

Bedford Depot Park Advisory Committee

FY 2006 Annual Report

In July 2004, the Selectmen established the Depot Park Advisory Committee with the following charge.

1. Provide oversight on the completion of the Depot Park project;
2. Seek funding (such as from grants) for the project's completion and other enhancements;
3. Oversee the Depot Park Revolving Fund and assist with developing financial reports for the Selectmen that show current and forecasted revenue and expenses;
4. Recommend policies for use of the Revolving Fund;
5. Recommend policies for the rent and other uses of Depot Park's buildings and properties;
6. Provide coordination with Friends of Bedford Depot Park.

Current appointed members of the committee are Joseph Piantedosi (chair) and James Shea (clerk). Ex-officio members are Selectman Angelo Colao, Facilities Director Richard Jones, Town Manager Richard Reed, and DPW Director Richard Warrington. Twelve meetings were convened during the past year.

The Facilities Director presented monthly financial statements of Depot Park's income and expenses, including an updated Revolving Fund balance. The account balance on July 1, 2005, was \$57,249.80. The balance on June 30, 2006, was \$65,840.13. Total expenses for FY 2006 were \$15,668.02. Total revenue was \$24,258.35. Income exceeded expenses by \$8,590.33.

In March, the Friends of Bedford Depot Park conveyed \$4,052.90 to the Revolving Fund. This represents the proceeds of food sales made by volunteers at the Freight House between January 1 and December 31, 2005. No revenue from the Friends is expected in FY 2007 due to the Freight House being closed for renovations.

The committee has concentrated on the remaining Depot Park phases. The Freight House and rail car renovation projects are the primary focus.

On June 24, the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) solicited bids for the Freight House project. The agency set deadlines for receipt of filed sub-bids and general bids on September 12 and 26, respectively. The project's estimated value is \$344,000. It is to be funded by the federal and state governments through the Transportation Enhancement Program.

The Friends of Bedford Depot Park vacated the Freight House in early April so that the Facilities Department could begin interior demolition of the first floor and install a new support beam system. Space in the Depot basement was provided for storage of the building's contents.

Interior improvements to the Freight House are not within the scope of the MHD project. The committee has discussed possible ways to accomplish interior renovations using Town forces. The Revolving Fund is seen as a possible funding source.

The DPW has coordinated renovations to the rail car with assistance from consultant Dan O'Brien. This \$125,000 project is funded by the Community Preservation Act (CPA). New windows and refurbished seats were purchased. Asbestos remediation services have been performed. Next to follow are interior painting, lighting, flooring, and new HVAC and electrical systems.

The intersection improvement project at Railroad Avenue/South Road/Loomis Street was largely completed in late fall. To the committee's disappointment, some recent events have adversely impacted the new intersection. Keyspan made two excavations at the center of the intersection shortly after final paving occurred. Also, the company excavated within the landscaped area at the corner of Railroad Avenue and South Road without making proper repairs to the new sod.

In early January, a motorist collided with the new signal pole and a light pole at the intersection of South Road and Loomis Street. The traffic signal was knocked over and broken, while the light fixture sustained moderate damage. A temporary traffic signal was installed until a new unit is received in about six months. The DPW intends to make repairs to the light fixture.

The committee has requested that the DPW better monitor the Depot Park grounds and landscaping. Overgrowth of weeds and vegetation has been a recurring problem.

In December, Robert Slechta of the Bedford Historical Commission (BHC) met with the committee to discuss applying for a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). The grant would be used to hire a consultant to perform an architectural study of the Depot. The committee agreed to submit a grant application pending approval from the Selectmen, which was later received. Facilities Director Richard Jones worked with Donald Corey and Robert Slechta of the BHC to draft a grant request of \$24,000. This money would be combined with \$16,000 in matching funds from the Community Preservation Act (CPA) that were approved at Annual Town

Meeting. In April, the Town received word from the MHC that our grant application was approved.

Facilities Director Richard Jones is coordinating the Depot study project. He anticipates that an RFP for the architectural consultant will be advertised in the summer. The committee has discussed the scope of services to be provided by the consultant. We expect that the study will encompass the building's history, its present condition, identification of maintenance needs, and options and cost estimates for future restoration.

Bedford Railroad Station is outside the scope of the present Depot Park Transportation Enhancement Project. Should it be the Town's desire to either renovate or restore the building, we would need to pursue other funding sources such as the CPA.

All units within the Depot are presently rented to tenants Donald Varney and Babe Ruth Baseball. Monthly rents are collected by the Facilities Department and deposited into the Revolving Fund. Some rent payments were received late. Also, one of the tenants has used areas of the building without authorization. We plan to work with the Facilities Director to draft a set of tenant rules that will specify a rent payment schedule and the spaces that tenants are authorized to occupy.

Annual Town Meeting voted to approve a bylaw amendment that allows mixed-use development within the Depot Park area. The committee intends to monitor any such proposals and evaluate their impact on Depot Park, its facilities and parking.

In the upcoming year, the committee will continue to provide general oversight of Depot Park, advance the completion of its remaining phases, and help ensure that the facility will be a lasting and valued asset for Bedford.

Respectfully submitted by,

Joseph Piantedosi, Chairman
September 11, 2006