

## **Danville Train Station Committee Minutes**

The Danville Train Station Committee (DTSC) is a subcommittee of the Planning Committee

*Meeting of March 9, 2021, 5:30-6:45pm*

Location: Zoom Meeting

*Attendees: Michael Hogue, Sally Fishburn, Kate Whitehead, Ross Meaders, Alison Low, Kitty Toll, Tim Ides, Patty Conly, Ted Houle, Rob Balivet, Alexandra Huff, Lois Russo*

Meeting opened with roll call at 5:33pm via Zoom by Michael Hogue, chair. Michael asked if there were any additions to the agenda. Agenda approved with the following additions:

- Volunteer Offer: Kate mentioned that the Danville Women's Club/Group contacted her to ask if there was any way they could help. She suggested the committee identify ways to get them involved.
- Select Board approved listing of Historic Places application.
- Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Meeting: Michael reported that there was a great LVRT meeting last week. Finishing of the trail is moving fast. The section from Danville to Hardwick is next, then Hardwick to Morristown, and finally Fletcher to Sheldon. The first contract will be for Danville in May, then Hardwick in June, and Fletcher in August, with final completion by June 2022. VTrans has asked everyone to step back to facilitate this timetable, with discussions about amenities and so forth to come after completion. A committee was formed with representatives from all towns along the trail work so they can to keep abreast of progress. Laura Ruggles will represent us to Select Board relative to this project. Minutes from the February 9<sup>th</sup> committee meeting were reviewed and accepted.

### **Building/Land Team – Sally Fishburn co-chair**

#### *Building Restoration Costs:*

Sally reported that she reviewed the GVV estimates. She noted that there is often a divide between what the architects recommend versus what she feels is appropriate for historic preservation. So, she removed some items from the scope, and she and Ross added a few more after their site visits, but all of the key items regarding roofing work, floor repair, drainage, canopy work, and so forth were kept. It looks like the total to have a restored building with basic services will be about \$200,000. Everyone agreed that was a nice number.

This number does not include fit out for use or items that would be necessary for year-round use (such as additional insulation or storm windows). But it does include basic insulation to supplement what is currently there, as well as a heating system (although it is a wood stove in the proposal, which would require staffing to use as well as wood stacking and storage. There was general agreement this did not make sense and perhaps a heat pump with a secondary source for cold days would be more appropriate.

Sally sent her revisions with the estimate to Rob for review, to ensure she did not miss anything, though he has not had a chance to review them yet. She then plans to have Jan Lewandoski evaluate the structure in April (assuming the snow has melted by then) to revise and confirm the estimates.

Sally also spoke to Ben Doyle, the Director of Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV) about the project and he was very excited. When Jan comes, Lisa Ryan will come with him. She will be the point person for PTV .

Sally reported that there might be a Freeman Foundation grant we could tie into for the project. She thinks it is a potentially great option since it is Northeast Kingdom only, not an application process, and with no matching fund requirements. It has early summer distribution of awards. She is not sure of award amounts, but the others she had been involved with were around \$45,000. There was a question whether they still have funds available, but Sally believes there are. Alison noted that this is for structures eligible for the National Register only (though it does not need to already be listed). Michael noted we may need to move on the federal register sooner, though Ross indicated we should complete the state first and he will look into the Bruhn grants are another option, with much higher grant amounts.

Michael provided an update on the work from the 1990's. There is a discrepancy between the GVV numbers and the condition of the building. He believes that when we took title, and the station was still in the hands of Vtrans they did the work before handing it over. If so, they may have records of the work that we can obtain. He also said he was supposed to get photos, but he has not received anything yet. He will follow up.

#### *Historic Register Applications:*

Ross reported that he is working on the square footage for the station—both measurements and drawings. He emailed a draft, about ten pages, just before the meeting (anything in the document in white has not yet been measured). It is to scale and prints in 24"x36" format, so if anyone wishes to print it, it will need rescaling, or he can assist. He will send out an updated version tomorrow with additions and corrections.

Kitty said she noticed the ochre and red colors on the last page and loved it. She asked if they were original. Ross does not know, though he based it on the paint samples scraped from above the ticket office window.

Ross added that somewhere in the 1930's the canopy was shortened, and the brackets were trimmed back so there would be a slope for the wooden gutter. This should be considered if we wish to restore the canopy to the original full length, because the brackets would also need restoration. Rob asked if the bracket restoration would require replacement or if they could be restored. Ross believes the brackets could be built out without a complete replacement. Rob would like to their team to get together on site to review this.

Michael said an original sign on the station could be an income opportunity. He asked Patty if she knew the dimensions of the signage taken down off the east side of the building. She only has the original proposed size, but she will forward it. Sally noted that the newspaper article indicated 24ft x 64ft. Patti will doublecheck.

The recycling center, originally called the freight room, is close to 750sf. Patty read out all the dimensions she had for the station from an early document. Michael said that implies the piece missing was about a third again larger than the current recycle center. Ross noted that 24ft x 24ft is framed out in the attic, and that from there to the east side of the building is about 40ft.

#### **Use Team – Kate Whitehead co-chair**

##### *Research on Co-Working & Bike Shop Use Concepts:*

Kate reported that the top ideas remain bike shop/rental and a co-working space. The 750sf space would be co-working. She will upload a document with conversations she has had to the shared google storage site. Kate believes this could work but had several suggestions:

- Know the market in Danville in terms of who would be interested in co-work. In Newport they geared it to a younger crowd but found that was not who actually used it.
- Look at Danville's ecosystem because the whole package is what makes it work—access to food, trails, food and other amenities. Their space is enticing because of the mixed use.

- Keep it lean and management staffing small. They use online platforms to sell membership and there is no paid staff. In Bethel they rented the upstairs space as their living space. They provide an access code for people to access it 24/7 so it is essentially turnkey.
- Flexibility in membership is key. Have anchor members that cover operating costs and then fill in around it. In both cases, there were other microbusinesses that brought in the main revenue to make it work.
- In terms of the layout, the private office space will be key. They did not find a fully open plan to be as desirable, because people wanted space to make private calls. Conference room space was also something highly desirable—whether on site or in partnership with another business in town (like the library conference room).

Kate said she has a call tomorrow with Evan at Due North CoWorking. Michael asked what size private office or conference space would need to be, since we only have 750sf available.

Alison asked whether Bethel mentioned anything about the impact of Covid on co-working. Kate said they had not, but it makes sense there might be greater demand now. She will ask Evan when she talks to him again.

Kate spoke with Local Motion in Burlington—a bike advocacy group with amenities (minimal fit out, rack and counter only) on the trail at 740sf. It may be a good model for Danville. They are seasonal—May thru Oct—and get a lot of foot traffic from Burlington. They use Square (a mobile purchasing app) to reduce overhead. There are other such options available now. Their annual revenues are somewhere between \$280-300,000.

Kate contacted a community bike shop in Missoula, Montana with a different nonprofit model. Their main revenues are grants, bike sales, fundraising events, and private donations. Their nonprofit status opens more opportunities here. They primarily use repurposed parts and bikes from the community and have an open bike shop with Earn-a-Bike and Build-a-Bike programs, free bikes for kids, etc. More a biking advocacy group that also focuses on sustainability. Caledonia County Trails group would be a great one to speak to in this model.

She has a few other bike shops she is reaching out to and will update soon.

#### *Surveys & RFP:*

Next steps – additional community surveys to answer some of the above. Also perhaps a RFP should be sent out to see who responds and comes to us with ideas.

Marketing for Danville – adventures, day bike trips, places to eat, businesses by advertising spots on the map.

Kate said those were the main takeaways.

Hannah Morris, Milk Shop in St J, is interested in something that could be a food option. Would not need full 750sf space, just a corner of the space. Service window, counter space, and not sure what else she would need for it. Seasonal. Plus water, sewer, and bathrooms.

Ted said there was a place in Morrisville that rents electric bikes and has been successful. Kate will look into that and reach out to them as well. She thinks Local Motion is also renting e-bikes.

Alison asked if they did fat tire rentals too—Ted said no. Michael mentioned the new gravel piece of the Hardwick trail when it was opened had a lot of fat tire traffic and was very successful. Ted said technically e-bikes are not legal on the trail, and this will be an issue down the road. He also said snowmobiles and fat tire snow biking do not mix very well, so he wonders if the two would coexist well—and thinks fat tire bikers want a different more challenging option like Kingdom Trails. Tim asked why they were illegal. Ted said it is because it is technically a motorized bike and becomes hard to draw the line with ATV use, which would make the trail

unusable to regular bikers. Who polices it? No one now but will become necessary. Joe Fox wrote a piece about it with restrictions on what is allowed (no throttle, speed max, etc). But this will heighten the need for policing so it does not get out of hand. Ross asked if size, weight or number of tires could help differentiate allowable vs disallowed use. Otherwise you pretty much allow motorcycles on the trail. Which changes things a lot.

Kate said Ross put together a survey to send out to bike shops in the area to find out if they do winter rentals and what challenges they face, and successes they have had. This would help solidify the proposal. Kate asked if this should be sent out. Michael thinks getting this out there, like a FrontPorchForum post, would help in terms of seeing what comes out of it. Patti thinks the survey sounds like a great idea too. Someone could pop up who wants to rent the space.

So next steps are in three parts: Kate will send out a survey regarding bike rentals. And an RFP for space use. And a survey for the co-working space and idea—more targeted to the community through Front Porch Forum.

Ross will upload the NH/VT Bicycle Shop Survey draft on shared drive so everyone can review it.

### **Funding Team – Kitty Toll co-chair**

#### *Parking Lot Possibilities:*

Kate said one thing that had become clear in her discussions is the need to get ahead of the parking issue. Kitty asked if the town was amenable to creating a parking lot for better access or whether this brings additional liability. Michael said we need to zero in on this with Keith—especially since they got the funding for the Recycle Center, parking is something that will need to be addressed. Michael will follow up.

Tim spoke to at least one landowner to the south of the station (where a barn currently stands) who would be willing to discuss a lease for a parking lot. It was a very preliminary discussion, but it was a positive first step. Kitty mentioned it could be a revenue source if there was an option for paying to park there, though this creates more staffing concerns.

#### *Funding:*

Kitty asked about the donation that came into the town. Wendy Summers is creating a form with tax information for charitable gifts and creating a separate account for the station, so those funds are kept separate. Kitty also asked whether Danville has identified an amount set aside for the station that we can count on for a \$200,000 restoration project. Michael said he can ask, and knows it isn't zero, but it will be dependent on the use. Kitty also indicated that she would lean heavily on Alison's expertise when it comes time to apply for grants.

Kitty had a preliminary discussion with Mike Walsh about the pro bono local contractor work concept. He said Danville contractors work well together and smiled. So her initial feeler was positive. It is worth pursuing as we have more concrete details to share.

Alison suggested talking to Craftsbury Academy who did a similar project—a community workday to replace the gym floor (a great community building event). She will check with Carly? to see who to contact.

Tim said he is worried the \$100,000 for the recycle center has used up the \$79,000 fund the town had. Michael said it is actually \$179,000 of which \$100,000 is dedicated to the recycle center. He will verify this.

### **New Business**

None.

Michael thanked everyone for their efforts and told Kate that a lot of the next steps are on her team's shoulders, and to pull in whomever she needs to proceed, then requested a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned.

**Next scheduled meeting is Tuesday April 13, 2021. This meeting will be held by Zoom only.**

Respectfully submitted,

Lois Russo, Secretary