

Habitat ReStore ceases operation in wake of May fire

Recommendation to end the lease going to city council meeting on Tues.

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TINCAP — An organization known for building houses for families has experienced first-hand over the past few months the tragedy of losing the roof over your head.

Thousand Islands Habitat for Humanity has been forced to cease the operation of its ReStore in the wake of a fire May 29 that heavily damaged its home in a converted hangar at the Brockville airport.

City council is to vote Tuesday night on a motion to let the organization out of its five-year lease.

Habitat began paying the \$17,160 annual rental fee when it opened the ReStore — a fundraising retail operation that sold recycled home improvement products — in May 2006.

Council's operations committee endorsed the recommendation to end the lease at its meeting this week.

Following May's fire, the store continued business from an office trailer, using several shipping containers to store what could be salvaged from the building.

However, spokesman Valerie Kines said Friday after the incredible amount of work clearing out the building and then having no permanent home, the decision was made to close.

"We were exhausted," said Kines.

She said the local Habitat chapter's board has not made a decision yet on whether the ReStore venture may restart sometime in the future.

"We don't know what the future holds," said Kines.

"But we decided we had to close it, that was the only option we had. Do we reopen and if so, when and how? That's for the future," she added.

Like any new business, Kines said the store was at the point of getting itself firmly established after two years of operating when the fire struck.

She said it was heartbreaking to



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A sign in a trailer window says it all about the Habitat for Humanity ReStore location on Airport Road on Friday.

see so much of the material they'd kept from going to a landfill have to end up there after the fire.

Much of it was simply too damaged by heat and smoke to sell, she said.

What they could salvage was sold off at a garage sale or given away.

Topping off their incredible disappointment was ultimately deciding to close the store.

"It was absolutely devastating," said Kines. "I can't emphasize how devastated we were about the whole thing."

No official cause has been determined for the blaze.

Conal Cosgrove, the city's director of operations, said the building's structural integrity has been ensured but there is no timeline on the repairs.

He said the cost of the restoration hasn't been determined, but noted it will be covered by the city's insurance.