

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION RAILROAD STATION WEATHERVANE
COMMUNITY DISCUSSION
DRAFT MEETING NOTES
JANUARY 15, 2025

A community discussion about the future of the recovered White River Junction Railroad Station Weathervane was held in Room 2 at the Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction, Vermont on Wednesday, January 15, 2025.

Attendance: Peggy Adams, Susanne Walker Abetti, Judy Barwood, David Briggs, Dennis Brown, Colin Butler, Lannie Collins, Judith Ehrlich, Birdie Emerson, Chris McKinley, George Miller, Linda Miller, Kipp Miller, Gayle Ottmann, Philip Rentz, Phil Sargent, Jonathan Schechtman, David Schutz, Pat Stark, and Matt Osborn.

Hartford Historic Preservation Commission (HHPC) chair Jonathan Schechtman called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. He proceeded to read the hybrid meeting script. Jonathan introduced State Curator David Schutz and VTrans Historic Preservation Officer Judith Ehrlich. Judith proceeded to provide background on the weathervane. The copper weathervane was located on top of the White River Junction Train Station where it resided for many years. In 1983, it was stolen. The crime was never solved. Two years ago, the weathervane was scheduled to go to auction at Southeby's. Prior to the auction, the item was checked through the Art Loss Register and determined to be stolen. It was then removed from the auction. After two years, the weathervane was returned to the rightful owner, the Vermont Agency of Transportation, since they are the current owner of the railroad station. Judith noted that last summer, the weathervane was lent to the Shelburne Museum for an exhibit on trains and it was a big hit with the public.

David Schutz noted that he is the curator of art and artifacts for the State of Vermont. He is delighted that the Hartford community is eager to have the weathervane back in town. After the weathervane was stolen, former train station owner Byron Hathorn had a replica made and installed. David stated that his goal is that the weathervane can be appreciated by the public safely.

Judith Ehrlich noted that the weathervane should be returned to White River Junction but they want to make sure that it will be located in a safe location and can be viewed up close by the public.

Jonathan Schechtman stated that we will go around the room and ask folks to give us their thoughts about a future home for the weathervane.

George Miller recommends that the weathervane be secured some place in the Town Hall lobby.

Linda Miller agreed and added that the weathervane should be under glass. David Briggs agreed.

Birdie Emerson agreed with others and added that people should be able to get close to the weathervane.

Kipp Miller said that the weathervane should be as close to the Railroad Station as possible. He thinks it should be visible up close and secure possibly adjacent to Engine 494.

Phil Sargent would like to see the weathervane in the Town Hall lobby with a plaque about its story.

Gayle Ottmann said the weathervane should be visible for people to appreciate it under museum-quality glass and have reading material about the weathervane. She suggested having a dedication ceremony.

Susanne Abetti would like to see the weathervane in the Town Hall.

Pat Stark said she would like to see the weathervane at the Town Hall with information informing the public of its location posted by Engine 494.

Philip Rentz said ideally the weathervane would be in a protected place at the Town Hall. He noted that there was a plaque on Engine 494 at the World's Fair.

Judith Ehrlich stated that it is important that the weathervane be protected by museum-quality glass.

Gayle Ottmann noted the attractive historic district brochures that the Town produced several years ago. She would like to see the Historic Preservation Commission create a brochure on railroad history.

Matt Osborn reported that several people who could not make tonight's meeting contacted him to provide their comments. He proceeded to read those comments.

Ken Parker would like to see the weathervane in the Town Hall lobby.

Diane and Sam Romano would like to see the weathervane returned to its original location on top of the Train Station.

John Heath would like to see the weathervane in the Town Hall lobby.

Shannon Zabko and Justin Righter think the weathervane would look majestic on top of a historic building in Hartford Village or maybe somewhere on the new bridge or maybe a memorial for the historic train crash victims in West Hartford. They want to be sure the weathervane is located in White River Junction or Hartford.

Mary Alice Leonard Heath would like to see the weathervane in a accessible location where people are able to view it like the Town Hall.

Jonathan Schechtman noted that the strong consensus is to locate the weathervane in the Town Hall lobby. He suggested taking a break and visit the lobby to look at possible locations. Attendees agreed and left the room to visit the lobby for five minutes.

Upon returning, David Schutz noted that he was surprised by the clear consensus. He noted that it would make a strong statement if the weathervane was located in the middle of the Town Hall lobby.

Matt Osborn noted that the weathervane is 5'5" long and 1'2" high. Judith Ehrlich stated that the weathervane width is about 1'.

Jonathan Schechtman said that if the weathervane was enclosed with plexiglass, it should add another 6" on all sides.

David Schutz noted that an enclosure is the only way to protect the weathervane. He added that the display has to be the right height so that children can easily view it as well as senior citizens. It should be compliant with the American Disabilities Act. He added that we also have to be mindful of maintenance. David likes the idea of having a QR code to access more information.

Jonathan Schechtman asked about funding for a weathervane display. Judith Ehrlich stated that she reached out to the Federal Highway Administration about funding the display. She suggested reaching out to the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. Since Hartford is a Certified Local Government, she suggested inquiring about a possible CLG grant. David Schutz thinks that the State be able to assist in funding the display and that we should reach out to our legislators.

Jonathan Schechtman said that we will need to seek the input of the Selectboard.

David Schutz and Judith Ehrlich stated that they will make a trip to the Town Hall to look at possible locations for the weathervane. David noted that he will bring along the State exhibit designer to provide their expertise. The designer is capable of providing renderings and develop cost estimates.

Jonathan Schechtman thanked everyone for attending the discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.