



BEDFORD DEPOT PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Town Hall • Bedford, Massachusetts 01730

Meeting of October 8, 2013

MINUTES

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

Ex-officio committee members in attendance: Richard Jones, Facilities Director; William Moonan, Selectman liaison; Rick Reed, Town Manager

Ex-officio committee members not in attendance: Roy Sorenson, DPW Director

Other Town officials in attendance: Jeffrey Cohen, Planning Board; Donald Corey, Historic Preservation Commission; Caroline Fedele, Selectman; Margot Fleischman, Selectman; Brian O'Donnell, Bicycle Advisory Committee; Michael Rosenberg, Selectman; Mark Sieganthaler, Selectman

Other persons in attendance: William Deen, 212 Old Billerica Road; Judy Eggleston, 12 Glenridge Drive; Arthur Ellis, 3 Burlington Road; Susan Grieb, 26 Fox Run Road; Polly Herz, 27 Independence Road; Dawn Kelley, 349 West Street, Winchendon, Massachusetts; Richard Miller, 349 West Street, Winchendon, Massachusetts; John Peterson, 18 Lido Lane; Barbara Purchia, 17 Reed Lane; Barry Sampson, 8 Brandon Street, Lexington, Massachusetts; Adam Schwartz, 34 Glenridge Drive; David Shamlian, 14 Hemlock Lane; Jan Shepard, 12 Glenridge Drive

Chairman Joseph Piantedosi (JP) called the meeting to order at 7:32 P.M. in the Town Hall lower level conference room. Using Keynote slides projected on a screen, he presented a timeline of Depot Park accomplishments, a summary of the architectural study that was performed on the Depot building in 2007, an overview of funds used to establish the Depot Park complex, an overview of revenues and expenses related to operation of the Depot Park complex, status of Depot tenant leases, and plans to restore the Depot's facade, improve accessibility to the building's first floor and add a handicap-accessible restroom on the first floor.

JP highlighted that 87% of the funding to establish Depot Park, purchase the Depot and Freight House buildings, renovate the Freight House welcome center, rebuild the adjacent intersection, and conduct the Depot architectural study, came from outside sources—and that restoration of Rail Diesel Car 6211 was achieved with approximately \$231,900 in donated labor and parts from the Friends of Bedford Depot Park organization.

Donald Corey, chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, noted that a prior owner of the Depot gutted the building's original interior and that nothing of historical significance remains inside. He distributed a memo dated October 7 from the Historic Preservation Commission which recommends that any interior improvements to the Depot, such as handicap access to the second floor or removal of the second floor, be determined by future tenants' needs, that these costs be the responsibility of the tenants, and that no Community Preservation funds be used for interior rehabilitation of the Depot.

JP proposed that funding be sought to complete the entire Depot facade work in a single phase. He feels this approach would save the Town money, create less overall disruption at the site, and be of less impact to the tenants.

Mark Sieganthaler inquired about the timing of the facade work. Richard Jones anticipates work on Phase One, which would add a new front entrance and a ramp and restore the facade on about one half the building, will begin once weather is conducive in the spring and be substantially complete by July 1, 2014, to comply with the terms of the Massachusetts Historical Commission grant. JP proposed that the RFP contain an “add-alternate” for Phase Two of the facade work, its implementation conditional on an additional appropriation being made at the 2014 Annual Town Meeting. Donald Corey added that it might be possible to obtain an additional grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission for Phase Two.

JP outlined the value that the Freight House welcome center has provided townspeople and visitors who arrive in Bedford through the Minuteman Bikeway. In view of a recent proposal to convert the Freight House to a restaurant, he asked the Selectmen to take a position that the Freight House be retained as a welcome center. The Selectmen gave no response to this request.

William Moonan observed that the Freight House has become a popular destination as a welcome center and asked whether we should build upon this by making Depot Park a place that brings visitors further into Bedford. He questioned whether Depot Park might become a cultural center and whether the Depot ought to become a welcome center and the Freight House used for a different purpose.

Caroline Fedele asked whether the current tenants are pleased with the Depot and if any work needs to be done at the building. Donald Corey commented that as a Town-owned building, the Depot must meet modern building and safety codes. Rick Reed said that modest investments made to the building would not require modern code compliance. JP explained that per the Massachusetts Building Code, a building must be brought up to modern code compliance if the renovation work costs a minimum of \$100,000 and the amount represents at least 30% of the assessed value of the existing structure. Some forms of work such as roof replacement are exempted from the calculation.

Michael Rosenberg asked whether the Bedford Historical Society has interest in renting the Depot. Donald Corey answered that the organization plans to establish a committee to consider options for museum space.

JP noted that with four Depot units rented, the Depot Park complex is financially self-supporting.

Mark Sieganthaler proposed that the interior of the Depot be restored in addition to its facade. Jim Shea (JS) noted that the cost estimate to remove the second floor and restore the interior is \$600,000. He questioned whether restoring the interior to its early 1900s configuration, which was comprised of several small rooms, would create desirable space for tenants or contemporary public usage, and whether the expense would be a good use of Bedford’s money.

Caroline Fedele asked whether limited parking at the Loomis Street lot would impact future uses of the Depot.

JP highlighted the 54 Loomis Street mixed-use development, which may include an eatery, that is to be constructed adjacent to the Depot. He proposed that the status quo remain in place at

Depot Park while the 54 Loomis Street and 111 South Road (Kenneth Larson) developments take form. Donald Corey added that he met with David Cerundolo, owner of 54 Loomis Street, about the Town's interest in an existing easement on the property, the relocation of a planned trash dumpster further away from the Depot, and the realignment of a sidewalk between 54 Loomis Street and the Minuteman Bikeway.

Margot Fleischman agreed that the two current real estate projects in the Depot Park vicinity represent a transitional period, and that it is a good idea to see the outcome of these projects before making any changes to Depot Park's operation. She said the present is a good opportunity to begin thinking about future uses of the Depot for a later time when the area is further developed. JS noted that public activity at Depot Park is seasonable and largely dependent upon weather conditions and bikeway usage. Parking at the Loomis Street lot is limited and very few public spaces exist near the Freight House, he said. The site was designed and constructed for visitors to primarily arrive via the bikeway, not by automobiles.

JP explained that the Massachusetts Uniform Procurement Act (M.G.L. Chapter 30B) applies to renting Depot units. He referenced a 2008 memo from the committee to the Selectmen that was endorsed by the Selectmen. This memo recommends that the Depot continue to be rented to help pay for Depot Park operational and capital expenses.

JS said existing tenants want to know about their future at the Depot. Rick Reed proposed executing new three-year leases with tenants as a short-term strategy. At the two-year mark, we could advertise an RFP for rental of the entire Depot building or individual units. Mr. Reed noted that he has a personal relationship with the current Unit 3 tenant and would not participate in the rental process. William Moonan said he feels renting the existing units for another three years is a good idea and would allow time to see how the 54 Loomis Street development takes shape. JP agreed with this approach.

Brian O'Donnell, an attorney with the Inspector General's Office, commented that the Town might have flexibility under the Procurement Law to rent the Depot for longer periods of time. With respect to the law, he said that the total rent paid is more of a factor than the lease terms.

William Moonan proposed to allow tenants to continue renting the Depot through 2017. During the interim, we can do fact-finding about the value the units might have after the building receives a restored facade and improved accessibility.

Mark Siegenthaler reiterated that he would like to see the building's interior restored. JS described how Lexington Depot, which is privately owned by the Lexington Historical Society, was restored by the organization on the exterior but the interior renovations are completely modern. Donald Corey commented that the exterior of Bedford Depot is how most people experience the old structure.

Michael Rosenberg inquired whether the tenants are satisfied with entire Depot improvement project. Barbara Purchia, a tenant of Unit 3, answered yes—the architect modified the design of the new window units to their liking.

JP invited comments from the public.

Adam Schwartz proposed that we take a larger vision of the Depot Park district. He said that Depot Park visitors are not always aware of what Downtown Bedford has to offer.

John Peterson said that the Depot Park complex is a focal point in Bedford. He believes Depot Park will continue to grow through evolution and that buildings near Depot Park will evolve. He wants the Freight House welcome center to continue, and proposes that the Depot's second floor be retained for the benefit of tenants.

William Moonan asked the Selectmen whether a vote or consensus is being sought. Margot Fleischman replied that a consensus exists on the Depot lease arrangements. She said that the Depot is a beautiful focal point, and requested that the potential of a future interior restoration not be discounted.

William Moonan left the meeting at 9:07 P.M.

Rick Reed said that the Community Preservation budget does not have sufficient funds at this time to accomplish a Phase Two of the Depot facade work. He asked whether Phase Two might be a bonded Community Preservation appropriation.

Caroline Fedele thanked the Depot Park Committee for all the progress it achieved over the years and its continued good work.

Polly Herz, a tenant of Unit 3, asked whether the Depot tenants are "safe" for the next three years. Caroline Fedele answered yes.

For the Selectmen, Margot Fleischman made a motion to adjourn their meeting at 9:11 P.M. Caroline Fedele seconded the motion, and it passed by a vote of 4-0.

JP summarized the meeting's main outcomes:

1. The Depot units will continue to be rented for at least the next three years.
2. The committee ought to seek funding now to enable Phase Two work on the Depot facade.

The committee discussed possible methods to obtain funds to implement Phase Two of the Depot facade work. Options include an appropriation of Community Preservation funds at the 2014 Annual Town Meeting and a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

The committee members agreed it is necessary to reevaluate minimum rent amounts when Units 1 and 4 are made available for lease.

At 9:33 P.M., JS made a motion to adjourn. JP seconded the motion, and it passed by a vote of 2-0.

Submitted by:

Jim Shea, Clerk

These minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of the Committee at its meeting of 2/12/14.

Documents and other exhibits used at this meeting:

- Meeting agenda, dated 10/08/13
- Keynote slide shows: *Depot Park Overview*, *Depot Architectural Study*, and *Miscellaneous*
- Memo from Historic Preservation Commission, dated 10/07/13