

MOVEMENT TO REBUILD BAXTER DEPOT

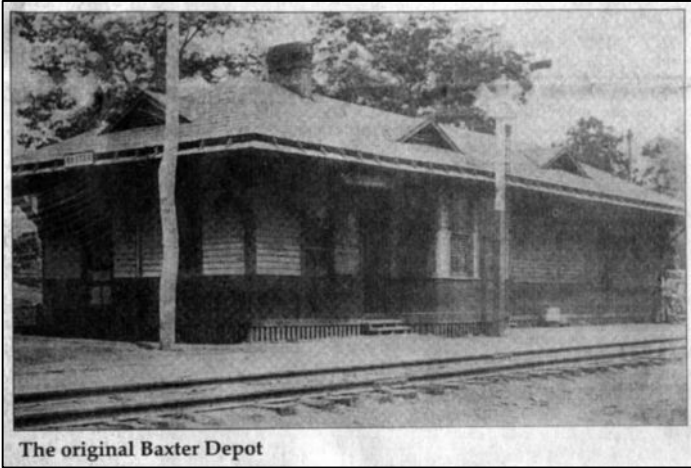
Herald-Citizen newspaper, Cookeville, TN

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Front page

By Jill Thomas

<http://www.ajlambert.com>



The original Baxter Depot

Is Baxter going to have its own depot ...again?

Six members from the Leadership Putnam Class of 2005 are holding a public meeting tomorrow to see if Baxter residents are interested in such a program.

“We have an anonymous donor who has offered to pay for most, if not all, of the construction,” said Jill Hutchison, a member of the LP class.

“We’ve been contacting the railroad authorities (Nashville & Eastern) to see

if we can have trains stop here – at first for special occasions like Old Timers’ Day and later as a regular stop on the line.

“And we have been finding more and more people who have remnants from the original depot that are willing to donate them so we can use them in the reconstruction,” she said.

Each year members of the newest class of Leadership Putnam work for months on a project to benefit the community.

“It has to be completed by May or it has to be so well developed by then that individuals can carry the project forward without the class members,” Hutchison said.

The goal for the Leadership Putnam team is to get a non-profit 501 (C) 3 organization set up and have a permanent board of directors who will be able to see the project through to its end.

“Three of us are from Baxter,” Hutchison said, “And we knew this was the kind of thing we wanted to do. But we had to convince the three members who are not from Baxter that this would be a project that would benefit the whole county.

“Mayor Jeff Wilhite really sold us all when we talked to him about it. He convinced the others that this was a great idea.”

Hutchinson and the two other Baxterites, Rocky Matlock and Julie Brown, have promised to stay on the ‘Baxter Railroad Board’ after their Leadership class ends because the prospect of seeing Baxter expand again was so appealing.

“Baxter used to be an active, vibrant place,” Hutchison said.

“I’ve been reading a book that describes Baxter in 1923. It had a bank, a hotel, a number of boarding homes, an electric light plant, a telephone exchange, a hat store, a garage, a gas station, a cotton gin, two restaurants, two schools, three churches and an express and freight office.

“And its population was basically the same that it is now - - 900.

According to Hutchison, the train at that time regularly hauled cross ties, poles, pulp wood, acid wood, lumber, poultry, handles, eggs and hogs and cattle.

“We’re hoping that now that Baxter has Love’s Truck Stop coming in and restaurants will start building here because we passed the liquor by the drink law, that momentum for this project will keep growing.

“We’d like to see 12 to 15 people on the board. They would have to do fund raising and work on the rules that would govern the depot and all that.

“We’d also like to see the Baxter Depot become a museum like the depot in Cookeville,” she said.

“Anyone who is interested should contact me or, better yet, get to the meeting on Wednesday at 4 p.m. That’s when the board is meeting for this month’s scheduled town meeting. We have the first spot on the agenda so we can talk to the board about what we’re planning.

“And then whoever has come will be invited to join with us in a different room while we go over plans and get the names of interest people.

“Also anyone who has memorabilia or old photos of Baxter depot or train activities from the past in Baxter should call or come to the meeting,” Hutchison said.

<http://www.ajlambert.com>



Planning for the new depot

Six members of the Leadership Putnam class of 2005 have begun planning for reconstructing a replica of the old Baxter Depot as their Leadership

project. Sara Erger, at left, Jill Hutchison, and Rocky Matlock check out some of the proposed plans. Standing are Kathleen Airhart and Ryan Wiggins.



FRIENDS OF THE BAXTER DEPOT

The Friends of the Baxter Depot recently received a \$7,500 donation from Maurine Ensor Patton to purchase the site of the town's historic train depot. Patton, front center, presents the donation to Eldon Leslie, left, vice-chairman of the Nashville and Eastern Railroad Authority, and Baxter Mayor Jeff Wilhite, right. Members of the Friends of the Baxter Depot stand in the background. From left, Depot board members, June Lewis and Isam Keith; Historian Faye Shanks; Jeanie Lee, marketing; and Depot board members Glenn Jones and Sue Neal. Herald-Citizen Photo/Camille Fliss.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 12 November 2007.

*The Friends of the Baxter Depot are working hard to get plans rolling on the building of a welcome center that will be fashioned much like the original depot. The project became more of a reality for committee as they received a TDOT enhancement grant in August.

Herald-Citizen: Tuesday, 12 January 2010, pg. A2

PLANS FOR BAXTER DEPOT TO BE DISCUSSED TONIGHT

by Amye Wright

BAXTER -- A train depot in Baxter could be one step closer to reality once again if construction plans are approved tonight.

According to Baxter Historical Welcome Center/Depot Committee member Sue Neal, the plans for the new depot will be submitted to the construction committee for approval.

Following approval, bids for construction will begin.

"We had to apply three times (for the Tennessee Department of Transportation enhancement grant) before we were accepted," Neal said.

The board intends to make the new depot look as much like the original as possible and the new depot will even be constructed at the original depot's site.

"It is going to be very similar to the old depot," Neal said. "It will be more modernized."

There are no requirements as to how authentic the new depot looks but Neal pointed out that the board would like for the new depot to follow the board's plans and stay as close to them as possible.

One of the problems faced by the board is getting the money to fund the project.

In 2009, the city of Baxter received a grant from TDOT that covered 80 percent of the projected \$453,741 construction cost. That left a balance of approximately \$90,000 to be covered by the city.

"We're just trying to raise the money ourselves," Neal said.

Currently, \$15,000 has been put back toward the remaining balance.

The board is hoping that the city will be able to help by loaning money for the project.

If all goes well and the plans are approved, the new depot could be finished as soon as September or October.

However, Neal pointed out that those projected dates would be feasible if nothing hindered the process of voting and construction.

The movement to get the Baxter depot rebuilt has been a slow process.

The process kicked off in 2007 with a \$7,500 donation from Maurine E. Patton that was put toward purchasing the depot property.

"It's going a little slower than anticipated but I guess you have to have a goal; something to aim for," Neal said.

Unlike the Cookeville depot, the new Baxter depot will probably not be added to the National Register of Historic Places.

"That would be neat if we could but I do not believe it will qualify," Neal said.

To become a member of the National Registry, the new structure would have to contain a certain amount of the original structure.

"We do not think it's feasible to use very much of any of the original wood," Neal said.

The thought of reviving a part of Putnam County's unique history is important to Neal and the board.

"We're just terribly excited," Neal said. "This is going to be tremendous for Baxter."

The Baxter train depot was demolished in 1964 after the Nashville and Eastern Railroad auctioned the property for \$1.

The Baxter Historical Welcome Center/Depot Committee will meet with the construction committee tonight at 5 at the new water department building, which is at the corner of Elm Street and First Avenue in Baxter.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 2 February 2011.

PLANS FOR BAXTER DEPOT TO BE ADJUSTED BEFORE VOTE

by Amye Wright

BAXTER -- The Friends of the Depot committee met Tuesday night in the hopes of finalizing the plans for the new depot and submitting them for construction bids. Unfortunately, a few minor adjustments are

needed before the final plans are drafted and then put to a vote.

Anthony Pelham of the James C. Hailey Co. engineering firm presented the plans to the committee and had a few questions about them.

"(The) State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) has been terrible on this project," Pelham said. "We've never had (a project) that has been this challenging to get their release."

The project will also require the agreement to easements, or the right to use a piece of property without actually owning it, between the new depot and the train tracks.

The current plans have a walkway extending from the depot all the way out to the train tracks. At the end of the walkway there is a drainage ditch that will need to be graded and have easements for the walkway to extend out to the tracks.

The easements will have to come from Nashville & Eastern Railroad Corp. since it owns the property of the railroad tracks. However, due to the sequence of steps that must be taken in this process, a release from SHPO is required before the plans can be submitted to NERR to get the lease agreement for the easements.

"We have talked to (NERR) and they've indicated that they have already seen the plans," Pelham said. "It would just be something they would have to sign off on once we got all of the other leases."

The current timeline for the project is first to get SHPO to send the plans to the Tennessee Department of Transportation to get the utilities release, then to get the easements from NERR, then get TDOT's approval, and then be able to award bids for construction in late spring.

Pelham said that he hoped to have an update from the SHPO office at Thursday night's meeting of mayor and aldermen.

Other items, including were the types of windows, outside light fixtures and other finishing touches, were debated by the committee.

While the plans currently remain within the budget, Pelham recommended that the committee prioritize accessory features of the new depot in the event that the construction came close to or exceeded the current budget.

"I think budget-wise we're still good," Pelham said. "I still want to have some priorities if we did have to drop some things."

Jeanie Lee, president of the Friends of the Depot committee, suggested that her business, Winell Lee Hardwoods, could assist with some of the interior work to relieve some of the cost.

"Our company could help out," Lee said. "We make (crown) mouldings."

If all of the paper work is completed and the final plans satisfy the committee, the next step will be bidding out the project to a construction company.

All budget calculations and adjustments would need to be discussed and agreed upon before bidding out. The adjustments would have to account for any problems that may be experienced during construction.

A notice of bidding will have to be in the Herald-Citizen for 14 days. Pelham stated that his firm also sends out bidding notices within the local region and posts them on the company's website.

"There are avenues where people from wherever can come and get (the) plans," Pelham said. "We do still (ask) them to make sure that they have proper license, bonding, and experience."

"That's why we reserve the right to reject any and all bids," Pelham said.

According to Pelham, these steps and particular qualifications are necessary to make sure that the city of Baxter will not be left with a partially finished project if for any reason that the program is abandoned in any way by the winning bidder.

Pelham also said he believes there could be anywhere from three to five companies that may bid for the project contract.

An update on SHPO's progress on the matter is expected to be announced at Thursday night's regular monthly meeting of the board of mayor and aldermen.

The meeting will take place at 7 p.m. at Baxter City Hall and is open to the public.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 4 February 2011.



THE NEW BAXTER DEPOT

Baxter Mayor Jeff Wilhite inspects the grounds around the new depot/welcome center, which is nearly complete. Photo by Ty Kernea.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 9 January 2013