

7. **DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION REGARDING THE TRAIN STATION HISTORY MUSEUM**

**Report: Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Council receive an update from the Ad Hoc Council Subcommittee responsible for interior design and displays of the Train Station History Museum and provide feedback and direction, as appropriate.

*Description:*



## Item No. 7 Town of Atherton

### **CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – REGULAR AGENDA**

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM: GEORGE RODERICKS, CITY MANAGER**

**DATE: NOVEMBER 20, 2024**

**SUBJECT: DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION REGARDING THE TRAIN STATION HISTORY MUSEUM**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council receive an update from the Ad Hoc Council Subcommittee responsible for interior design and displays of the Train Station History Museum and provide feedback and direction, as appropriate.

### **BACKGROUND**

In April 2024, the City Council reviewed and provided input into a proposal from the Ad Hoc Subcommittee for design of the interior of the Train Station History Museum, to include a layout and plan for display cases (Attachment 1). Since that time, the Subcommittee has met to develop a plan for the station and train models as well as the surrounding diorama displays that can be provided to display vendors to assist the Town in the creation of the displays. Staff and the Subcommittee narrowed the vendor list down to a model builder (Dave Haehn) and train and display diorama team (Vargas Brothers). Once the Subcommittee reaches a consensus on the final layout for the display cases, staff will work with the vendors to complete the work. At this time, all work is anticipated to be within the Town's budget for the project.

### **ANALYSIS**

As the Subcommittee works to finalize the plan, the Subcommittee has been unable to reach consensus on a few areas. Specifically, the Subcommittee did not find consensus on the number and type of stations to depict in the display cases. A spreadsheet was created to reflect the discussion (Attachment 2) and to provide to the vendors for direction; but, the Subcommittee still did not find consensus and a second spreadsheet was created for further discussion (Attachment 3).

The Subcommittee met on November 19 to attempt to reach consensus. This item is being held as a placeholder for the November 20 Council Meeting. If the Subcommittee reaches consensus on November 19, the item can be pulled from the Agenda as no Council input is required. However,

if the Subcommittee cannot reach consensus, input from the full Council will assist in providing direction to the Subcommittee on the specific issues needing consensus.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

None at this time.

### **GOAL ALIGNMENT**

This Report and its contents are in alignment with the following Council Policy Goals:.

- Goal Area A – Maintain Fiscal Responsibility
- Goal Area C – Create and Expand the Town Center/Library

### **POLICY FOCUS**

The Policy discussion for this item should revolve around the extent to which the Council wishes to design the display cases in the Train Museum.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town's electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,200 subscribers to the Town's electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents as well as stakeholders –to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire Protection District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

### **COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL**

This item has not been before a Town Committee or Commission

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. A- Train Station History Proposal
2. B – Model Summaries – Version A
3. C – Model Summaries – Version B

## **Train Station Display Proposal**

The Atherton Train Station Museum would incorporate the Train Station Building into the Town Center and create a new public space where visitors can stroll, sit and view displays that tell the story of Atherton's history with the railroad and train station. The exhibits in the station will:

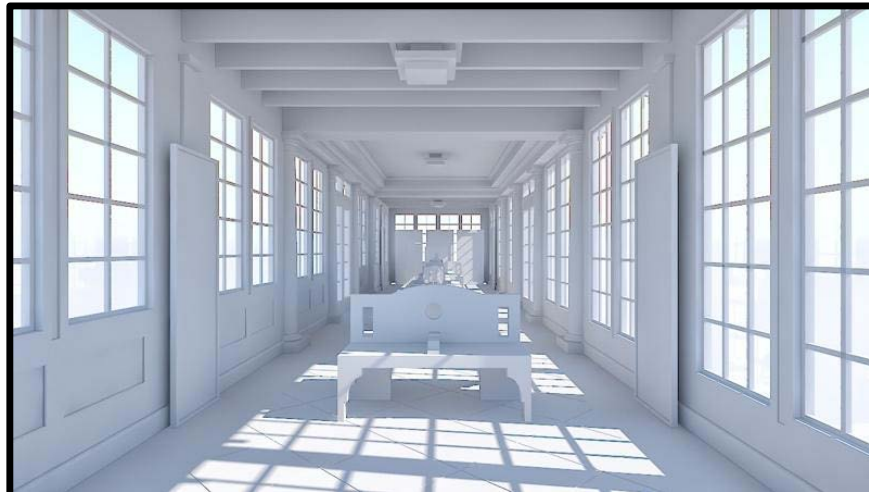
- Provide short, easily understood descriptions of the history of the train, the station building and the train's impact on Atherton.
- Provide an interesting, creative display down the center of the station featuring 150 years of evolution of the station and trains.
- Offer a convenient, comfortable location for visitors to view the Atherton Train Video "Tracks of Change" that was produced for Atherton's Centennial Celebration.
- Provide an outdoor display utilizing the existing schedule display case and outdoor sitting.

### **Display Areas**

The Ad Hoc Train Station Subcommittee recommends, that the Council consider supporting a display that consists of 3 areas inside the station:

- 1) Free standing displays that tell the story of pre-train Atherton (Native Americans, settlers, the stagecoach days and the building of the SF and SJ Railroad in 1863);
- 2) Center display that features a train track with model trains that show the history and evolution of the trains, the station, and the riders over time; and
- 3) Video screen with seating that will show the "Tracks of Change" video.

There are additional wall spaces within the Station that can accommodate other mounted displays or memorabilia cases in the future.



## **Free Standing Displays**

At the northern end of the building, is space for three freestanding 2D-displays.

One of the displays would focus on the Ohlone and the colonization up to the grant of Rancho de las Pulgas in 1795.

A second display would focus on the early peninsula wagon and stagecoach era and the impact of the gold rush.

A third display would focus on the launching of the railroad in 1863 and how it transformed the southern peninsula by bringing in many people, launching the cities and large estates and enabling the transportation of goods to San Francisco.

## **Center Model Train & Track Display**

The center of the Museum would contain an encased model train track in the larger G model scale.

The cases would be divided into five (5) time periods starting from the beginning of the train to the close of the station in 2020.

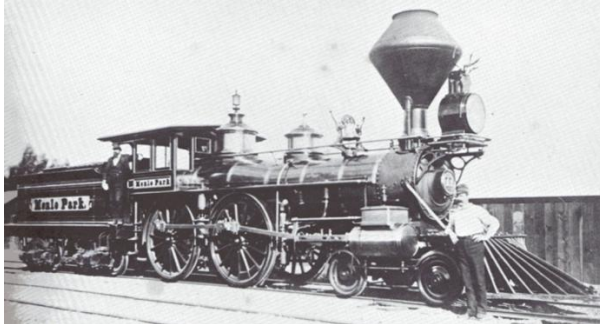
At each station period there is proposed to be a model train engine of that time-period and a model of the train station as it appeared at that time, along with photos and other information and time-appropriate activities for each of those periods. There could be audio triggered by QR code for that station that could be accessed via the visitors iPhone that would play period music and tell the story of that time.



## Contemplated Time Periods

### 1) The Flag Stop 1863-1912

The first stop in the display case would depict the first fifty years including a wood-burner engine, Fair Oaks Flag Stop shelter, horse and buggy with person in period clothes. The audio would play period music and sounds and tell a brief overview of the time-period. The model wood burning engine could incorporate smoke and sounds.



### 2) The First Atherton Station:1912-1930

This stop in the display case would feature a Steam Engine, the first Atherton Train Station with 8 posts and terra cotta roof. The audio will describe that period and include the train's use in the 1906 earthquake.



Atherton 1913 – Atherton Heritage Association



### 3) The Glamorous Period: 1930-1950

This stop in the display case would feature a Daylight Train, the Atherton station with 8 posts, fully enclosed by glass walls and glass doors, with a newspaper stand outside. The audio would describe the period and include the role of the train in World War II.



Atherton 1939 – Arnold Menke collection

### 4) The commuter era 1950- 1980

This stop in the display case would feature a Diesel Engine. The Atherton station expanded with 15-foot extensions on either side, taking its final shape, with a full parking lot. The model could bring to life the image of Dinkelspiel with a band and kids or depict the daily commuters. This is the busiest time for the Atherton train station in its history. The audio would feature music and a period description.



*Between Station No. 4 and No. 5 will be transition audio that would tell the story of the birth of Silicon Valley in pictures and audio. It will cover the 1980-2000 period of limited station use as business changed focus from San Francisco to Silicon Valley.*

## **5) Station Closing 2020**

At this final stop in the display case, there could be a Cal train Electric Engine displayed. The model would show the Atherton station as it appeared when it was closed in December 2020. The people would have face masks marking the covid era and there would be a tesla in the parking lot. The audio would describe the period and final closing of the train station.



A southbound train at Atherton station in December 2020 on the final weekend of service to the station

## **Video Display Area**

A third section of the museum on the southern end of the building would be set up for visitors to sit or stand and watch the train video "Tracks of Change ". This video will have a viewer-controlled start button or motion sensor. The historic, large 1910 benches are integrated into either end of the central display case such that viewers can use the bench and face the video screen. The other bench at the opposite end is also embedded into the display case to allow for reading of the 2D displays.

## **Exterior of the Station**

Outside of the station museum is the historic clock which has been relocated to the front of the museum.

The existing Atherton Caltrain station sign could be retrofitted to say Atherton Train Station Museum.



The existing outdoor schedule display case has been renovated in the remodel. It can display historical image reproductions and information. It could be a permanent display or a changing display that is updated periodically to bring new things to the museum.



### **Content for Displays**

Atherton residents and the public would be invited to share and donate period-appropriate model trains, and historical photos and memorabilia.

The town has been offered the donation of a Daylight model train by the Leuger family which could be featured in the center case as part of the glamor era display.

The Town could seek other model train donations or buy the remaining 4 model trains. The train station building models will need to be constructed either from scratch or from modified existing model kits. While the models are being built (or if there are insufficient funds to build the models) photos of the station as shown in this proposal could be utilized.



The Sacramento train museum has offered to long term loan any items they may have in storage and offered to allow the Town to reproduce any flat art they may have.

To create the historical content for the Train Video, the Town collaborated with the Atherton Heritage Association as well as the San Mateo Historical archive, the Menlo Park Historical Society, the Sacramento Rail Museum archives and various historians and video sources. The Atherton Heritage Association has historical photos of the train station and some limited memorabilia. These images can be selected and digitized to create other displays inside and outside of the station.

There is a plaque dedicated to Rosemary Maulbetsch that will be displayed on the exterior of the museum along with a historical building plaque.

At the 100-year Centennial Celebration, the Train Display Area gathered an email list of interested residents. If the Town wishes to pursue interested parties, those that signed up can be sent relevant communications. In addition, the Subcommittee has contacts with the local model train associations.

### **Building of the Displays**

The 2D free standing displays and outdoor case can be commissioned to an outside agency to create. While the main display case is being created as part of the Train Station Renovation, the model trains and stations would need to be constructed. These can be commissioned to professional model builders or a committee of resident volunteers (similar to the model train exhibit in Menlo Park). The Subcommittee recommends that the Town commission the models to be built if the price is reasonable, otherwise at least initially use photos.

### **Maintenance of Museum**

The museum would be an unattended, self-guided experience. The doors would be opened and closed automatically at pre-determined hours. The area is loosely monitored by cameras to the Police Department. The space would be cleaned by the Town's cleaning contractor. The Town's existing insurance covers the structure.

There are many successful local examples of unattended mini museums. The public location adjacent to the police station should deter vandalism. The items of any value such as the model trains and stations are under a glass case. If more expensive items are donated, the Town will need to consider security as well as climate control features, such as UV window treatment and monitored heating and humidity levels. As this time, it is anticipated that there will only be reproductions and no highly valuable memorabilia.



### **Next Steps and Decisions**

1. The entirety of the allocated budget for the Train Museum was exhausted for renovations, so if the Council wishes to pursue outfitting the interior of the Museum, the council must address funding. The Town can allocate public funds, staff time and other resources; or, the Council could consider private sponsorships, funding, or turning over the museum to a non-profit.
2. Much of the model work would need to be commissioned or built by volunteers. How does the Council wish to proceed?
3. The Council could also seek residents to form a non-profit to manage the museum as well as its memorabilia. This could be done up front or later, after the Town commissions its completion. It is unknown if there is a resident group or interest.
4. The Town could seek out other potential grants from other sources – such as the National Model Train Association. This would require staff time and resources, unless led by an outside group.
5. What considerations should there be for operation? The assumption is that the museum would be unattended, self-guided. What budget should be attached to general maintenance?

### **Subcommittee Recommendation:**

The Subcommittee recommends that the Council allocate \$50,000 to create the content for the display cases and the center section, including the purchase of any necessary model trains. The Subcommittee believes that the Museum could be ready to receive visitors within 6 months of the contracting with design and development contractors.

	Northern Display Case						Southern Display Case			
	Station One		Station Two		Station Three		Station Four		Station Five/Six	
	Shelter Shed/Flag Stop	Vendor	Open Station	Vendor	Station w/Walls	Vendor	Station w/Walls & Doors	Vendor	Station w/Extensions	Vendor
Years	Fair Oaks Flag Stop/Shelter Shed 1863-1912		First Atherton Station 1912-1920		First Glass Walled Station 1920-1939		Glamour Period/WWII 1939-1951		Commuter Era/Station Closure/Electrification 1951-1980 and 2020	
General Description	Fair Oaks Flag Stop/Station Shed with benches and lattice back wall	Dave Haehn	Basic Station Dimensions with eight (8) columns	Dave Haehn	Basic Station w/Columns and Glass Walls	Dave Haehn	Basic Station w/Columns, Glass Walls & Glass Doors	Dave Haehn	Basic Station w/Glass Walls (3 sides but reduced wall on train side) and wall extensions	Dave Haehn
Dimension Source Data	Janet McGovern Book, 14 x 20 foot open shelter w/lattice partition		Extrapolation from Architectural Drawings, 2024		Extrapolation from Architectural Drawings, 2024		Extrapolation from Architectural Drawings, 2024		Architectural Drawings, 2024	
Color Palette	Natural Wood Tones		Beige Columns with red trim colors		variation of yellow w/dark trim per photo		Green with Dark Trim		Current Color Scheme	
Train (Y/N)	Y		N		Y		Y		Y	
Train Description/Type	Wood Engine, Menlo Park		462 Pacific Oil 1920s	(one longer train bridging Station 2/3)	462 Pacific Oil 1920s	(one longer train bridging Station 2/3)	484 or 444 Northern Engine Oil/Steam (Daylight)		FPYO Diesel w/Caltrain	
Station Interior Items	Fair Oaks Sign, lattice along back wall with bench	Dave Haehn	Atherton sign, 2 sets of back to back benches w/whole in back of bench	Dave Haehn	Atherton sign, 2 sets of back to back benches w/whole in back of bench	Dave Haehn	Atherton sign, 2 sets of back to back benches w/whole in back of bench	Dave Haehn	Atherton signs, bulletin boards w/Ticket Info, Ads, and Timetable, Newspaper Vendors, 2 sets of back to back benches w/whole in back of bench	Dave Haehn
Possible Station Items	None	Haehn/Vargas	None	Haehn/Vargas	None	Haehn/Vargas	planters on ends	Haehn/Vargas	planters on ends	Haehn/Vargas
Possible Area Items	wagon with produce being unloaded	Vargas	horse and wagon	Vargas	dirt road	Vargas	newspaper racks	Vargas	trash can	Vargas
	man flagging down the train		Model T vehicle		split rail fence (different than St. One)		Era-specific autos		mailbox	
	women dressed up with suitcase		People standing around (as shown in photo)		Era-specific autos		street lights		bicycle racks	
	dirt road				possible street light(s)		road		trees	
	split rail fence								Caltrain Sign	
									exterior bulletin board	
									window displays	
Other Notes/Story	Tell the visual story of people using the Flag Stop to catch the train into the city or to transport produce and other supplies.		Tell the visual story of people using the train to travel into the city, building supplies, post-earthquake		Tell the visual story of modernization of the area, people traveling into the city, recent news in the newspaper headlines		Tell the visual story of development, modernization of the region, newspaper headlines, WWII, glamorous travel		Tell the visual story of commuters coming and going from the city, newspaper headlines of the time. Station 5 needs to tell the visual story of commuters coming and going from the city, newspapers and headlines of the time. However, the Town would also like to show/tell the story of the station closure and the pandemic. Should this be depicted as an additional station or via a 2-D panel or is there a creative way in the visual display to reflect the transition to closure of the station?	

	Northern Display Case				Southern Display Case					
	Station One		Station Two		Station three		Station Four		Station five	
	Shelter Shed/Flag Stop	Vendor	Open Station	Vendor	Station w/Walls & Doors	Vendor	Station w/Extensions	Vendor	Station w/Extensions	Vendor
Years	Fair Oaks Flag Stop/Shelter Shed 1863-1912		First Atherton Station thru glass walled 1912-1939		Glamour Period/WWII 1939-1951		Commuter Era 1951-1980		Station Close/covid 1980-2020	
General Description	Fair Oaks Flag Stop/Station Shed with benches and lattice back wall	Dave Haehn	Basic Station Dimensions with eight (8) columns	Dave Haehn	Basic Station w/Columns, Glass Walls & Glass Doors	Dave Haehn	Basic Station w/Glass Walls (3 sides but reduced wall on train side) and wall extensions	Dave Haehn	full station with wings as it looked in 2020 at closing	Dave Haehn
Image Source Data	2-3 photos of flagstop and Janet McGovern Book, 14 x 20 foot open shelter w/lattice partition		Extrapolation from photo of men in open station		Extrapolation from photos		Dinskeal photo with band, other 50s photos & color video		photo train closing	
Color Palette	Natural Wood Tones		Beige Columns with red trim colors		Green with Dark Trim		Current Color Scheme		Current Color Scheme	
Train (Y/N)	Y		N		Y		Y		Y	
Train Description/Type	Wood Engine, The Menlo Park Locomotive #11 of the SF&SJ.		462 Pacific Oil 1920s		484 or 444 Northern Engine Oil/Steam (Daylight)		FPYO Diesel w/Caltrain		first electric train or 2020 train	
Station Interior Items	Fair Oaks Sign, lattice along back wall with bench	Dave Haehn	Atherton sign, 2 sets of back to back benches w/whole in back of bench	Dave Haehn	Atherton sign, 2 sets of back to back benches w/whole in back of bench	Dave Haehn	Atherton signs, bulletin boards w/Ticket Info, Ads, and Timetable, Newspaper Vend Stands, 2 sets of back to back benches w/whole in back of bench	Dave Haehn	Atherton signs, bulletin boards w/Ticket Info, Ads, and Timetable, Newspaper Vend Stands?, 2 sets of back to back benches w/whole in back of bench	Dave Haehn
Possible Station Items	None	Haehn/Vargas	None	Haehn/Vargas	planters on ends 2 slat benches on track side	Haehn/Vargas	planters on ends exterior benches	Haehn/Vargas	a tesla in paring lot person with a covid mask	Haehn/Vargas
Possible Area Items	wagon with produce being unloaded man flagging down the train women dressed up with suitcase dirt road split rail fence	Vargas	horse and wagon Model T vehicle People standing around (as shown in photo) split rail fence (different than St. One) dirt road	Vargas	newspaper racks Era-specific autos street lights road	Vargas	trash can mailbox bicycle racks trees exterior bulletin board window displays	Vargas	2 trash cans and street light mailbox? bicycle racks? trees Caltrain Sign exterior bulletin board train closure sign	Vargas
Key Story points	1850s the Gold Rush brought gold-seekers and wealth to the area). The first stop in the display case would depict the first fifty years including a wood-burner engine, Fair Oaks Flag Stop shelter, passagner horse and buggy and a produce wagon and a person in period clothes flagging down a train. The audio would play period music and sounds, and tell a brief overview of the time period. The model wood burning engine could incorporate smoke and sounds.		Tell the visual story of people using the train to travel into the city, transporting building supplies, post-earthquake. This stop in the display case would feature a Steam Engine, the first Atherton Train Station with 8 posts and terra cotta roof. The audio will describe that period and include the train's use in the 1906 earthquake.  During this period the station went though a stages where walls are added and varous changes in color. We could have some still images on a time line dispalced on the case to show this visual transision and the audio will also explain these changes.		This stop in the display case would feature a Daylight Train, the Atherton station with 8 posts, fully enclosed by glass walls and glass doors, with a newspaper stand outside. The audio would describe the period and include the role of the train in World War II.  Tell the visual story of development, modernization of the region, newspaper headlines, WWII, glamorous travel		This stop in the display case would feature a Diesel Engine. The Atherton station expanded with 15-foot extensions on either side, taking its final shape, with a full parking lot. The model could bring to life the image of Dinkelspiel with a band and kids or depict the daily commuters. This is the busiest time for the Atherton train station in its history. The audio would feature music and a period description. This stop on the tracks (or half way between) would feature a QR code to a section on the birth of Silicon Valley told in audio and still images. It will cover the 1980-2000 period of limited station use as business changes it's focus from San Francisco to Silicon Valley		Tell the story of the station closure and the pandemic. At this final stop in the display case, there could be the first test a Cal train Electric Engine displayed or the trains in ervie in 2020. The model would show the Atherton station as it appeared when it was closed in December 2020. Use cloisng piture and video. The people would have face masks marking the covid era and there would be a tesla in the parking lot. The place is pretty empty a deserted The audio would describe the period and final closing of the train station.	

images station  
image train

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San>