

All signs point toward demolition of old train station

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The former Pawtucket/Central Falls Commuter Rail Station is likely headed for demolition.

PAWTUCKET/CENTRAL FALLS – In the end, a viable future for the old Pawtucket/Central Falls Commuter Rail Station on the line between the two cities might not be viable after all, *The Breeze* has learned, as parties deliberating its future are leaning toward removing it.

Central Falls City Solicitor Matt Jerzyk said attorney John Dorsey, previously appointed special master for the property, has been weighing various proposals for the derelict station perched over active tracks.

“All signs point toward demolition,” he said.

The station, located behind CVS off Broad Street, has been part of various proposals for redevelopment over the years, saved at one point by “Save Our Station” protestors who wanted to preserve the landmark rather than see it lost.

Jerzyk said the city has really valued the relationship with Dorsey, who is also guiding the process on some other properties.

The first stage of demolition is tabbed at some \$800,000 according to Dorsey's quotes, and the question at this point is where the money is going to come from, according to the solicitor. Demolition of the station that operated from 1916 to 1959 can't happen while trains are running, he said, so it needs to be done between the hours of 2 a.m. and 6 a.m.

One question to be determined is whether the entire station should be demolished, said Jerzyk, or whether a portion should be left as a sort of pedestrian bridge.

The Breeze reported in early January that there could be a potential bid for the property as Dorsey sought to push for its redevelopment.

The station has long been a source of safety concerns, with many inspections done to remove loose bricks and make sure no materials are in jeopardy of falling on the tracks below. The station was once considered for renovation as a modern station, but the curve in the tracks here made a straight platform impossible.

The property's history includes its purchase for \$1 by a local church in 2012, an event that led one Pawtucket official to saying that the church was "bamboozled" into purchasing it without realizing the liability they were taking on. In 2016, the church was cited for having high grass and stacked materials, creating places for rodents to shelter on the Montgomery Street side of the station.

Members of the church that year requested to use that side of the property for parking at their nearby church on Broad Street, and officials allowed it as long as it was cleaned up.

The station at 9 Railroad St. was purchased at tax sale by Broad Investments LLC in the fall of 2014. According to property records, it went back to the church after a year, but Broad Investments LLC was later listed as the owner again. Records showed it was purchased from the church for \$28,000 in 2014, and was taken over by Broad

Investments for zero dollars in June of 2018, and that a combined entity called Broad Investments LLC & Reservoir purchased it for \$79,000 in July of that year. Reservoir Adventures LLC previously foreclosed on the right to redeem through a court process.

Former owner Oscar "Ike" Seelbinder sold the depot for \$1 to the church in December of 2012. He was blocked in his efforts to develop the property by preservationists, many of whom would show up to meetings with "Save Our Station" (S.O.S.) shirts on.

Seelbinder originally purchased the station from the Vitali family, which previously ran a flea market in the building.