

Maine Street Station Oversight Committee

May 1, 2008 5:00PM to 6:45PM

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Oversight Committee: Councilors Knight, Tucker, Webb; Town Staff: Mathew Eddy, Don Gerrish, Amanda Similien; Councilors Favreau, Klatt; Others: Peter Baker (MACTEC), Marybeth Burbank, Jim Dougherty, George Gilmore, Martha Gilmore, Mike Lyne (JHR), Tricia Welsh

Minutes were accepted with a few changes noted by Margo Knight, which will be adjusted and then posted on the Website.

Financial Report:

EDA Proposal Mathew Eddy described the Economic Development Association grant process and timing; the \$850,000 proposal for infrastructure on the site was to go in front of the EDA Investment Review Committee on Thursday, 5/8/08. He said that there is no definite date of decision, and once it comes out of committee with a positive vote, we do not know how long the paper chase process takes. It must be approved by the committee, then by the director, and then go through the congressional offices.

Cedar Street Lot Mathew reported that he was developing more detailed information on the proposed Town management of the Cedar Street lot. He said there is a line holder in the CIP for \$6000 annual maintenance costs, but we still need to do the engineering estimates, which will be part of the modification to MACTEC's contract that he will present to the Town Council on May 19.

Don Gerrish said that the questions that were posed to the council at their last meeting will be answered at the council meeting on May 19. Brunswick's commitment is for the "inside the fence" development piece of remediation and infrastructure. That is \$2million. The Town has \$900,000 in hand/spent and is responsible for \$1.1 million more should we not receive other funding. We believe we will receive EDA and some sort of CDBG funding. The Council did authorize up to a \$2.2Million bond for this project, but will only need \$1.1 million at the most.

Mary Heath asked what the costs were total costs were for Cedar Street. She also asked if the Downeast propane tank would be moved. Mathew answered that paving and other pieces are 100% DOT expense because the Park & Ride and train. The Town will apply for an enhancement grant for these costs, and we have requested a letter from the state to explain these details (hope to have this prior to Tuesday's planning board). Downeast will pay for and move the propane tank removal. They have been contacted and are determining the best place for it to go.

Marybeth Burbank asked if there was coal ash on the site. Mathew said that they will be studying this further because, like the other site, we believe there is some. In this case, it will probably be capped because it will be used as a parking lot. The site will go through the environmental review and approval process for remediation. The lease for the lot between the town and DOT will also have the capital expense responsibilities spelled out.

Finances Overall David Webb asked how the project stood with cash flow and financial obligations. Mathew said that we have come close with the main site. MACTEC is closing out their latest bills currently. There are some new expenses not in the original scope due to the addition of Cedar Street lot to the discussion now.

Don said that the Town is waiting for the approval from the Planning Board to be able to start the infrastructure, hopefully in July. By that time we should have the additional funding sources secured; therefore we will not spend further until the approval takes place.

Mary Heath asked when the Cedar Street lot would be paved and was told next year. She then asked what the timeline would be if the Cedar Street lot were approved and if one aspect could delay another.

Mathew said that the Planning Board will decide the timing and the projects and when the certificate of occupancy is permitted, and therefore when the lot would be needed. They will make the determination and look at the approval for Maine Street Station and permit from there. The developer is looking at joint parking agreements, so they might not need Cedar Street at this point at all.

Train Update Wayne Davis of Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) and Marybeth Burbank, formerly of the Maine Street Station Oversight Committee, were specially invited to talk with us about the latest legislation that approved a funding source to upgrade the tracks from Portland to Brunswick.

Brunswick Economic Development staff had a preliminary meeting with Patricia Quinn on Tuesday April 29th to discuss the agreements and pieces. They also talked with Ron Roy of ME DOTs transit program about the process.

Wayne Davis reviewed the events of the previous week when the bill, LD2019, passed. He was amazed by the ignorance of the legislative leaders to rail and its benefits to the state of Maine. It passed the House and Senate and went to appropriations. The Governor remained neutral until it was explained to him and then, according to Wayne, it became his bill and with his motto- You will make this happen! The bill approved taking 50% of the Auto Rental Tax and placing it into the STAR account. The money collected will pay off a debt service of a loan to the Fed by the FRA (someone discovered that there are billions in the FRA account) of \$31million to upgrade the track between Portland and Brunswick. The 2006 price was \$25.4 million; the 2008 price is \$31 million.

The track owner Guilford (also known as Pan Am) is "hot" to do this project, and the company plans to have it done within two years. They are fond of delivering projects early and under budget. The paperwork has been submitted and as soon as the loan comes through, "the earth will start to move." Naysayers say that it does not affect the rest of Maine, but ridership statistics prove otherwise: In a three day period during the summer of 2007, all zip codes in Maine were represented at the Portland station. The DownEaster has experienced an increase in ridership long before the gas prices increased. A study of the train (Maine was the only state in 20 years to do this) as an economic engine for Maine shows that the Brunswick –Portland line will create the new Boston. The physical connection of rails is different between the roads and planes. Brunswick is in an enviable position when the train comes through. There is a lot of potential for trains and what they bring, for Brunswick.

David Webb asked what Brunswick could do to help facilitate the success of the train coming to Brunswick. Wayne answered that parking is key. Portland could use a garage, Cedar Street is a great option and potentially having a trolley is a good thought to have. The facility for the station – coffee, reading materials and things to do around the physical station while folks are on a layover or stopping through. Shopping center, condos, etc. have worked elsewhere.

The DownEaster has received no more than four calls complaining about the noise of the train. This is true as long as maintenance is kept current.

Don asked about the level of repairs on the line needed for speed, etc. The top speed is set for 60 MPH, on continuously welded rail. Crossing pieces are needed (which is what is lacking on the Rockland line) to reach 80 MPH, but with crossings, they can't reach 80, so 60 is more viable for this route with the crossings. They won't know the true capability of the speed until the rail is done and the train tests it out. The estimated travel time for Portland to Brunswick is 35-45 minutes. The Portland-Boston run has had a top speed request of 110mph, but that would warrant a second track.

Margo Knight asked Wayne if he agreed with Patricia Quinn's positive assessment of the size of the proposed station. Wayne said that he is not good at visualizing square footage, but as long as there is heat in the winter and AC in the summer then it should be fine. The additional elements of the businesses surrounding the station are helpful as well.

David Webb asked Wayne's opinion of the proximity of the parking. Wayne said that there should be close short-term parking; the longer term parking is good at Cedar Street. Using shared parking with others is good as well.

Mary Heath asked whether, in terms of the planning piece and numbers for growth possibilities of passengers, if this is the time before the station is built to revisit the type of station being incorporated within the space and also the potential for enclosing the walkway between the buildings.

Mike Lyne said that site restraints make it difficult to redo what has been proposed. JHR is doing a shared-use analysis for parking for the Planning Board presentation, and using creative ideas for all this to work. The operators (Amtrak and Maine Eastern Railroad) are comfortable with the station's size and location, and it may grow in the future, but currently it is proposed for the tenants to lease more room when the needs change.

Mathew offered that the Town and JHR could contemplate the use of the walkway and potential entrances and exits there from the tenants.

Wayne said that the passenger numbers he is used to are intercity numbers, but these will be different because Brunswick is not that type of station.

Marybeth Burbank asked several questions and had several comments based on the fact that Brunswick is the hub for the region north of Portland:

- 1-Is Maine Eastern content to have their present station removed and not in the parking lot?
- 2-She is disappointed that they aren't planning to have short term parking at the station, how will the multimodal design guidelines be followed?
- 3-Where is the Taxi stop? How many busses can park on the street?
- 4-There were supportive pieces around the original plan, now it seems to be all retail.
- 5-Do we have to do it this way? Can we move the buildings farther apart and place the station in the middle space? Are we compromising on the transit level? We need to seriously recognize the train is coming and produce what we didn't envision for a multimodal sense before the construction begins.

Wayne said that Saco has a high level platform and that is fine with the rail service. The town decided a station building is needed, so it is building one now. Wells is the only station with a building. It is always a money question for municipalities.

Don said that the Town has had conversations with communities that have rail stations. The communities subsidize the costs of the stations. As for the question of the size, Don said that when he and Town staff have met with the rail groups, they have always said they would lease the space, that this is enough space for them, but they could always ask for more space.

Mike Lyne asked Marybeth about a hybrid design of the station. She said that, recognizing the town and its history, we need to constantly look at the style of the town and keep the history of the town and rail in our minds.

Mathew said that this entire center is a transit center, not just 1200 square feet for tickets. The developer and architect have tied 34,000 square feet together and made the entire thing look like a station. Maybe the Town and JHR could revisit the overhang portion and see how this inter-connectedness works, but all of the pieces are supportive. We have used the multimodal model in this plan and have looked at this building as a transit center, not two buildings, the open-ended piece may be something to rethink, but he felt that the fundamental design is what Marybeth was asking for.

David asked if the engineers have looked at the needs that have been created because the train is definitely coming. Mathew said that the Town and the developer have been doing that and they are looking at ways that expansion can happen in 5-10 years from now. They believe that the site has what we need for this service.

Mary Heath said that the classic station would be lovely but is not reality. We have an opportunity of a blank slate of land, and we should look at modifications to accommodate what we know is coming. As the project takes on its life, we know time is money so we should pause and see what is do-able and then move forward. A delay should be OK for a bit.

Mike replied that there have been lots of committee meetings going over the plans, but what has been lacking up to this point is the visual. He believes that it will look and feel more interesting once the designs are made and presented, compared to what people feel or see in the paper drawings and block models. He said that JHR has always prepared for the train, and they are not behind the curve. The big picture of the project is the multimodal aspect and it meets the criteria, so we need to keep the ball rolling.

Mary Heath asked how this could be communicated better to the citizens. Mike said when JHR has the elevations drawn, it would be a good presentation for people to come and see.

Karen Klatt said that she agreed with Marybeth. As a citizen, she didn't pay attention to the Maine Street Station processes and just assumed it would be based around a station. Mathew said that this project was designed to serve the intention of the traveler since the beginning. Karen replied that she felt this is not what the community had planned and is hearing the same from others. Don suggested that a more defined concept picture will meet the needs of citizens to see what is planned. Peter Baker said the concept design that has been formed makes these two buildings look like a 34,000 square foot train station.

Karen said that she has heard that the community is upset with this proposal, however BEDC members and Town Staff are fine with it. Mike said that the number of folks that are happy with this project greatly outnumber the complainers. Karen asked him if he would give her the names of those who are happy. Mike said that he would. Karen said that she felt it is not adequate for a train station that the town would want, that parking is an issue, that we have taken the station and moved it from where folks are used to it being.

Mike said that throughout design meetings, we have thought to move the station closer to Cedar Street (the train service providers want it where it is in the current plans), and it would be ideal to have parking next to the station, but we need to understand the realities of this lot. Meetings have taken place as well as discussions on this for years. Peter Baker added that the concepts have been vetted through the public process and the parking needs have driven everything at this site. That is why there is only parking for one bus, because of the local ordinances. The master plan feasibility was upside down with parking lots and garages. Public subsidy of those was always part of the plan. They are very expensive proposition for this property. If the money was there, short-term parking on MSS would be a "no-brainer," but it is not feasible.

David said that the Town owns the land, so we need to describe what the Town is getting back in this project--community space, balance for travelers, etc.

Mike suggested talking about the Brownfields nature of this project at our next meeting, because that makes it very atypical.

Next Meeting 5/15/08, 5pm, Municipal Meeting Facility.