



Groundbreaking of Maine Street Station

Excerpts from an article by Greg Ammons, Coastal Journal contributor (full article published October 21, 2008)

BRUNSWICK - If commercial progress can act as psychotherapy, the groundbreaking of Brunswick's Maine Street Station last week provided just the tonic for area and state politicians, along with assorted community and business leaders, who otherwise might still be stressing over the impending closure of the Naval Air Station.

"There is a sense of urgency," Margo Knight of the Brunswick Town Council, who was in attendance at the groundbreaking, told the Coastal Journal in an interview this past Sunday. "We want to make sure that we have a strong downtown, and this is one way of going forward to help that that happens.

The weather cleared just long enough for Governor John Baldacci to come to Brunswick and give his blessing. "I think this is one that makes sense and a lot of other people think makes sense," Baldacci nodded.

At the beginning of the proceedings, the Governor was joined by Don Gerrish, retiring Brunswick Town Manager, and J. Hilary Rockett, Jr., a Bowdoin graduate and now principal for JHR Development of Maine, LLC., the company in charge of constructing the Maine Street Station.

Indeed, Bowdoin College is more than just a participating local business as it pertains to the project; it is the major player, without whom Maine Street Station likely would remain on the drawing table. "Not only have they been involved on the implementation committee, but I met with President [of Bowdoin College Barry] Mills and asked them to become a tenant at Maine Street Station," Rockett said in his opening remarks at the groundbreaking. "Bowdoin didn't need to do that, they've been in existence for a long time without it, but Barry said he knew how important this project was for the town."

Phase I, Rockett told the crowd gathered, begins this week. "We're going to [start with] Building[s] 1, 3 and 4. 1 is the first building in front of MidCoast [Federal Credit Union] right on Maine Street, 1-story, 3,000 square-foot building." From where he spoke at the lectern, Buildings 3 & 4 would be situated on either side of him. "Two 20,000 square-foot, 2-story buildings," Rockett envisions, "retail on the first floors, offices on the second floors, and the train station. He continued: "Right behind you will be the condominium building, 16 condos at this point. And up at the corner will be the



left to right: Governor John Baldacci, J. Hilary Rockett, Jr. of JHR Development, and Don Gerrish, Brunswick Town Manager

Inn." It is imagined that few in the crowd of an estimated 50 or 60 in attendance didn't smile at the prospect.

Understandably, the town council and manager wax respectively on the benefit of the project and how it will benefit Brunswick. Meanwhile, Bowdoin officials envision the assistance the project will provide the college, its students, teachers and administration. Collectively, the upside is seen to benefit all involved: "It's an embarrassment," Rob Jarrett told the gathering, addressing the current isolation of Bowdoin students from the townspeople and vice versa. And who would know better than he, a graduate of Bowdoin in 1964, and who is now Chair of the Brunswick Downtown Association. He envisions the project to be "a bridge from Bowdoin College to the rest of the downtown, and its been a long time coming."

With respect to alumni and other visitors to Brunswick, Knight said, "it's a good thing bringing them down into the town, where the businesses are and they can see the variety of what's going on in town. So they feel good about either visiting there or having their students attend Bowdoin."

Also in attendance at the groundbreaking proceedings were representatives for Senators Susan Collins, Olympia Snowe and Congressman Tom Allen respectively. Occupancy is expected to occur by next summer, 2009.