

Bowne House funds on hold

BY [John Lauinger](#)

Tuesday, June 9th 2009, 1:12 PM

THE BULK of the funding for the long-overdue restoration of the historic Bowne House in [Flushing](#) remains in place, but a portion will be held back until 2013, city officials said last week.

The Colonial-era relic - one of the city's oldest homes and an important symbol of religious freedom - has been surrounded by controversy amid a series of anonymous e-mails lambasting the city for yanking the funds.

The city is in the process of acquiring the house from the [Bowne House Historical Society](#).

The \$628,000 that [City Councilman John Liu \(D-Flushing\)](#) allocated for the restoration has been pulled by the city, the Parks Department confirmed to [Queens News](#).

That money won't be available until 2013, but department officials appeared to quash fears that the restoration project was doomed.

"We currently have \$1.7 million available for the restoration of the roof, siding, windows and doors, as well as structural stabilization of the house," Parks said in a statement.

The Historic House Trust of [New York City](#), a nonprofit preservation group that works with Parks, issued a similar statement.

The Bowne House, where [John Bowne](#) defied Dutch Colonial law and allowed members of the outlawed Quaker faith to meet, will become the Trust's 23rd site once the handover is complete.

The historical society's board of trustees signed over the home to the city in March, according to a source with knowledge of the situation.

All that remains is for state [Attorney General Andrew Cuomo](#) to sign off on the transfer.

"Capital restoration work can begin after the transfer," the Parks Department said in its statement, without providing a timeline.

The funding scuttlebutt prompted some preservationists and a state lawmaker to charge that the pullback would jeopardize the continued existence of the home, whose roof is covered by little more than a tarp.

"Bowne House is in desperate need of the funds to continue with the building repairs," state [Sen. Frank Padavan](#) wrote to [Mayor Bloomberg](#) on May 18. Padavan has allocated \$100,000 to build a visitor center at the site.

Members of the Bowne House board learned of the funding issue in an e-mail that [Mikel Travisano](#), an architectural conservator with the Trust, sent to some members on March 24, shortly after the board signed away the property, a source said.

That e-mail, obtained by Queens News, included a message that could prove ominous for the project's future.

"Because of current and continuing budget problems, future changes to the Parks budget will be funding cuts rather than moving funds to a future fiscal year," Travisano wrote.

"Sorry for the bad news," he concluded.

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