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# **Nonprofit closes on Guilford store deal**

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GUILFORD -- A local nonprofit has officially purchased Guilford's only store after more than a year of negotiations.

Friends of Algiers Village, Inc. closed on the Guilford Country Store, Wednesday afternoon, finalizing a sales deal for the group to own the historic building.

Located near the corner of Route 5 and Guilford Center Road, the store has remained a focus point in the village for nearly 200 years. Since 1817, the building has served as a tavern, hotel, dance hall and meeting place prior to it becoming a retail shop.

Since last July, Friends of Algiers (FOA) have worked with outgoing store owner Patricia Good on an agreement to purchase the shop in an effort to keep it locally owned.

"We worked pretty steadily on bringing all of the components together on the purchase," said FOA President Eric Morse. "We just got so much support and we were happy that we were able to deliver on what we promised the community."

Since its inception, the Friends organization has worked to preserve the historic qualities of Guilford's downtown village known as Algiers. In 2008, they teamed up with Windham Housing Trust to purchase the Tontine building and renovate it into affordable apartment units.

The group was expected to takeover operations in early July, but they ran into a roadblock when the project was put on hold from the bank as FOA waited to hear about a required Vermont Housing & Conservation Board grant for an easement to preserve the historic qualities of the building.

After receiving approval for the historic easement, all the interested parties "got on the same page and gave the go-ahead," Morse said. "Brattleboro Savings & Loan has been very supportive in helping us line up the funding to help us purchase the store."

Guilford Chairman Richard Clark said he is looking forward to seeing the improvements made at the location to make the store more convenient for customers.

"I think it's great the sale went through, and they have indicated that they will have the building continue to serve as a storefront for as long as possible," he added.

Only now, the work really begins, according to Morse.

FOA will use a planning grant to contrive the interior of the store and work on improvements to get the store up-and-running again soon. Morse said while there are no confirmed dates for its reopening at this time, the nonprofit would like it operating before the end of the year.

The next immediate step for FOA is to plan for the first-floor renovation and continue negotiations with potential store managers. While Friends would own the building, they would lease the store as a business.

Calls made directly to the store were not answered.

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