

Ad Hoc Committee – Claremont Amtrak
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Chair Lovett called the meeting to order at 5:45pm.

The meeting was comprised of an on-site tour of the train stop and the depot building followed by discussion at the Lambert Auto Sales conference room.

Committee Members in Attendance:

Councilor Towle – Ward I
Councilor Lovett – Ward II
Councilor Reed - Councilor-at-Large (arrived at 5:55)
Representative Raymond Gagnon – NH State Rep

Members of the Public who attended the on-site tour and/or discussion:

Jan Lambert
John Lambert
Mary Morin (Claremont Cycle Depot)
Andrew O’Hearne
Kayla Putnam
Ron Garceau - SoaNipi

Mary hosted the on-site tour of the train stop and depot building which took place from 5:45 to 6:25pm. At the beginning of the tour, committee members had an opportunity to speak with a couple from New London waiting for the arrival of their daughter. Their daughter elected to take the train after discovering seats on the Dartmouth Coach were sold out. The couple knew of the Claremont train stop because the husband had commuted to work via the Claremont stop prior to retirement.

The Committee noted that the train stop was an excellent transportation alternative for people using Dartmouth Coach. The Committee also asked and confirmed that the couple would not have known how to get to the stop if they had not already known of its existence.

On-site tour observations:

- The wooden fence adjacent to the wooden benches along the platform has a hole. Ms. Lambert suggested that, once repaired, it could be used for posting information.
- Amtrak sign on wall of depot building is faded and could be updated.
- Four wooden benches, donated by the Lamberts, are in poor condition and should be replaced.
- Roof overhang provides partial protection from weather. Questions were raised about the possibility of extending the overhang to provide better coverage.
- Signage on external wall of depot building is outdated and should be removed.
- Amtrak gray signs, installed along the platform, are in excellent condition. It just needs to be cleaned. Questions arose as to how often Amtrak personnel clean/maintain the signs, and if we could add information to them.
- Yellow markings on train platform are faded and should be repainted.
- Asphalt comprising the train platform is starting to break up in places.

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- Rail tie bordering platform is severely splintered and should be replaced.
- Personnel at the Cycle Depot have never witnessed the wheelchair lift being used.

At 6:17pm the group witnessed the arrival of the train and off-loading of passengers. At approximately 6:25pm the group departed for Lambert Auto Sales for follow-up discussion with John Lambert. The following topics were covered during the discussion:

Depot Building History –Owned by John Lambert, the depot has housed many businesses over the years. Claremont Cycle Depot has been at the depot for about 10 years. Prior to the bicycle shop, it was home to several restaurants dating back to the 1970s. Prior to the 1970s it housed a machine shop business. The building has bathroom facilities, dating back to the restaurant era. The walls downstairs are the original stone. The roof is slate and the cupola replaces what was a chimney. Historically, the back part of the building with the flat roof was not closed in. It was the area that housed the carts used for transporting luggage before being converted into a closed space.

In addition to the building, John Lambert owns the adjoining parking lot. He leases two handicap and six regular parking spaces to Amtrak. Amtrak owns the property between the edge of the platform and the railroad ties behind the large gray Amtrak signs. Installed on this property by Amtrak, are lighting, a wheelchair lift, and signage. The City owns the small pie-shaped piece of land between the road and the parking lot. The Guard Rail is on the city owned property.

Amtrak invested a lot of money in upgrading the rail bed. These upgrades allow for high-speed trains (80mph), double decker passenger trains, and freight. Currently, freight trains pass by once or twice a day.

Amtrak leases the rail from New England Central. New England Central is responsible for the removal of debris along the rail bed.

Jeremy Zullo is under contract with Amtrak to remove snow. He has been certified by Amtrak to do this. However, this contract is for removal of snow on the Amtrak property, and does not include snow removal from the parking lot to the platform.

Last year, Amtrak tested the possibility of accommodating bicycles on the train. The objective of the test was to ascertain if bicycles could be loaded/off-loaded quickly enough to not negatively impact the train schedule. John Lambert participated in this test. He offered to forward the results of this test to the Committee if he had them.

Potential upgrades to train stop:

- Mr. Lambert is open to ideas (i.e. extension of roof overhang, stand-alone shelter) of how to better protect passengers from the weather.
- Mr. Lambert is willing to develop a partnership with regard to enhanced security. For example, he would pay for the electricity if others did the monitoring.

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-Mr. Lambert is open to improving the landscaping on his property. He offered to supply the materials if volunteers were willing to provide the labor. Prior to any work being done, a landscaping and maintenance plan would be submitted to Mr. Lambert for approval.

-The current parking agreement with Amtrak will not be sufficient if more parking spaces are needed. The city owned land behind the depot along Plains Rd may be an alternative. However, soil remediation or airport right-of-way issues may need further investigation.

-Transportation is non-existent and suggestions for resolving this issue included contacting Hertz and Enterprise, zip.com, CATS and other shuttle services (i.e. resort, Common Man)

-Mr. Lambert is open to having a food/refreshment wagon come to his parking lot during train arrival/departures.

Chair Lovett called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was made by Councilor Reed and seconded by Councilor Towle.

Motion adjourned at 7:30.

Submitted by:

Charlene Lovett, Chair

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