hospitality place" during the festival. Thunderfest, held in conjunction with the Thunderbolt Ski Race, is scheduled for Saturday, March 3.

"Thunderfest is going to be at the Visitors Center, but I think people will be all over town," Kolis said. "Here's a good sign: Four different groups of people looking for something to do in downtown Adams stopped by while I was working in the building just this weekend."

According to Kolis, an array of storyboards highlighting local history will be featured at the Firehouse during the festival.

Kolis believes there are "a lot of similar things" going on in town that he compared to what initially drew him to Ohio, where he worked in community development with the city of Cleveland.

"Through the Internet, I've been able to watch what's going on in town, and I think the local government is spot-on in what they're doing to fan the flames of development," Kolis said, citing projects at the Mausert Block, Ashuwillticook Trail, the Armory Court and the Registry of Deeds. "Quite frankly, I'm not sure I would have purchased the Firehouse if I hadn't seen the other stuff going on."

The town, according to Kolis, is an "absolute gem," boasting natural beauty and a "preserved" historical mill town appearance intriguing to outsiders.

"I want to do as much as I can to promote a regeneration," Kolis said.

A restaurant at the location could potentially be called McKinley's at the Firehouse, and Kolis also spoke of starting a nonprofit free speech club -- to be called The Adams Anthony Center for Political, Economic and Social Discourse -- featuring local speakers and events around town.

Although no timeline is yet in place for his use of the building, Kolis said he will be a regular visitor in the coming months as his plans continue to develop.

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