

## **Bedford Depot Park Advisory Committee FY 2010 Annual Report**

Depot Park is a complex of historic buildings, public amenities and a vintage railroad car at the Minuteman Bikeway terminus on South Road. The project that began in 1995 was largely funded by the Federal and state governments' Transportation Enhancement Program. Approximately \$2.5 million in Federal and state funding was allocated towards property acquisition, site improvements, building renovations, and reconstruction of the intersection.

The Selectmen established the Depot Park Advisory Committee to seek funding for the project, oversee its completion, provide general oversight of the complex, develop financial reports, and recommend policies for use of the Revolving Fund and the rental and usage of the buildings. Current appointed members of the committee are Donald Corey, Joseph Piantedosi (chair) and James Shea (clerk). Ex-officio members are Facilities Director Richard Jones, Town Manager Richard Reed, and DPW Director Richard Warrington. William Moonan is the selectman liaison. Eleven meetings were held during the year.

### **Revolving Account**

Depot Park's revenues and operating expenses are transacted through a revolving account that is managed by the Facilities Director with input and oversight from the committee. The account's balance as of June 30, 2010, was \$37,415.74. For FY 2010, operating expenses totaled \$26,229.33 and revenues were \$13,851.01.

### **Primary Tasks**

The Committee focussed on five main activities during the past year:

1. Complete the interior fit-out of the Freight House
2. Complete the railroad car renovations
3. Solicit tenants for the Depot building
4. Make efforts to reduce operating expenses and increase revenues
5. Promote rentals of the railroad car

### **Freight House Renovations**

The Freight House at 120 South Road was built in 1877. Originally, it was the Engine House for the two-foot-gauge Billerica & Bedford Railroad. The building was acquired by the Town in 1999 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Although a state project to rehabilitate the building concluded in June 2009, several relatively small tasks were left to be performed by the Town. The Facilities Department made progress throughout the year to paint, install new flooring and replace restroom fixtures on the second floor. Expenses were paid by the Historic Properties Stabilization Fund. Completion of telephone/data wiring and installation of a door access card reader are slated for the future.

## **Railroad Car 6211**

Rail Diesel Car 6211 was built by the Budd Company in 1955 and ran in passenger service throughout the Boston & Maine Railroad, including on the Bedford Branch, for 25 years. In 1998, the Town acquired the vintage railway vehicle as an exhibit for Depot Park.

A total of \$121,613.00 from the Community Preservation Program and Historic Properties Stabilization Fund was allocated to renovate the car. A small balance of this money that remains will help pay for completion of the car's electrical wiring and possibly a fire alarm system.

The railroad car is normally open for the public to visit on weekends during the bikeway season when the Freight House is open. Much positive feedback has been received from visitors about the car, its renovations and historical exhibits.

Number 6211 is available for rent as a venue for meetings and festivities. The committee produced a colorful flyer to promote the car's rental opportunities. A total of \$904.60 in rental revenue from the car was deposited into the Revolving Fund in FY 2010.

## **Depot Rental**

In October, the committee advertised an RFP for rental of up to four office units in the Depot building. Two proposals were received. Babe Ruth Baseball proposed to rent Unit 2 on a five-year lease with a total payment of \$24,000.00. JRM Antiques proposed to rent Unit 1 on a three-year lease with a total payment of \$19,248.00. After completion of an evaluation process, the Town awarded leases to both proposers in December. The tenants are assessed pro-rated charges for common area maintenance and utilities.

In May, representatives of The Glass Works, Inc., a nonprofit collaborative of stained glass artists, proposed to rent Unit 4. An agreement was reached to rent this space on a one-year lease beginning on July 1 with an option to renew for a second year. The rent is \$436.17 per month.

The Facilities Department made repairs and improvements to the Depot's rental units and common areas at a total charge of \$6,098.06. Work included painting, millwork, new stairway railings and cleaning.

One unit remains available for rent. The committee is seeking an additional qualified tenant to bring the Depot to full occupancy. We project that when the building is fully rented, the Depot Park complex budget will become balanced.

## **Information Center at the Freight House**

Under a nonexclusive license granted by the Town, the Friends of Bedford Depot Park organization operates an information and refreshment center inside the Freight House. It is primarily open on weekends during the bikeway season and when Farmers' Market occurs at Depot Park on Monday afternoons. Proceeds from the sale of snacks and beverages are conveyed to the Revolving Fund. Between mid-June and December 2009, the Friends raised a total of \$2,685.80 from refreshment sales to help support the Depot Park complex.

Exhibits at the Freight House and inside the Budd Car highlight the town's railroad heritage. A donated HO-scale model railroad illustrates Bedford's rail transportation facilities as they were during the 1950s.

### **Public Restrooms**

This was the first year when the new restrooms at the rear of the Freight House building became available to the public. They are open from sunrise to sunset during the bikeway season. The total labor charge for restroom custodial services in FY 2010 was \$3,818.26.

### **Objectives for FY 2011**

We intend that the Depot Park complex be financially self-supporting, is kept well maintained and attractive, and remains a resource that the public will enjoy. In the year ahead, the committee plans to continue the oversight and guidance necessary to achieve these goals.

Respectfully submitted by,

Joseph R. Piantedosi  
Chairman