

Danville Train Station Committee Minutes - DRAFT

Meeting of November 9, 2021, 5:30-6:45pm

Location: Danville Town Hall Meeting Room and via Zoom

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

Meeting opened at 5:33pm via Zoom by Michael Hogue, chair. The Danville Train Station Committee (DTSC) is a subcommittee of the Planning Committee. Michael took roll and submitted the agenda for approval. Agenda approved.

Minutes from the October 12th meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Chair Report – Michael Hogue

Michael reported that he met with the Select Board (SB) regarding the scope and cost of the station restoration and the need to hire a grant writing consultant. The SB approved the plan to incorporate both the passenger and the freight sides in the fundraising and work plan; and in addition supported the associated costs and fundraise to \$400,000.

The SB also approved the plan to hire an independent contractor for grant writing and administration with appropriate coordination with the Town Clerk. Michael put forth the idea of using the currently available funds raised for the restoration project (around \$4,100) to support the effort through year's end. They also approve the hiring of Kate Whitehead as the contractor subject to an acceptable contact relationship. The DTSC to submit a draft contract for SB approval.

Building/Land Team – Sally Fishburn co-chair

Sally Fishburn reported that Rob talked to Andy Dussault who will complete the land survey for us; but it cannot be completed until spring. Today the team received a proposal for services from architect Ryan Edwards (RE) and Engineering Ventures. Alison Low used the cost proposal for the Municipal Planning Grant application. In addition RE reviewed the cost estimate the team has been working with and determined that it was a bit too low. The increases were principally due to adding the canopy and platform, architectural and engineering, additional contractor expense and larger contingencies. The net result was a projected cost of \$517,320 versus \$386,530, a \$130,790 increase.

Michael noted that that seemed a really high per SF cost. The architect and engineer's fees and overhead included everything until the end of the project, which is why it may seem higher than expectations. Michael noted that we have made projections starting with Integrated Architects, adjusted based on discussions with local contractors and inflation factors; perhaps we are compounding errors. It is doubtful that we will have good handle on cost until A&E is done with schematics and identification of materials/fixtures. So we probably need to assume \$517,320 is closer to the real number.

Sally noted that she gave RE access to all Google files and research and contingencies for review before submitting their proposal. RE felt that our numbers were light, so the increases were made based on their experience in restoration projects, usually ending up costing more than volunteer committees generally estimate, to prevent exhausting funds before completion.

Alison asked if the estimate took into account the septic tank in the parking lot. Sally said not that she knew of, but he used documents in our files, but she doesn't think that it was in there. Michael asked if we confirmed there was a septic tank. Alison stated we have a report that says there is a buried tank, but no one has knowledge of whether it was pulled. So she thinks it is still there.

Alison also asked if RE had completed a 106 evaluation (historic elements evaluation). Alison wonders if we can roll that into the stewardship grants. And find out what his ballpark is so we can try to work that into the VHCB monies. She also asked if RE added costs the Town's portion of builder's risk. Sally said they hadn't talked about that at all. Kitty asked what that meant. Alison said new construction is listed as an exclusion in underlying insurance policies and requires a separate policy to cover the construction exposures. Sally said she will bring up that issue as well, because we would need to know if we have to carry that insurance, and if so, the cost.

Michael indicated that Rob Balivet sent out a list of questions relative to the RE proposal. Sally said she had discussed it with Rob and she said many of those items she thought were covered.

Michael said he was at a loss here about what to do; particularly as he just met with the Select Board and presented the merger of Phase One and Phase Two with a combined fund raise of \$400,000. A week later the number is a plus \$125-150,000.

Michael talked about timing, and pointed out he won't have good numbers until sometime in the Spring. Sally said a cost estimator could develop a good set from schematic drawings that RE's team would put together. That would solidify the numbers.

Alison reported that the Municipal Grant had a large number of applicants and so monies may be very hard to come by this year. But if we do get awarded then we should be able to move very quickly, because their procurement process is quick. We would not be obligated for the lowest bidder, only the most responsive. Usually if we receive grants, we need to give opportunities for people to bid. We cannot just choose our own. But it does not have to be an involved process. Either RFP or RFQ are feasible. But we would certainly give RE consideration for all the work he has done to help us prepare for this grant application.

Michael wondered if there are any options for funds coming sooner than MPG. Alison thinks anything from Preservation Trust or DHP would be around the same time. They will evaluate the focus around preservation and construction, not planning etc. Alison also mentioned about approaching NCIC now because even if we get funded we will have a shortfall.

Michael pointed out that obviously not much will happen in the next couple months other than generating enough funds to hire an architect/engineer to produce a solid number. Thus we will not have enough information to launch a fund raising campaign until then.

Alison thinks we are in a place to start fundraising on the estimate for the \$517,320. Shouldn't we start now since we have already begun and submitted some grant applications? Kitty feels we need a target that is more stable, with a firm idea of how much we need to raise in the community. Businesses will want to know the percentage of the project they are funding.

Sally said the canopy is in the project as far as she is concerned. So that \$517k number is as solid as we can get at this point in the process. And that it should cover most. And that any restoration process is often a changing number as the world of construction and materials is changing so rapidly it is hard to plan for those changes. Kitty wants to be sure that we know close enough that we are asking for the right target amounts, but with a reasonable enough total that potential donors feel it makes sense. Sally feels that is where we are now.

Kitty asked if we are a \$500k, \$550k or the actual \$517k project? She worries that hitting the half a million mark will be an eyeraiser for the town, even if it is accurate. Michael pointed out that we went to the Select Board with \$400k and now are saying that it is 25% higher, which will raise eyebrows. He is uncomfortable going to bat for this huge change without having the cost estimator evaluate it.

Alison points out that we would have had to hire Ryan to create the conceptals in order for the cost estimator to work, but that makes it difficult because it would have started the process and fundraising to make that happen. Plus we don't have a website, a prospectus, a plan, or anything that shows all the milestones we have hit to date. So no one can look at where we are yet.

Michael said the first thing we need to do is for three or four of us to sit down with Ryan and pound through all the numbers to be sure we understand them all. Sally said the A&E of \$60k was missing entirely from our first estimates (because we did not realize that we needed the permits and other formalized items), which is a huge chunk we were missing. And the rest was mostly percentages for contingencies and so forth that is so much more volatile these days. We would need to pay Ryan to do this since they would now be working on a project they don't have yet. She thinks being cautious is a smarter thing for the completion of this project.

Michael went through the numbers and with \$194k grants we are in for plus the town \$50 to \$100k, that leaves about \$200k fundraise. Alison mentioned that if we get a cash flow and more specifics with economic benefits, then we could go for some of the larger grants of like \$250k. But that is why we need to get the VORAC grant push done, to get to that point.

Tim mentioned that spending over \$500k for our building is insane. We need to reevaluate how we can get below that cap for what this purpose is. Ted agreed and thinks it will be a harder to sell to the community given that the building's only has two rooms. What is the purpose that supports a \$500,000 investment?

Michael proposed we do some serious prep work before the December meeting to discuss a reevaluation for that meeting, with a series of small meetings leading up to it so we can make some concrete decisions. Alison suggested maybe we get to the point of a single unifying vision first, to clarify what is most important and what we can pare down. Ross wondered how we can have a single unifying vision if we do not know what the use will be. Michael feels that the space is too small to generate revenue streams that will cover operating and maintenance costs. If rent is not our number one priority, then how does the building contribute to Danville? A facilitator to determine that vision may be helpful. Alison knows someone we could approach for this. Not to mention we would need all those pieces to even start fundraising anyway.

There was a general agreement to do this, and that should be what our next meeting's agenda. Alison and Michael will contact the facilitator.

It was noted that we did not address the other agenda items because this turned out to be such a significant issue, though some line items were discussed as part of this agenda item.

New Business: None.

Michael thanked everyone for their efforts and requested a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:35pm.

Next scheduled meeting is Tuesday December 14, 2021 at 5:30pm. It will be hybrid – in person for those fully vaccinated and wearing masks, as well as available via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Lois Russo, Secretary