

Saving a station in Nahant

By Bridget Turcotte / The Daily Item | Posted: Tuesday, August 18, 2015 3:00 am

NAHANT — In an effort to preserve and improve the Life Saving Station on Nahant Road, crews will be finishing up the installation of a new fence this week.

Old fences were removed and new post-and-rope style fences are being built in areas around the building and dune areas. An older metal fence lining the beach will remain in place to further protect the dunes.

The new “rope and rail” fencing will be installed, surrounding and segregating the dunes along the beach area. They are also being installed in the front and to the sides of the building and along the pathway leading to the beach.

The posts for most of the fencing have already been installed and will soon be cut to size. Rope will then be added to serve as a barrier and provide an added appealing look, said Dennis Maroney, vice-president of the Preservation Trust.

The project will continue in late September, said Maroney.

“We will do an environmental resurfacing of the parking lot,” he said. “We’ll use crushed gravel. There will also be a little brum to catch the water during flooding.”

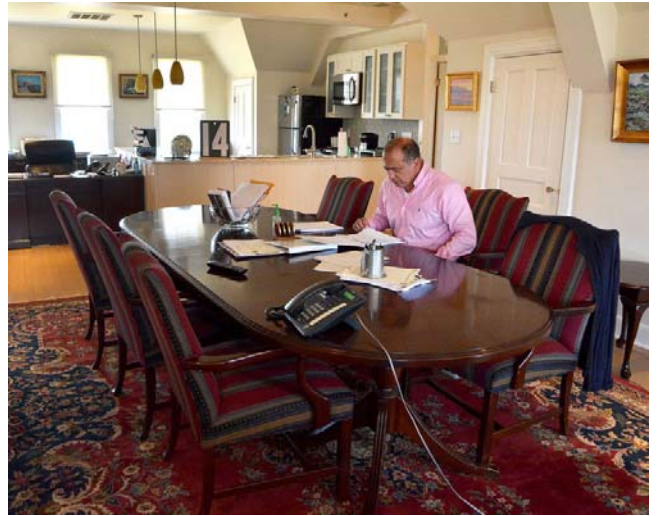
“We have to deal with the elements,” he said. The area has been known to be subjected to severe flooding during major storms, he said.

“That will be part of the big project,” Maroney said. “We’ll be redoing the stairs, which weren’t currently built to any safety codes.”

The stairs will need to be rebuilt and a hand rail will need to be installed. After the stairs are built, a new sidewalk will also be constructed surrounding the building, he said.

“It will be built using corrugated concrete like at the town hall,” he said.

The Life Saving Station was built after eight people died from a coal-schooner wreck on Short Beach in 1898. Henry Cabot Lodge, who was a U.S. senator and resident of Nahant at the time, worked quickly to transfer land on the beach to the federal government. He was able to get Congress to fund



Nahant Life Saving Station

Newly renovated crew quarters at the Nahant Life Saving Station are currently occupied by Larry DiBenedetto of Wakefield, who uses it for his business.

the construction of the Life Saving Station.

It was used to rescue ships in trouble for a number of years. There is a tower at the top of the building where rescuers could keep watch and the bottom of the building housed boats. In an emergency, large doors would be opened and the boats would be launched into the water.

It served as a Life Saving station for a number of years, even after the Life Saving Service merged into the Coast Guard. Eventually it became a recreational space for the Coast Guard.

According to Maroney, it was deeded back to the town in 2000 and renovated in 2012. Now, the space is used to host functions. It also houses the American Legion and an apartment upstairs.

This helps provide funding for projects like this one. However, funding also comes from private gifts and donations, the town and community preservation grants.

After the fencing, stairs, sidewalk and paving is complete, the trust will look at landscaping.

“We will get some strong plants that can handle the elements,” Maroney said.

“We’re also exploring possibilities for the tower room,” he said. “We have to look at historic and safety issues but it would be neat to have a private dining room for two.”

“I look forward to working with the Nahant Preservation Trust on this project,” said DPW Superintendent Gabe Federico.

“It’s very iconic,” said Jeff Chelgren, Nahant town manager. “To have lost it for the wrong reasons, or for any reasons, would have been tragic.”

Project improvements are expected to conclude in October.