

# Bedford Depot Park Advisory Committee

Meeting of August 31, 2004

## MINUTES

**Committee members in attendance:** Joseph Piantedosi (JP); Jim Shea (JS)

**Ex-officio committee members in attendance:** Richard Jones (RJ), Facilities Director; Angelo Colao (AC), Selectman liaison to Depot Park; Rick Reed (RR), Town Administrator; Richard Warrington (RW), DPW Director

Chairman JP called the meeting to order at 3:35 P.M. outside Bedford Freight House, 120 South Road.

JS distributed two 1950s photographs of the Depot. One photo was taken from the Reformatory Branch (western) side of the building, and the other was made from the Lexington Branch (eastern) side. He also provided copies of a floor plan schematic drawing of the Depot that was made in 1916 as part of an Interstate Commerce Commission valuation survey.

The committee went to the Railroad Station to inspect the building's condition and its rental units. JP asked that the committee first look at short-term maintenance issues, and then at long-term issues.

The committee examined water drainage issues and the deteriorating bulkhead at the rear of the Depot. RJ questioned how water is collecting in the Depot's basement. Would removal of the roof's gutters alleviate this problem, he asked. RJ observed that the pitch of the concrete sidewalk at the rear of the Depot may be a contributing reason for the poor drainage.

The Depot's current tenant, Donald Varney, briefly joined the group to express his concerns about building maintenance. He said that every time it rains, water comes off the roof and collects in the basement. RW suggested that the gutters are too small. To keep water away from the building, he proposed installing an underground pipe between the gutter downspouts and the ditch that exists on the southern side of the bikeway. He also proposed sealing the bulkhead with a tarp to keep rainwater from running into the basement.

RR joined the meeting at 3:43 P.M.

RW explained that the concrete sidewalk represents a line of demarcation between the Transportation Enhancement (site work) project and the separate Depot project.

Next, the committee examined the deteriorating wooden beams that support the train order signals. RJ said that the Facilities Department might be able to fabricate new bottom pieces for the posts.

JP asked about the unfinished landscaping on the northwestern side of the Station. RW said that David Cerundolo, the abutter who owns the property at 54 Loomis Street, is responsible for

completing the landscaping.

As the committee went inside the Depot, JP observed that the handrail on the front steps is loose.

RJ explained that the building has six large rooms, two of them in the basement. The committee checked the interior of the garage. RJ said that soon after the Facilities Department cleared out this space, Don Varney moved some of his belongings into it without permission. RR reported that Babe Ruth Baseball is interested in renting the garage for a period of one year. JP suggested that the garage door be closed in. RJ suggested that the Facilities Department could make some repairs to the garage unit, including patching wall openings and painting.

JS noted that many interior light fixtures do not work.

JP asked how the Depot is zoned for electrical service. Each unit has a separate meter, RJ said.

The committee then toured the basement. RJ reported that the Facilities Department's main Depot projects have been a new fire alarm system and a new boiler. He said that the Town removed an old furnace that failed, installed a new heating unit, and cut over the entire building to the single furnace.

JP pointed out the hazards of boxes that are stored beneath the stairway and corrosive chemicals that are stored in a basement room.

The committee toured the second floor. Don Varney has moved into one of the upstairs office units without permission, RR pointed out.

The committee left the Depot and walked across the parking lot to the Freight House. On the way, JP asked about the utility poles that still exist between the Depot and Freight House. RW said that the electrical service to the Freight House needs to be re-routed to the underground conduit before the poles may be removed. The telephone wires have already been placed underground, he said. RW said he'll check who is going to relocate the electrical wires and who owns the poles. JS suggested that coaxial cable also be pulled through the conduit as a future contingency for cable television and Internet service.

There was discussion about the uncompleted status of the concrete sidewalk alongside the Freight House. RW said that this sidewalk is to be built as part of the Freight House exterior restoration project. This project is under the domain of the Massachusetts Highway Department, he said.

The committee examined the rear room on the first floor of the Freight House. JP pointed out that we do not have a plan in place for the building's interior renovations.

JS asked about the scope of the Mass. Highway Department's Freight House project. RW said that it would include a new mechanical room and a new heating and cooling system. The second floor is not included in this project. The project is supposed to happen sometime in FY 2005, RW said.

JP referenced an e-mail message he received from Selectman Gordon Feltman which suggests that funding for the Freight House restoration project could be placed in jeopardy unless quicker progress is achieved.

RJ asked for more information about what the state will do with the building. Is interior demolition part of the project, JS asked? RW said he will check with the engineer, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, to get answers to these questions.

JP asked whether Facilities Department employees might be interested in doing the interior renovations on an overtime basis, to be paid from the Revolving Fund. RJ said this is a possibility. JP said that architectural plans are needed for the interior work. JS recalled that a few years ago, he prepared a rough floor plan schematic. He will circulate it committee members.

The committee went to the upstairs conference room to continue its meeting.

JP asked whether temporary pipes to the Depot's downspouts could be installed to drain water away from the building. He also asked about grading the rear of Depot. RW said this could be done.

How can we fix the Depot's train order signal posts, JP asked. RJ said he thinks he has someone of staff who could do the job.

JP asked what era we are trying to replicate with the restoration projects. JS answered that the general era is the 1940s and '50s.

After discussion, the committee reached a consensus to close in the Depot's garage door and to make the garage a rentable unit. The Facilities Department is to handle this work.

AC asked what the timeframe is for the Depot's restoration. RR said there are no current plans to restore the building. He feels that we need to get the Freight House and intersection projects completed before focussing on restoration of the Depot.

JP said the railing on the Depot's front steps needs to be fixed. RJ said he will have the railing repaired. Let's also close in the small door on the northern side of Depot, JP suggested. RR asked whether the garage is heated. RJ answered that he doesn't believe the space is heated.

JS asked about the condition of the Depot's roof. RJ said he'll take a look at the roof when work on the gutters is done.

JP asked what should be done about the tenant (Don Varney) who is using space inside the Depot that is not rented to him. RJ said that he's spoken to Don Varney about this matter in the past.

RR suggested that we consider both the near-term and the long-term Depot rental situations. Rental fees will increase once the park is finished. Let's rent space to Babe Ruth Baseball for a year to increase revenue, RR proposed. We could issue a short-term RFP for now, RR said, and after the area becomes more desirable, another RFP could be issued. JP said he thinks a short-term RFP is a good idea.

JS asked how much money is currently being received for Depot rent. RJ reported that Don Varney pays \$950 a month for rent. He pays separately for his own electric service but not for heat.

JS suggested that the Town send an invoice to the tenant each month, rather than waiting for the tenant to pay on his own schedule. The invoice could specify the space he is entitled to use, he said. This might be a tool in getting the tenant out of areas he does not belong in.

JS asked whether there is a written rental agreement with Don Varney. RR explained that there is no written agreement, that he is a “tenant at will.”

RR wondered how much the garage unit could be rented for if we made some improvements to it. Would Babe Ruth Baseball be able to pay enough, he asked. JS inquired how much rent the organization is currently paying for space inside the Old Town Hall. RR said he thinks it’s a couple hundred dollars a month. The same amount would apply for any rental of the Depot garage, he proposed. RJ said that Babe Ruth Baseball is slated to go back into the Town Center building in the summer of 2005.

RR said that the quickest way to get more revenue from the Depot is to move Babe Ruth Baseball into the garage and to negotiate with Don Varney on renting more space. RR commented that at one time, David Cerundolo was interested in renting space inside the Depot.

JS said he feels it’s okay to rent to Babe Ruth Baseball if the agreement is only for one year. Currently, there’s no tenant in the garage—so any additional revenue for the Revolving Fund would be welcomed, he remarked.

After discussion, the committee consented to rent the Depot’s garage unit to Babe Ruth Baseball, contingent upon a written agreement that stipulates the rental terms and the monthly fee.

Much discussion followed about how to write an RFP for the Depot and how to evaluate responses. JP asked whether the Town should issue an RFP that would be for a three-year rental term.

AC suggested that unless there are serious problems renting to Don Varney, that we work with him and retain him as the main Depot tenant until there’s a clear plan for the Depot’s future. RW proposed getting Don Varney back into the space he belongs in, that we ask him for a nominal increase in rent, that we rent out the garage unit to Babe Ruth Baseball, and that we seek a tenant for the large upstairs office unit.

RJ distributed financial statements for the Depot and Freight House buildings. He left the meeting at 5:50 P.M.

JP suggested that we back-charge Don Varney for the electric bills that the Town has been paying on the Depot office units he’s been using on an unauthorized basis.

JP said that for the next committee meeting, he would like to see the Freight House exterior restoration plans. RW said he will get these plans from the Mass. Highway Department after they complete their review of them.

RR said he is working on getting a Revolving Fund balance sheet for the committee.

RW said he wants to kick off the rail car restoration project soon and establish the process that will be followed.

RW reported that replacement globes for two of the exterior lights have been ordered by the contractor. The water fountain has been repaired and dead shrubs have been replaced, he added.

JP said that the committee will postpone review of the draft minutes from the meeting of August 18th until the next meeting. He set the date of the next meeting for Wednesday, September 22, at 3:30 P.M., at the Freight House.

At 6:01 P.M., JP made a motion to adjourn the meeting. JS seconded the motion. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Submitted by

Jim Shea, Clerk

These minutes were approved by unanimous vote of the committee at its meeting of September 22, 2004.