

Windsor Locks In Stalemate Over Purchase Of Train Station From Amtrak

By SHAWN R. BEALS / *September 3, 2009*

WINDSOR LOCKS — - The town and the Windsor Locks Preservation Association are at a stalemate about how to proceed with the proposed purchase of the historic Main Street train station from Amtrak.

Amtrak has been negotiating a sale with the preservation association, but the train company said that before it can continue, it wants a letter saying that the town will agree to the sale and that it won't use the site for a future train station.

"Once Amtrak receives acknowledgment in writing from the town that it accepts the sale of the historic train station to the preservation association which would preclude future train service at the station, the process can continue," Cliff Cole, a spokesman for Amtrak, said in an e-mail last month.

The preservation association wants the town to send the letter. But First Selectman Steven Wawruck said earlier this week that before he writes the letter, he needs to know two things:

- What, exactly, does Amtrak consider the size of the plot the train station sits on?
- What are the conclusions of a consultant hired by the town to determine whether moving an active train stop to a place just north of the old station is feasible?

"We can't go anywhere without the letter. Amtrak has made that clear," said Edward McAnaney, the preservation group's attorney, noting that negotiations with several Amtrak engineering divisions have been going on for several years.

Town officials said they support the purchase and renovation of the historic station, which would be part of a Main Street improvement plan.

But Economic Development Director Patrick McMahon said the town wants to make sure that giving Amtrak the letter doesn't interfere with efforts to move the active train stop to a place roughly adjacent to the historic station.

The consultant hired by the town is expected to complete the study of the train stop move within 90 days. McAnaney said that the preservation association might have already defined the site in question by submitting plans to Amtrak that include a 0.97-acre plot.

Selectmen Denise Balboni and Joe Calsetta urged caution about taking immediate action on the letter. "It would be difficult for us to say we would have no use for the site when we don't know what the site is defined as," Balboni said.

The preservation group wants to preserve the station, which, among its claims to town history, was its use by Gov. Ella Grasso when she took the train to Hartford for her inauguration in 1975.