

Ad Hoc Committee Meeting - Claremont Amtrak Stop
August 5, 2014
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Madam Chair Lovett called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Members of the committee present were:

Ward I Councilor Carolyn Towle
Ward II Councilor Charlene Lovett
At Large Councilor James Reed

Review of July 30th minutes:

Councilors commented on good minute taking from Councilor Reed and thanked him for continuing to take minutes for the time being.

A motion was made by Ms. Towle and seconded by Ms. Lovett to accept the minutes from July 30th 2014.

Voice vote: motion carried 3-0

Public present at the meeting was :

Jan Lambert - Represents the Cycle Depot
Andrew O'Hearne - State Rep of NH - Resident
Ray Gagnon - State Rep of NH – Resident and committee applicant

Ms. Lovett had made an apology to anyone inconvenienced by the incorrect time being posted. She was aware of the fact that Mr. Bernie Folta had come to the Council Chambers at 3pm and might not be returning tonight.

Ms. Lovett made mention after last week's meeting that Mr. Patrick O'grady published an article in the Valley News about our committee meeting which has started getting people interested. We thank Mr. Ogrady for doing the article.

Ms. Lovett gave us an update of reaching out to Sarah Wheelock. She is very interested in participating though she is not a resident. She will not be able to join the Committee but will still be a participant. Ms. Wheelock will either briefing us on 8/12/14 or 8/19/14 about potential destination packages and her thoughts regarding the current train stop structure and Amtrak timetable.

Ms. Lovett has requested to speak at the next Chamber's Board meeting on 8/19/14.

Ms. Lovett referred to the 76 page document on the NNEIRI, and stated that the work being done by the committee on the train station will only make our position stronger for approval as a stop on the high-speed line.

Ms. Lovett wrote an overview of the NNEIRI document for the committee's use, and offered the entire document to anyone who wanted to read it. Ms. Towle took it to read at home.

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Open for Discussion:

Ms. Towle stated she has been to the Amtrak stop several different times from different directions to get a better view from all directions. Ms. Towle has come in from River Rd. junction as well as the others. She was looking into signage enhancement especially from Drapers Corners. Ms. Towle took photos of the sight for an overview of what is now lacking that she shared with the committee.

Ms. Towle also mentioned the local businesses that lead to the stop, including The Hitching Post, Easy Mart and others to highlight some points of interest along the route to the station.

Ms. Towle also stated that restoring Moody Park and enhancing the trails would help bring cyclists in by train to use our park.

Ms. Lovett said, according to conversations with John Lambert, a bridge between rails would have to be built in order for passengers to load/unload bicycles. It is a complex/expensive endeavor and would have to be considered a long term goal.

Ms. Lovett said let us look at short term goals to start.

Open for public comment:

Ray Gagnon agreed that developing a plan of how the junction could be a economic asset to Claremont is necessary, especially during the process of being considered for the high speed rail. A list of objectives will help to be chosen.

Ms. Lambert stated her daughter thinks there needs to be a more formal structure between themselves as landowners, Claremont and Amtrak.

Ms. Towle stated at the junction the Lamberts have been more than hospitality to the people who get off the train and thanked them for doing this.

Ms. Towle stated short term goals:

Beautification of the area (i.e. paint decorative chain fence, plant flowers). The benches need to be replaced asap as they are not even usable in their current condition. Reach out to SRVRTC to have students build benches or other business, or have people donate benches in memory of someone. Plaques could be placed on the benches identifying who donated them and in whose memory.

Ms. Lambert stated that they would welcome beautification/landscaping efforts.

Ms. Towle stated we could draw up plans to beautify the landscape for the Claremont Cycle Shop's approval. She also stated that the stockade fence has a hole in it, and should be repaired/painted.

Mr. Reed stated to replace the fence with a vinyl one would require less maintenance in the future.

Ms. Towle stated the signage down there needs to be updated. For example, there are signs

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advertising taxi providers and the Budget Inn which are no longer in service. The sign on the bottom states that this is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Towle recommended we take down the signs and begin anew. Perhaps local businesses could buy a space on the wall to promote their business. This would help pay for the cost of new signage.

Mr. Reed stated having the community shuttle service (CATS) stop at the train station would help customers not get stranded.

Mr. Gagnon stated that Nancy Merrill and Zach Williams were currently working on that.

Mr. Towle stated the overhang is not sufficient enough to protect passengers from the elements, and would have to get an engineer's opinion on what could be done to the existing structure.

Ms. Lovett stated another idea would be to construct a three sided shelter, and that there is a possibility that it could be built by the tech students.

Ms. Lambert referred us to a structure used on Mt. Ascutney trails in Vermont. She wrote an article on it. It is next to the ski shop.

- 3 sided structure, 1 side bulletin board for information
- dressing room on one side
- lavatory on other side

Mr. O'Hearne stated it might be a good idea to get the daily roster update from Amtrak of who and how many passengers were getting off that day in Claremont. Amtrak could then relay that information to the shuttle service so they would know if they needed to stop at the station or not.

Ms. Towle stated restrooms are definitely important. Ms. Towle is going to stop down there at different times a day to see about lighting and how it looks at night.

Mr. Gagnon stated that perhaps a computer providing a continual loop of current information might be helpful to passengers.

Ms. Lambert made mention of there being a big problem with vandalism down there at night, so computer technology might not be the preferred option. She stated that a protected holder (i.e. transparent, acrylic) with brochures could provide passengers with information of interest.

- Information on how do I get a ticket?
- How to purchase a ticket ?

Ms. Lovett mentioned that she had requested that approval for Amtrak signage be included as an agenda item for the City Council on 8/13/14, and it has. She stated Amtrak will provide both trailblazer signs and community signage for free. The only cost to the city is the poles and installation of those signs. Also, committee applications will have to be approved at the next council meeting.

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Ms. Lovett stated we need to prioritize upgrades:

- Transportation to/from station
- Accuracy of posted information
- Passenger comfort

Ms. Towle stated safety needs to be added to this list.

Committee agreed on:

- Transportation to/from station
- Accuracy of posted information
- Passenger comfort
- Passenger security

Ms. Lovett requested that committee members identify the short and long term options for addressing these issues and prioritize them.

Ms. Lovett stated that city staff at Planning & Development (PD) is prepared to respond to information requests. Ms. Lovett would like an update of PD discussions with CATS. Nancy Merrill also made mention of City Center Committee meet on 3rd Tuesday at 5:15 of each month, So we will be discussing new location for our 3rd meeting 8/12/14.

Mr. Gagnon suggested we update the PD on our work and that the PD write a letter to NNEIRI updating them on the committee's work.

Ms. Lovett reviewed our timeline:

- 8/13/14 - signage approval, approval of committee applications
- 8/27/14 preliminary report to City Councilors
- next step is to identify costs of upgrades and funding sources

Mr. Reed stated he was going to reach out to Peter Burling who was a Passenger Rail Representative for many years to get some more insight and suggestions.

A motion was made by Ms. Towle and seconded by Ms. Lovett to adjourn.

Voice vote: 3-0 motion passes.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:11 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
James P. Reed Jr.