



Former Polish princess mansion sold; plans underway for B&B

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UTICA — The mansion at 294 Genesee St. that once housed a self-appointed Polish princess has a new owner who might convert the property into a bed and breakfast.

Jake Thurston, a real estate agent with Coldwell Banker Faith Properties who oversaw the transaction, said a Utica-based family plans to move into the mansion soon.

“They would like to see the public in there,” he said. “This is a great thing for Utica. It’s a wonderful property with a lot of history.”

Plans for the 1850s mansion took a surreal turn in 2009 when the property was purchased by Diana Lenska and a foreign investor who promised to turn the building into a Polish cultural embassy. The money and support for that vision never materialized and she left town last summer after gutting many of the mansion’s original fixtures.

Lenska claimed a link to Polish royalty after founding the Royal Order of the Kingdom of Poland in the 1980s. As the organization’s grandmaster, she then designated herself as a princess.

Shortly after the mansion was abandoned, preservationists said they were concerned the property’s condition would disinterest investors. That apparently was not the case.

“It was on the market for about two weeks before we received an offer,” Thurston said.

Thurston would not reveal the new owner’s name, purchase price or date of the transaction, even though the information eventually will be public. Lenska and her Hong Kong-based sponsor, A Better Tomorrow Limited, purchased the building in 2009 for \$202,000.

Utica City Assessor David Williams and an employee at the Oneida County Clerk’s Office said updated information about the property has not yet passed through either office.

While Lenska’s grandiose plans never took hold, a part of her vision wasn’t completely dissimilar from the new owner. In 2009, Lenska shared her dream on the Royal Order’s MySpace page:

"Steeped within the history and traditions of monarchy, the embassy will host balls, concerts, investitures, musicals, art exhibits, official functions within the etiquette and protocol of the 18-19th century," the page read. "The cultural embassy will also serve as a royal bed and breakfast for visiting knights."

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