

Syracuse to try to get \$363,000 demolition cost from Marsellus Casket Co. factory owners

Published: Thursday, September 30, 2010, 2:33 PM Updated: Thursday, September 30, 2010, 3:30 PM



Charley Hannagan / The Post-Standard



Dick Blume / The Post-Standard

The former Marsellus Casket Co. factory is being demolished today after a fire destroyed the Richmond Avenue building Wednesday.

Syracuse, NY -- Syracuse will try to get the \$363,000 cost of taking down the fire-ravaged Marsellus Casket Co. factory from its owners, city officials said today.

The city wants Richmond Ave. Development LLC, the owners of the 121-year-old former factory swept by fire early Wednesday, to pay for the demolition, said Lindsay McCluskey, speaking for the mayor's office. She said the corporation, a Westchester County investment group, has insurance on the building which it has owned since 2007.

Worried about the building's stability, the city sought emergency bids to demolish the building from three contractors on a pre-approved list, McCluskey said. Two submitted proposals. The lowest bidder, Crisafulli Trucking of Syracuse, won the contract, she said.

Demolition began at 3 p.m. Wednesday, 12 hours after the fire was reported, and continued through the evening and into today.

Company owner Antonio Crisafulli estimated it will take about 10 days to demolish the building, take away the rubble and level the lot at the corner of Richmond Avenue and Van Rensselaer Street.

Syracuse firefighters and a fire truck have been standing by dousing smoldering debris as excavating equipment digs through the rubble.

"That building wouldn't stop burning," Crisafulli said this afternoon.

The fire department has been "A-1" in putting out flames in the debris, he said.

A large white clock that has adorned the four-story brick building for generations was among the first sections of the building demolished Wednesday night, Crisafulli said.

Fire investigators say someone started the fire on the third floor underneath the clock and about 50 to 60 feet inside the building. But they don't know if it was intentionally set.

Officials theorize the fire may have been started by kids, a homeless person or someone using a torch to strip and steal metal from the building.

The clock stood watch over the 50 to 60 firefighters who battled the blaze for several hours Wednesday. But it couldn't withstand the demolition.

It was too high up and the structure was too unstable to save it, McCluskey said.

Even if the clock was saved, there would have been nowhere to put it on public display.

The Onondaga Historical Association wasn't offered the clock. Even if it had been offered, the OHA couldn't take it anyway, said Curator of History Dennis Connors.

The museum has limited space and it doesn't have a loading dock or a warehouse to store it in, he said.

"I would guess we'd probably have to pass on something like that," Connors said. "It wouldn't fit in the museum and wouldn't make sense to store it and public not be able to see it anyway."

[Click here to see previous coverage of the Marsellus Casket Co. fire.](#)

See a video of the demolition:

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