

AD HOC COMMITTEE - CLAREMONT AMTRAK STOP

Minutes for March 24, 2015

Call to order: 6:07 pm by the chair

Attendees: Carolyn Towle, Raymond Gagnon, Charlene Lovett (Chair)

Absent: James Reed, Scott Magnuson

1. Raymond Gagnon provided an update relative to Concord (Statehouse) activities
 - a. NH House Budget presently cuts funds for next step of the Merrimack River Rail Corridor,
 - b. Rep Geo. Sykes of Lebanon has been appointed as the House Transportation Cte rep to the NH Passenger Rail Authority. This is a positive development, as he is supportive of Claremont's rail efforts,
 - c. Suggested the Committee explore the feasibility of utilizing two different programs that might be appropriate to foster economic development at the Claremont Jct. The two initiatives are RSA 79-E, and ERZ (Economic Recovery Zone) program as tools to develop an Economic Development Village at the Claremont Jct. Both initiatives might provide economic incentives to business & are worth further research.

2. Chairwoman Lovett informed the committee about an Amtrak program that deals with Train Safety for elementary age students. She's spoken with the SAU and they are supportive of Amtrak coming to Claremont and providing workshops/classes for students relative to Safety issue around Trains & Tracks. Her thought was we could use this as a Segway to instill interest in the summer train event as well as a tool to educate the public and school age youth on train safety. Committee concurred that this was an excellent idea and worthy of further pursuit.

3. Committee discussed follow up meeting/discussion with property owners & businesses abutting the Claremont Jct. Preliminary outreach to abutting businesses is ongoing.
 - a. Tentative plan is to set April 14 as a tentative date to meet with businesses re:
 - i. Shelter Plans
 - ii. Bike/Train Event
 - iii. Long Term Economic Planning & the creation of the Claremont Jct Economic Development Village.

4. The Chair provided the committee a correspondence recently forwarded her from the mayor from a Claremont resident regarding the Amtrak Vermonter and the Claremont Jct stop. The Claremont resident regularly takes the train to NYC from Claremont Jct on business and offered the following wish list:

- a. Fully functioning station,
- b. Restroom facilities,
- c. Ticket Kiosk,
- d. Info regarding the Amtrak App,
- e. Improved boarding ability. At present Amtrak staff place a stool to assist passengers in boarding/de-boarding the train. This is awkward and not safe especially in winter.

Anecdotal input from other passengers he happened to ask who were dis-embarking from the Amtrak Vermonter at Claremont Jct;

- f. Don't change the character of the Station – they appear to like the old station look and feel we should preserve the exterior of the building.
 - g. Maintain free parking – rumor among travelers is that the parking lot will be paved and they are concerned that this might affect their present ability to park free, which apparently is a major draw. Travelers seem to feel safe leaving their vehicle at the Claremont Jct.
5. Committee felt that we should respond to this individual in writing via email and express our appreciation of his feedback. R. Gagnon volunteered to craft an email from the committee. Plan will be to craft an email, reference the entire committee and share with members.
 6. Discussion morphed into a conversation by the committee on the need to identify and document various anecdotal comments/feedback regarding Claremont Jct. Ideally the sharing of positive comments as well as helpful comments to improve the station would bode well relative to demonstrating activity at the Claremont Jct to Amtrak authorities.
 - a. Chairwoman Lovett mentioned how Scott Magnuson has created an on-going log of station activity ,
 - b. Discussion then focused on creating a Claremont Jct Web Site with interface to social media. Ray Gagnon volunteered to explore options and report back to the committee.
 7. Carolyn Towle provided an update on reaching out to area landscapers about landscape enhancements to the Jct. She spoke with Mr. & Mrs. Lee Stevens at Log Cabin Nursery who have agreed to provide the committee advice on how to proceed. Plan will be to look at low maintenance landscaping at the site. Suggestion was to reach out to Log Cabin Nursery relative to their availability to meet with the committee at the site, however the committee felt we should first visit the site as a preliminary step. Committee set 6PM Mar 31st as the site visit date.

8. Ray Gagnon was asked as to the status of feedback from Enterprise Car rental. He informed the committee that he has been unsuccessful in meeting with them but will check relative to the following;
 - a. Vehicle Availability,
 - b. Pickup and delivery of a vehicle to the Claremont Jct ,
 - c. Identify promotional items they would like to have displayed at the Jct site.

9. Claremont Jct Train/Bike Weekend – tentative date set based on various schedules will be July 24/25.

10. Chair informed committee that April will have to be when we focus efforts on the Jct Train/Bike tour weekend.

7:02 pm - Motion to adjourn was made by Caroline Towle, 2nd by Charlene Lovett – vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted:

Raymond Gagnon – acting scribe.