

August 4, 2017

Update on Hamilton's Train Depot

Hamilton, NY –

In 2015, the Town Board made a pro-active decision to find a new location for the town office. After almost 100 years at the 16 Broad Street address it became apparent that the location could no longer provide adequate space for daily operations, the housing of staff, a big enough public meeting space, the appropriate housing for the numerous records that the town is required to retain and archive, nor did it provide handicap accessibility.

The search led to old Train Depot at 38 Milford Street. The building held potential to meet the needs of a new town office, while at the same time preserving an historic building and making it a public space. Many other towns and villages have done the same thing. The market for properties had very few opportunities elsewhere, so the board made the decision to purchase the building and attempt to renovate it.

Unfortunately, the rehabilitation costs became too great an expense and the postage size lot presented numerous restrictions. The piers, at first determined a solid base, did not meet the load needs of the new use. The Town considered lifting the building to create a new cement slab and foundation as part of the renovation. While it all seemed feasible in concept, the building estimates clearly presented too great a cost.

An alternative was presented to dismantle the building, remove the historic artifacts that made it a train depot, and include them in a new building at almost half the projected cost of renovating the existing building. A new building would save labor costs, one of the most expensive aspects of a public works project. The decision was obvious—to select the option that would save money and save some of the history of the building by removing and reusing the most significant pieces. The board felt it reached the best balanced decision they could make at the time.

John Taibi, local author and notable expert on the railroad, assessed the structure and salvaged significant historical features such as the transom windows and graffiti for reuse in the new building. Artifacts, vintage photos, and documents will be displayed in a small 'museum' in the building's meeting room or shared with the Hamilton Historical Commission. Numerous photographs have been taken during every stage and those will be in a photo book available for the public to view as well. What is believed to be the original 'Freight House' sign was found under the building, and will be evaluated for restoration and put on public display. The Railroad District's history will be available to the public, while providing a functional town office that meets today's energy and accessibility codes.

Although the Town Board publicized this process through print articles and on the website, they regret that some community members were taken off guard by the loss of the old building. The Town Board wishes to publicly acknowledge and thank John Taibi who was present during the entire deconstruction process and consulted with the Town Clerk Sue Reymers. The Town Board also wants to thank Jack Loop for his on-going assistance as Town Historian through this project. Ultimately, the board feels that it will be able to bring this rich history to life in a cost-saving new building that will serve our community well for another 100 years to come.

Please check the website for ongoing updates at www.townofhamiltonny.org. Contact Sue Reymers, Town Clerk at the Town Office at (315) 824-3380 if you have any questions. The public is always welcome and encouraged to attend town board meetings. The next meeting is August 10 at 6:30 p.m. in the Court House.