

Leaders hope Coatesville train station project a boost for the city

By Bill Rettew Jr.

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New State Representative Harry Lewis, R- 17th and State Senator Andy Dinniman, D-19thn speak to community members about plans for the Coatesville Train Station at Olivet United Methodist Church Thursday evening Jan. 29, 2015.

COATESVILLE—State Sen. Andy Dinniman told a large group of community movers, shakers and stakeholders during Thursday's meeting at Olivet Church that politics should not be allowed to derail plans for a new city train station, and a career and learning center.

Plans to build a train station, and career training and education center, between North Third and Fourth avenues, have sat on the drawing board for four years. Arsonists torched part of Fleetwood Street, while destroying a block of homes, in 2008.

"There is no partisan politics," Dinniman said. "We're here together to make sure this project works. We're going to have to stick together. You all have to run in the same direction."

Dinniman's district includes all five Chester County train stations: Parkesburg; Coatesville; Downingtown; Paoli; and East Whiteland (Exton).

State Rep. Harry Lewis supports the project.

"It's been a long, long way to get to this point," Lewis said. "There are a lot of naysayers who say we can't do this. We have an opportunity to get some actual work done. Let's restore the pride we have in this city."

PennDot earmarked \$20 million to build the first floor for a new station. Dinniman still seeks grants to help pay for construction of additional floors above the proposed station, along with an additional second building.

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Entrepreneurs will likely need to pitch in. Dinniman said private funding might be required for much of the non-station related construction.

"We're out of the desert," Dinniman said. "We're not to the promised land yet but we're almost there."

No start date for construction has yet been set. The project will create new construction jobs. Starting Thursday, applications are being taken for local workers and apprentices who will train on the job.

"The problem--we've seen it again and again—we watch others come and build this community and we don't get any jobs," Dinniman said.

"When the jobs arrive we will have young men ready to work," Lewis said.

Jennie Granger, PennDOT director and project manager, said the train station might include more than 400 parking spaces in a safe, well-lit environment.

The first-floor train station might also house a seating area, messaging boards, a place to buy tickets, rest rooms, an entrepreneurial center and possibly a coffee stand.

Some to the best information concerning the project was scribbled on a napkin, Granger said.

"The magic often happens over bacon and coffee," she said, with a smile.

Dinniman said the project will spark revitalization.

"We know that when the train arrives, and you can depend on it, its use increases," he said. "We need to create reasons for people to get off here. We need to create a destination."

The senator suggested that the station might take advantage of the already existing and strong Chester County international horse trade. He noted that the station might piggyback off, or even spark, the horse market, including for saddles, feed and even boot repair.

"The ideas are endless," he said. "We have to use our creativity."

Kyle Hudson, marketing and media strategist at 23 North Digital talked about the advantages of the proposed center for entrepreneurs. He favors putting people together, under one roof.

"By creating a center where all these people sit next to each other you can get almost anything done," he said. "Sometimes you make random connections."

Dinniman agreed.



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Community members gathered at Olivet United Methodist Church Thursday evening Jan. 29, 2015 to talk about plans for the Coatesville Train Station. 2015.

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"We will have a place for young people with hopes and ideas to take their ideas into the market place," he said.

The project should generate tax revenue.

"Above the first floor, we're going to add and not subtract from the Coatesville tax base," Dinniman said.

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