

12/23/13 \$700, 000 Commonwealth grant for Beaver Station announced by Sen Elder Vogel

Two Beaver County projects were awarded Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program grants totaling \$3.7 million today, according to Senator Elder Vogel.

Aliquippa Tin Mill, L.P. received \$3 million toward the redevelopment of the former J&L Steel Corporation's tin mill in Aliquippa. The Beaver Area Heritage Foundation (BAHF) received \$700,000 toward the comprehensive rehabilitation and restoration of the former Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad (P&LE) passenger station in Beaver Borough.

The local grants were two of several announced by Governor Corbett. Senator Vogel strongly supported both applications for the state funding.

The Beaver Station project will restore the circa 1897 Romanesque station to its original, beautiful external appearance and complete an attractively landscaped 3-acre campus now containing two other BAHF-owned historic properties and tourist attractions.

"Beaver Station is an iconic, key contributing property in Beaver Borough's nationally designated Historic District," Senator Vogel said. "This financial support from RACP will help return Beaver Station to a position where it can be a vital part of the community as a historic site, a tourist attraction, and a multipurpose meeting and event space that can be used for arts classes and displays, musical performances, corporate and cultural events or any manner of appropriate public and private gatherings."

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Historic Beaver Station on board to receive \$700,000 state grant

BEAVER — The borough's former passenger train station has been promised a \$700,000 state grant. The money would nearly double previous fundraising dollars to renovate the historic East End Avenue building. The Beaver Area Heritage Foundation has been renovating the 117-year-old station, which used to house Beaver County 911 center operations. The state money will help with a community area that could be used for musical events and weddings, as well as a catering kitchen, which are part of a comprehensive rehabilitation and renovation project.

"We think there's a lot of demand for unique venues like a ... train station," Beaver Station Steering Committee Chairman David O'Leary said.

The state grant money, announced Monday, comes from the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program. The foundation has previously secured 125 commitments worth more than \$835,000 through individual and corporate donors, foundation officials said. “We do believe that show of local support helped our application in Harrisburg,” O’Leary said.

The foundation has an initial goal to raise \$1.75 million, which would put the station into full operation. The group ultimately wants to raise \$2.3 million to include an endowment and nonessential exterior amenities, such as additional landscaping. The state grant means the foundation needs to raise a remaining \$215,000 to meet the \$1.75 million goal.

The grant requires a 100 percent local match, but the foundation needs to review what expenses will count toward that total. Bricks-and-mortar spending counts but architectural services and furniture costs may not be eligible, O’Leary said. Another application also is required to secure the state grant, O’Leary said.

The Beaver County Genealogy & History Center has already moved into a so-called “bunker” area in a lower portion of the station, and it is open five days a week.

Workers are currently refinishing walls and floors in a basement area, and the foundation hopes to complete that work by Sept. 1, O’Leary said. Money has already been raised for that work, he said. Additional state money also has helped with renovating a slate roof, which is almost complete.

The historic site already includes a freight station that was renovated, which features a museum and an archive and research center. O’Leary said the archive and research center will relocate to the passenger station’s lower level as renovations are completed.

Among other changes, the Sweetwater Center for the Arts will have two classrooms in the lower level, according to the foundation’s website www.beaverstation.org The upper level of the passenger station, where the community space will be, should be completed in 2015, O’Leary said.