

Clifton, after the Flood

Repairs planned for bridge and lodge damaged in last year's flood.

By [Mike DiCicco](#)

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Plans to repair flood damage to the Acacia Lodge and Buckley Bridge, both situated along Pope's Head Creek in Clifton, are under way, although the bridge will be completed well before the lodge. Both Buckley Bridge, which provides access to Randolph Buckley Park, and Acacia Lodge No. 16, which is the meeting place for Masonic District No. 4 and the self-proclaimed "most flooded little lodge in the Commonwealth," were damaged when the creek overflowed after 12 inches of rain fell over the course of four days in June 2006. Both projects will involve removing the structures in order to repair their foundations. Applications were submitted on behalf of both projects for grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), but only the bridge received a grant.

THE TOWN posted a bid for construction contractors for the bridge repairs July 6 and expects to execute a contract by Aug. 6. Vice Mayor Patrick Layden said several contractors have expressed interest in the project, which would involve lifting the bridge and repairing an abutment that was damaged by rushing water. The bridge is currently unusable.

"Certain areas were declared eligible for federal help because of all of the damage from flooding," said Layden, noting that Fairfax County was among those localities. Under the agreement with FEMA, the town will pay only a small percentage of the cost of repairs.

He said he expected permits from the county and the state's Marine Resource Commission to be granted within the next couple of weeks, and the projected completion date is Oct. 1. Layden noted that the town has a strong interest in completing the repairs in October because without the bridge, Clifton will be unable to stage its annual Haunted Trail event, which he said "draws several hundred people and brings a lot of money into the town." Last year's Haunted Trail was canceled because the bridge could not be used.

Repairing the lodge will be a bigger job. Its foundation was damaged by rushing water, which also damaged the interior by flooding the building by a depth of 3 feet. The plan is to move the building onto the neighboring property, owned by the Clifton Betterment to Association (CBA), while the foundation is rebuilt. The new foundation will allow water to flow through it and will raise the building about 3 feet. The floor will also be replaced and new wall coverings installed in the first story, said Brandt Baber, a 25-year member of the lodge.

A second phase of construction will include general refurbishments including a new roof, front porch, exterior siding and windows, as well as a second story added to the rearward bathroom attachment, said Baber. A stairway would descend to the yard from the attachment's new upstairs level, and the bathrooms would be made handicapped-accessible.

The town's Architectural Review Board (ARB) and Planning Commission both considered the plans for the lodge at their June meetings, and concerns were raised about the possibility that adding to the rear of the building might violate the town's setback requirements.

"We approved raising the building and putting a new front porch on, but we stopped there," said Royce Jarrendt, who chairs the Architectural Review Board, noting that the Clifton Betterment Association was considering donating a strip of its land to the lodge to solve any problem with setback requirements. The lodge, said Jarrendt, "agreed that would take some time and they'd come back to us when they had all



Photo by Mike DiCicco
Acacia Lodge No. 16 in Clifton is still in need of repairs after last summer's flooding.



their ducks in row."

Baber noted that the Planning Commission had also approved phase one of the project, and the Town Council will consider the plans at its next meeting.

Meanwhile, the masons of District No. 4 have continued to meet in the building. "We have to make certain we have about as many people on one side of the lodge as on the other," said Baber, chuckling. He explained that an architectural engineer had declared the building to be "safe enough," but that it still shifts occasionally due to a buckled floor joist.

Baber, who chairs the lodge's Finance Committee, said the group would not begin seeking a contractor until it had raised the necessary funds, which he said would take until September or October. He explained that FEMA would only offer grants to government agencies or those carrying out "essential public services," which disqualified the lodge. Having spent about \$15,000 on planning and design, the lodge now has about \$20,000 of the \$80,000 it expects to spend on the first phase of the project, he said. Baber said the lodge has conducted numerous fund raisers, such as the recent Saint John's Table Lodge at the Kena Temple in Fairfax, which raised about \$5,000.

Most of the second phase of construction, he said, will aim to restore the historic appearance of the building, which was built as a grist mill in the 1870s about a mile and a half from its current location.

Baber noted that changes to the addition would not only make it handicapped-accessible but might make the bathrooms accessible to the public.

Betterment Association President Michelle Stein said the CBA would discuss the question of donating a 10- to 15-foot strip of land to the lodge at its next meeting in mid-August. "The CBA's goal is always to help preserve the historic buildings in town," said Stein. "We certainly wouldn't give away land for any other reason." She added that it still had not been determined whether the additional land was necessary. The land in question is part of a larger tract that is being planned as a park.