

Danville Train Station Committee Minutes

Meeting of February 9, 2021, 5:30-6:53pm

Location: Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Michael Hogue, Ted Houle, Ross Meaders, Kate Whitehead, Tim Ide, Alison Low, Patty Conley, Kitty Toll, Rob Balivet, Sally Fishburn, Keith Gadapee, Lois Russo-Secretary

The Danville Train Station Committee (DTSC) is a subcommittee of the Planning Committee. Meeting opened at 5:31pm via Zoom by Michael Hogue, chair. Michael took roll and submitted the agenda for approval. Agenda approved unanimously with the addition of the update from Ross Meaders.

Agenda addition - Town Approval of Historical Filings – Ross Meaders

Ross Meaders said Devin Coleman (State Architectural Historian) emailed him back and wanted to know if we wanted to proceed with the state filing. The building is eligible for both categories A (historic event – opening of the RR station) & C (architecture itself). Ross asked if there were any questions. Tim Ide asked if the Planning Committee would be involved. Michael said that would be the next step followed by the Select Board. Patty Conley asked if there were limitations. Ross answered that if we completely altered the building so it no longer presented its historical form, then it might get removed from the state and/or national register. If it were torn down, as Tim asked, then we would lose the registration since there would no longer be a building and would no longer meet A & C status. Michael pointed out however that we cannot just decide unilaterally to tear it down, this would require DBR and the Planning Committee's (PC) involvement and approval vis a vis the zoning articles. Alison Low also reminded the committee of the deed provision that would require consultation with Vtrans and Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.

Tonight we are voting on whether we wish to pursue a listing on the State Register of Historic Places only; federal will follow at a later time.

Rob Balivet asked if our aim is to bringing it back to the earlier snapshots of the train station, or is that flexible. Ross answered that it is more flexible. We have a historic waiting room, even though it is not the original. Those changes were made almost 100 years ago, so everything that is currently there is considered part of the historic building because the changes are older than fifty years.

Michael mentioned that during the conversation about state certification that we were advised that they take the building "as it is" at the time of the filing.

Michael asked for a motion to recommend to the PC that we pursue the state registration. Ross motioned and received unanimous approval. Michael indicated he would forward to the PC.

Tim mentioned that in the Governor's budget for the LVRT, there were funds available over and above completing the trail and wondered if any of those monies (approximately \$5 million) might be available to this project. Alison said this issue has not been resolved. Michael asked Kitty if she would look into the possibility.

Prior Meeting Minutes Approval

Minutes from the January 5th committee meeting were reviewed and accepted. As were the minutes from the special committee meeting held on February 3rd.

Use Team – Kate Whitehead co-chair

Kate and Patty mentioned that the team connected with eight communities re: ownership, current uses, grants, allocation of expenses, and how the building ties into the LVRT. There was a mix of town owned, private ownership and one building owned by a nonprofit:

Town Owned Depots:

Hardwick: Historical Society

Vtrans Grant & smaller grants: \$170,000 to renovate. Historical society leases the space. Use: museum; private donations from members and an endowment helps covers expenses and upkeep. Shared cost between Town and Historical Society. Possibly add bathrooms in future. East Hardwick site (further up the trail) they are planning for LVRT Trailhead.

Wolcott: The Community Library

The Town took out a loan and did not seek grants for restoration. They've kept costs down by using volunteer labor (i.e. local construction company and the Caledonia County Work Camp). Volunteers are painting the structure. Historical Society was involved in renovations and making certain that the building was as historically accurate as possible. They have had a couple of tenants: PreK and Waldorf school. Tenants paid rent that covered the loan, utilities & maintenance.

The community/public library is back in there now. The Town is paying for utilities and maintenance costs. The library serves coffee and hot chocolate has outdoor and indoor seating for community members. Plans for more gardens, classes & events. There is a covered pavillion close by along the LVRT that acts as the trailhead; has picnic tables, benches, bike racks, kiosk. Used a NBRC grant.

Swanton: Museum for Swanton Historical Society

Historic Preservation Grants & other grants. LVRT Trailhead. Cost share between Town and Historical Society = utilities (town) and building & grounds (historical society).

St. Johnsbury: Chamber of Commerce, Town Offices, NCIC, Bathrooms and Visitor Center

Town-Owned Trailheads:

Hyde Park: NBRC grant - LVRT Trailhead, parking and covered pavilion planning for new art structures along the trail and up in the Village.

Johnson: Private funding is helping to develop LVRT trailhead. Pavilion being built is inspired by the old train station.

Privately Owned Depots:

Greensboro Bend: Residence

Exterior is historically intact. It's a private residence (though may not be occupied year round?) and the Town has been trying to work with or partner with the owner for a use that ties in with the LVRT.

Morrisville: Restaurant

The Town sold the station to restaurant owners; beer and pool room – kept building historically intact. Trailhead close by with a kiosk.

Cambridge: New building is owned by Smugglers Notch and used as a pumping station for snowmaking. Public cannot access the inside, but exterior has the façade of a train station. NBRC grant covered costs for trailhead w/ train themed playground, picnic table, bike repair station and parking. Cambridge Trails committee & partners led the effort.

Waterbury: an Amtrak station had a 501-c-3 that bought the building and leased the land from the town. Green Mountain Coffee Roasters had a 20 year lease as the anchor for the building. It was a private/nonprofit/municipal project, and

much bigger than most of the LVRT depots. The parent company, Keurig, has announced it is relinquishing the lease and moving Green Mountain out of the building.

Kate reiterated that the Historic Society or a municipal use like a town office or library had a presence in all the LVRT buildings.

Patty reviewed the Danville Historical Society minutes of March 1992 meeting on possible uses of the station. There were three top potential uses: Historical Society Museum, using the building to increase connection with schools for educational purposes, and rent part of the building to obtain funds to keep the project afloat. Our thinking seems to parallel the work that was done back in 1992.

Kitty asked whether the school needed any additional space, such as office space. Kate said this was a good question and she doesn't know. Keith Gadapee said this hasn't come up yet, though there was a discussion about opening up one of the offices. Ted said that he thinks the school is always looking for office space. Kate will look talk with the school.

Kate identified the top uses from town surveys, conducted by the V2V project:

- Historical Society presence
- restrooms
- access to water
- food/restaurant/café/ice cream
- community events/community room
- bike shop/ski shop with rentals
- wayfinding
- co-working, incubator space

Kate said we do not want to compete with businesses already in the community. Food was mentioned, but there may be other ways to address that. We would rather drive people into the village. So she sort of crossed that one off her list. The library just refurbished a community room so we should push people toward that. So what is left? Bike shop/rental/ski shop. Or the incubator/co-workspace which would help build community.

On the historical side – Historical Society/museum/wayfinding/space. The community wants access to the building in some way. She asked about the ability to make part of the space available with bathrooms and a small seating area where they could come to warm up, learn about the area, etc.

So the two halves, historical and incubator, would address both tourism needs and local community needs for those who do not have broadband access at home. So we have three areas: recycle side, historic side, and outside with a covered pavilion to address the wayfinding. For the food piece, perhaps a small built-in café with a window to outside. Or vending machines with snacks. Or ice cream in the summer. Or seasonal with food trucks.

Kate also said that the incubator space could still have a real estate office or other use. Michael said that outside display cases could also be made to rent space for postings by realtors or others.

Michael mentioned there was an awning with a west facing window, so perhaps this was a way to purchase food before getting on the train.

Patty asked about a realtor locating to a historic space on the trail. But the one she spoke to has consolidated down to a single office. Even though the market is hot right now, real estate is so volatile with Covid that it would be difficult for a realtor to make a commitment. Patty also reached out to another realtor who thought it

was an intriguing proposal, and they do get a lot of traffic from tourists coming to bike or ski, so it might be interesting to have a presence right on the trail. Maybe not an office, but Michael's idea of display booths might work.

Kitty reminded everyone that more realtors are remote these days. Many people go to Zillow and others to review properties versus storefronts. She said ice cream was also suggested to her.

Patty thought perhaps the Chamber might want a presence there.

Ted Houle thinks a ski shop might not work because he does not see much snowshoeing or skiing on the trail over the weekends with all the snow machine traffic. But even fat biking occurs in the winter. Probably only during the week as well. It is used for people walking their dogs during the week. But again, he would never do it on the weekends.

Ross mentioned too that even snow machiners might need to use a bathroom or get warm or get snacks that might help contribute to the costs. Some of these might be easy additions.

Michael said maybe there are things we could add that Marty's does not offer so we become a second stop on the trail after they hit Marty's.

From the discussions, Michael said it feels as though there is a consensus to keep the building as it is with any changes being small additions in and around like the display cases or pavilion-viable uses that fit within the current structure. Sally said we create a space in the freight room that is essentially a blank canvas so that whomever wanted to rent would pay for the fit-out themselves.

Sally asked if we are focused on being open year round; and how many days a week? Because we would need to staff it, and like St. J it would need to be volunteers. So how many days and what times would it be staffed? We need to consider whether volunteers can be counted on to manage the traffic.

Ross talked about the potential for a business in the freight area to show product in the passenger area thus improving exposure. For example, going in to the historic waiting room or the restrooms and seeing some nice bikes and then buying a bike. So he wondered if the historic society would allow a tenant to use part of that space. Patty said that it would depend on what the museum pieces were. If it is mostly pictorial, then certainly that could be feasible. The ticket office area could be secured and locked, but that wouldn't be possible in the rest of the passenger area, so that could certainly work depending on what it is. But the renter showcasing product in that space would have to provide supervision.

Kate's team will explore more about the bike rental/ski shop and incubator idea as well as the co-work space for next month's meeting.

Building/Land Team – Sally Fishburn co-chair

Michael discussed the review of construction documents from 1991 and 2015. He also asked the Town clerk for expenditures on the building. He said it is not clear how the building improved from the 1991 description to where it is today.

Keith asked if the team should look into acquiring some land to help with the parking situation. Kate said this would be worth exploring because she sees people parking there now, and doesn't know how we could restrict trail users from parking in the station lot. Sally said they even pull over on the side of the road where there is no parking to use the trail, so she knows we would have a difficult time restricting it. Michael mentioned a space that might not be state wetland south of the trail that could be a possibility. Sally thinks that it is not wetland

based on what she read in the Village to Village report. Tim said he would be willing to talk to the owner south of the station. There was unanimous agreement it was worth exploring.

Sally received approval from the SB to match a grant for hiring a preservation contractor to look at the building (visual inspection only) and list out the priorities of work to be addressed with a cost range on each; going from most to least important. However this review must be delayed until the snow is melted so the contractor can clearly see how the land and building work together. She and Ross are going back to review things and Ross will make drawings. She is getting very familiar with the building. The foundation work and the attic structure were done sometime in the 1990's. The biggest issue she sees is related to drainage. Someone suggested a slab in the basement, but she disagrees, she would put in a French drain and drainage around the building and keep the dirt floor. But overall the building itself is in pretty good shape. She listed a few specific smaller things needing improvement—that will require work but do not impact the overall structural integrity.

Roof, painting, drainage, a few exterior issues especially on the south side. So she feels the estimate for repairs that was submitted in 2015 by GVV is out of line with what she would recommend being done.

Tim was surprised because the foundation looks bad. But Sally said it is a dry stone foundation and may look bad, but structurally it is actually in very good shape. She would love to know who had done the work in the 1990's—which was well done—and when it was specifically. Sally thinks it was around 1996, clearly it was post the 1991 report. Patty will see if she can track down more information about the work and date in the HS documents. Michael will be getting pictures from GVV so maybe it will provide details.

Sally said this should reduce the costs for renovation significantly. She said they will know more soon, but she is encouraged thus far.

Rob mentioned that the recycling area had windows in the direction of the rails. He thinks we should add those back in. Sally agreed, and that was not in the current report, so that would be additional. But everyone agreed that it needs to be made more attractive and enjoyable for sitting in the space. Patty said that there is even a space for a little piazza with tables just outside with planters around. (On the old train platform) Ross said a platform would help with a ramp for getting bikes or snowmobiles inside. Michael suggested perhaps not on the most visible sides. ADA accessibility is also something to consider in terms of a ramp to a platform.

Rob asked the schedule on the chimney. Keith said the board has hired a contractor to take it down, he is not sure when. The SB voted on the money last Thursday.

Michael proposed that we develop more information and economics about our potential uses before we take it out to the community to weigh in. Kitty said sometimes the use of a project looks great but has not considered all the realities involved in making it work. So before we go to the community with anything we need to be sure that anything we present is something we can really make happen. Rob said it would be wonderful to have someplace that has the maple creamies in town. Sally said ice cream sounds wonderful and suggests it be external to the building such as a self-contained stand on the land but not in the building itself.

Funding Team – Kitty Toll co-chair

Michael said there is not much to do fundraising wise since we have not nailed down use and so forth. Kitty asked if we should be getting in the queue now on the Caledonia County Work Camp as well as the St. J Tech School. She also asked if there was any benefit to adding a contractor to the committee who could help with recruiting in-kind contracting work. Sally who is an historic contractor said she would prefer someone else take this on and that it was a good idea to support in kind donation of at least overhead and profit. Kitty agreed you could absolutely accrue those costs to help with some grant matching needs. This could be a great “DIY” Danville

project with a lot of the work donated by the Danville community. Sally agreed with the exception of hazardous materials. If the paint is lead for example. And since there has not been a hazardous materials review done, we would need to do that before volunteers came in or we could run into issues with the state. Michael and Patty pointed out that the ACA study in 1991 did test all layers of paint and there was almost no lead. So this would be doable as a community project. Sally said in the process of evaluating the work necessary to bring the station "up to snuff", that she would indicate which elements should be done by the pros and which could be done by volunteers.

A discussion of the colors for the building ensued. Was ochre and red the original building color? Patty will check HS records.

Michael said that the town's 501(C)(3) has a provision that we can use for accepting and allocating fundraising to the station project. Kitty will follow up with Andy Rudin as his family would like to make a contribution. Tim said he did some 501(C)(3) research and found it is expensive, means working with the IRS and requires annual filings at the federal and state levels. Tim feels we should avoid it if at all possible. Michael said since the town is willing to work with us to use their 501(C)(3), we can certainly drop the subject.

Patty said someone wanted to donate and asked if she should accept it. Unanimous approval and she should ask Wendy how we should set it up with the town.

Michael asked what progress we need to make for next month. Kitty said that her team will talk to some contractors about weekend volunteer options. Keith will reach out to VAST to regarding the station uses that have been most successful and what they would like to see. Kate will evaluate the options mentioned above further and what it would take to make it viable. Sally will re-cast the elements of the building that need work and related cost to come with a new 'ballpark' estimate.

New Business

Michael asked if there was any new business. Being none, he thanked everyone for their efforts and requested a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned.

Next scheduled meeting is Tuesday March 9, 2021. This meeting will be held by Zoom only.

Respectfully submitted,

Lois Russo, Secretary