

CASE STUDY 2: Moving the Maisenbacher House

Linking Case Study to Chapter Materials: In this case students are introduced to the nature and complexities of public management. The questions that follow the case provide an opportunity to discuss the topics in Chapters 1 and 2.

In 2007 Springfield Clinic of Springfield, Illinois, purchased the Lincoln-era Maisenbacher House located at 1028 South Seventh St. The Maisenbacher house was built between 1855 and 1865. As the story goes, the original owner, Isaac Lindsay, completed the house with \$650 he borrowed from Abraham Lincoln. But Springfield Clinic had other concerns besides the history of the house. It was in the midst of an expansion and the grand residence stood on property slated for a new parking lot. Within a few weeks, contractors were allowed to remove the plumbing, wiring and other fixtures in preparation for the demolition. Shortly thereafter, two citizens began an effort to preserve what was one of fewer than one hundred remaining structures in the city that predated the Civil War. Clinic officials granted the activists until April to organize a move for the 3,700-square-foot two-story Italianate brick building: if no plan could be organized, the building would be razed, but if their efforts were successful, they would have until November 2008 to complete the move.

Lacking funding, a buyer, or even a lot for relocation of the house, the pair embarked on a six-month odyssey of meetings with developers, historic societies, city and state officials, and dozens of other individuals and organizations in hopes of finding a solution to the dilemma. In early May, a private developer offered to move the structure to a lot just five blocks away to the corner of Seventh and Jackson Streets, across from the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. The move would also require the demolition of a structure on the new property deemed not worthy of saving. A complex transfer of ownership was arranged, and the Springfield Clinic itself committed to pay 80 percent of the cost of the move. In October, the city agreed to cover the remaining \$55,000 for the move with federal grant money and spend \$60,000 of city development funds for demolition of the other building. The local paper quoted Mayor Tim Davlin on the project: "I am pleased that everyone cooperated and worked together to make this happen, and I am looking forward to seeing the house begin a new life at a new location."

In mid-November, with much fanfare, the Maisenbacher was rolled five blocks—where it was parked on a side street for thirty days. At that time, it became apparent that not only was there no permanent foundation for the building, there was no design and none in development. As could be expected, much criticism followed in the local press. The city council balked at the mayor's request for an additional \$822,000 to design and build a foundation to begin restoration. A temporary rock pad was constructed and the house was lowered onto a temporary foundation of railroad ties. In February, the council approved a much-reduced request of just under \$280,000. Finally, a new foundation was constructed under the building during the summer of 2009. But all was not done: future renovation costs were estimated at more than \$1 million, perhaps as much as \$2 million.

Source: This case was written by Jeffrey Paine, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University Purdue University-Indianapolis

Discussion Questions

1. What went wrong in moving the Maisenbacher?
2. Who are the stakeholders?
3. What is the role of Springfield in the Maisenbacher case? What are the goals of the city? How will you know if the government is effective?
4. From the perspective of a city manager, what complexities are inherent in the case?

In what ways might the environment shape the public manager's job in this case?

5. What competencies would best prepare a public manager to be effective in the Maisenbacher case?