

Danville Train Station Committee Minutes

Meeting of April 13, 2021, 5:30-6:45pm

Location: Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Michael Hogue, Sally Fishburn, Rob Balivet, Ted Houle, Alison Low, Ross Meaders, Tim Ide, Kate Whitehead, Patty Conly, Kitty Toll, Stan Pekala, Lois Russo

Meeting opened at 5:32pm via Zoom by Michael Hogue, chair. The Danville Train Station Committee (DTSC) is a subcommittee of the PC. Michael took roll and indicated there were no guests in attendance.

He then submitted the agenda for approval. Agenda approved unanimously. Minutes from the March 9th committee meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Michael asked if everyone had read the article by Patty in the North Star Monthly titled *"The Day of the Depot, Part 1 of 3: The railroad arrives in Danville."* She was congratulated for the article and said she had not realized it would be included in an issue with the cover story *"Hobos, Tramps & Bums"* but felt it was a great tie-in.

Ad Hoc March 24th Meeting – Michael Hogue

Michael updated on a short zoom meeting held March 24th with Alison Low, Doug Morton from NVDA, Ken Linsley from SB, Kate Whitehead and Kitty Toll regarding earmarks and Peter Welch's letter soliciting projects from Vermont Towns. There was a deadline on Mar 30th necessitating the interim meeting.

It was clear during that meeting that we were not ready to put in a request. If we apply for federal monies, we need to get VTrans involved. To do that, we need a full-blown scoping study—probably a four-year timeline. When the team realized this, it was proposed to break our station project into two parts.

Part One: fundraiser to restore the Historic Building (*immediate*)

Part Two: grants and fundraising to do a use/scoping study and fit out, etc. (*after restoration*)

Michael said he wished he could have involved the whole committee in that meeting, but there was simply not enough time, but he would like their feedback now on this proposal to shift the team's efforts into two phases. Sally said it made sense to her and she feels like it is a great way to move forward. Ted agreed. Patty also felt this would create more buy-in from the community, allowing the station restoration to truly become a community project—Danville Pride—instead of just a few people spearheading the effort. Sally added not to forget that the original construction of the station was a subscription project with the town.

Michael added that this project has many different constituencies that can be targeted for fundraising efforts: RR and LVRT enthusiasts, Trail Users (Bicyclists, Walkers/Hikers, Equestrians, Snowmobilers); Health Promoters; Danville residents and businesses; Vermont Personal and Family Trusts; and Cyber funding. Kitty plans to have the at-large community be the last group we fundraise from, so that we can get the thermometer partially filled to kickstart that effort.

Funding Team – Kitty Toll co-chair

Kitty spoke with both the former and current directors as well as Emily Hutchinson, Director of Philanthropy, at NVRH who have been involved in big capital campaigns. They said that our \$300,000 campaign was doable for a small, dedicated group like ours, and that if we can kickstart it with smaller grants and the town, then add large donors, with the community as the final piece. At first Emily was concerned we did not have a use

determined, but when Kitty laid out what we had so far, Emily changed her mind and felt we had enough to go after grants if we elaborated on our plans to encourage people from the trail to visit the town. We could this draw by signs on the trail with events and historical tidbits—such as where the train went off the tracks and where the bell was found—with other ideas to be determined and included later.

Michael said the next step will be to create a prospectus for fundraising defining the of the current condition of the building, along with our plans to develop it. Kitty then refined these next steps:

1. If we are looking for three \$50,000 donations as a kickstart, it will require speaking with 15 or more people/organizations. The team needs to identify this list, and then determine which ones to approach now, versus those that should wait.
2. Create a document that tells the story (prospectus referred to above).
3. Determine whether we need to hire a grant writer and how we would fund them if it is necessary.

Michael updated communication he had with Ken Linsley SB to determine precisely how much money is available from the Town. There is somewhere between \$90-100,000 currently in the building fund with another \$100,000 coming in late October. The plan is to use the current funds to relocate the recycle center. The Select Board as earmarked the October funds for completing the recycle center if needed, and to support the revitalization of the train station. When we go to the Select Board for approval of the fund raising plan, we should seek a guarantee of \$50,000 for the project.

Kitty reported that the team will have a meeting mid-month to answer some of these questions.

Building/Land Team – Sally Fishburn co-chair

Sally reported that the inspection/assessment of the station would take place Friday morning at 10:15 am so an official report on the station repairs could be generated. She hopes it will be a two-week turnaround, but she will verify this with the inspector.

She is looking into a couple other items:

- whether we would be able to put an addition on the east end of the station or not (it might be Class 2 Wetlands which would prohibit). She has talked to Julie at A&R about meeting to clarify this.
- If we should approach the medical center about purchasing or leasing some of the land north of the station.

Michael asked whether Ross could create CAD drawings showing the station as it is and then another showing the planned restoration with the ochre and red colors. Ross said he does not have CAD, but he is using a program that would allow this. Rob mentioned (via Zoom comment) he has AutoCAD Light if Ross needs it.

Sally reported that the septic and water go right by the train station, but that Keith does not know whether it is hooked to the station, so there is a chance this could incur additional expense.

Use Team – Kate Whitehead co-chair

Patty reported that she spoke with the Historical Society's Board of Directors to solicit their thoughts about the station and what they were willing to contribute to the project. Everyone is more than willing to contribute any volunteer help—labor, program planning, etc—needed. They would prefer this hands-on involvement rather than any financial commitment, though they would finance anything that relates to their presence in the station itself, as well as collaborate with any local organizations that wish to work with the Historical Society at the station. Things specifically mentioned:

- historical markers that would be interesting for users to read about
- volunteers to answer historical questions
- walking history of the town of Danville (pamphlet or digital app on phones)

Michael asked if this meant the Historical Society would not be willing to pay rent. Patty replied that they do not need to occupy the whole space in the station—since they are happy to just have a presence with displays and other items—which means it could be rented to someone else.

Michael mention that the state will control signage on the trail to assure consistency, however they will discuss with the towns prior to making decisions. Danville is a member of the Alliance of Towns for the LVRT and meet regularly relative to all the issues and progress with the trail’s completion and determination such as making it a horizontal park. A lead person sas been assigned to signage and we will learn more once she starts.

Kate said she spoke with the Chamber of Commerce, and they are definitely interested in being involved—it aligns well with their work highlighting local businesses. They would be interested in grant funding to install a digital outdoor kiosk they could manage remotely, which would allow users to scan barcodes that take them to websites and around to businesses, events, and such in Danville.

Rob reported that the people that own the Three Ponds are interested in an ice cream shop at the station. This could present a great opportunity, especially since they are now taking over the Barrel to Bottle space on the green.

Kate reported that the team had planned to send out the bike survey right away, but an opportunity to work with Hardwick and St Johnsbury to create a joint bike rental and repair system is being explored. The team identified a new group—The Trailhead Collective in St. Johnsbury—formed to promote bicycle events linked to the Rail Trail who will be partnering with the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail to provide a trailer for their bikes as a pilot. They also discovered, with regards to the Montana bike shop idea, that there is a similar concept locally in St. Johnsbury—a build-a-bike program for youths called LINK, headed by Evan Olson. We might be able to explore a partnership expanding their operations to include adults. Kate thought that we should have him look at our space as well. She feels it is certainly worth further discussion with them, so we are not competing.

Michael suggested we identify several small “quick hit” items to add to the site as part of the initial restoration and first use (such as landscaping, an outdoor kiosk, or external display boxes). This would make the site attractive to donors as well as functional prior to phase two of the project. Kate agreed and mentioned that several groups had small funds available for grants. She asked if these “quick hit” items could also include mapping and other things—small items ancillary to the restoration itself—so that we would have a leg up before the scoping study, making the station useable and attractive well before phase two’s 2-4 year completion estimate. There was positive response to this suggestion.

Patty said it would be good to develop such a list since there is a meeting of the Women’s Club coming up in a couple weeks when she will be doing a presentation about our goals. The Women’s Club also wants to participate and these small components might be a good way for them to get involved. Ted suggested looking at the Northeast Regional Medical group who have given funds to things like this in the past.

Patty noted that snack sales along the trail for users out of the ticket office were one of the board member suggestions. Rob said if there is construction going on, it could be a liability. So, we need to wait and see, but we might be able to use the space as-is for some things with a ‘Donate Here’ sign. Ted noted that we may need to wait on the construction since materials costs are sky high right now. Rob and Patty both mentioned that it is also extremely hard to get materials right now.

Ted said that VTrans is so flush with money that they have moved up the Rail Trail completion and work timelines.

Michael reported that he had asked Wendy Somers for what the 2020 operating cost of the station/recycle center (ie. Heat, light, propane, insurance etc) to provide a baseline for estimating those costs going forward.

Michael also said we might want to consider infrastructure for internet and phone to the station while Tilson is stringing lines in the area. Tim said that either Charter or Spectrum probably goes right by the building right now.

Goals for Next Month – Michael Hogue

Michael proposed that for our next step the team needs to make a fund raising chart that includes each of the constituencies interested in or using the trail. Kitty mentioned we need to identify who to approach, and the ask level, in each group. Also one of us needs to take responsibility for one of the groups. He asked Ted if he could make contact with the Tour de France rider in East Burke to see if he might help in the biking community. Ted will follow up.

New Business – None.

Michael thanked everyone for their efforts and requested a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:23pm.

Next scheduled meeting is Tuesday May 11, 2021. This meeting will be held by Zoom only.

Respectfully submitted,

Lois Russo, Secretary