

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY AGENDA REPORT

DATE: April 28, 2003
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Doug Morgan
MEETING: May 3, 2003
ITEM: Magnolia Tower Status
SUBJECT: Current Events

Some months back, Amtrak started the process aimed toward the construction of a new maintenance facility near Magnolia St in west Oakland, CA. About two months ago, Amtrak informed me that they were near to selecting a general contractor to perform the construction work. Around the first of April the selected general contractor, Kiewit Construction, notified me they were ready to start work on the dismantling of the Magnolia tower.

During telephone conversations with the Kiewit project superintendent, assurances were made that the building would be dismantled in accordance with an agreed to plan, at no cost to the Feather River Rail Society.

I traveled to Oakland on April 14 and met with the project superintendent concerning the method of dismantling including the remediation of the hazardous materials contained on and in the structure. It was agreed that the process of dismantling would start with the remediation of the hazardous materials followed by a careful structural biopsy. From this examination, we would know where to cut and how deep. My preliminary examination of the tower suggested perhaps as little as 10 pieces might be developed from the process. All pieces were to be loaded into a Society furnished gondola.

Work commenced on the 15th with a sub-contractor licensed to remove hazardous materials. They removed part of the singles from the roof but didn't get very far before the end of the workday. I found several large heavy-duty plastic bags and started the task of cleaning the filth out of the upper story of the tower. The job was

necessary in order to examine the mostly intact switch control machine still located in the upper story. I found most of the wood panels for the machine and these were carefully stacked upon the machine until they could be removed. The machine is approximately 12 feet in length, 4 feet in width and about 36 inches in height. I estimate it weighs approximately 2,000 to 2,500 pounds.

Late in the afternoon Vic Neves appeared on site and helped with the removal of the wood components of the switch machine, as well as related items including some of the historical paper work found in the building. These items were transported to Vic's house for safekeeping.

The removal of the switch machine is going to be tricky but the examination revealed, in my view, that the machine can be removed from the building in one piece with a small crane once one of the four walls is removed. My plan is to take my flatbed truck to Oakland in order to haul the machine to Portola.

The sub-contractor got a better start the following day, April 16th. The workers finished the roof shingle removal and started on the horizontal soffit portion of the underside of the roof that contained hazardous materials. The horizontal soffit had been added on at sometime in the past and was not original. Meanwhile, I started and finished the removal of all plywood window covers installed after the building was decommission in the early 1990's. Once again one could observe train activities from the tower, as many others had for nine decades.

It was during this time that Eugene Vicknair and Eric Stephens arrived on the scene and made the images attached to this report. Together we noticed the original under roof details covered up by the soffit of the building, all in good shape and appearance.

The sub-contractor had taken some samples of the wallboard in both the upper and lower stories of the tower on Tuesday and had them sent to a lab for analysis. The results were available for discussion on Wednesday in the afternoon. In the samples were found traces of hazardous materials in the wallboard of the upper story, which would require more drastic efforts of removal on the part of the sub-contractor. The materials were friable, meaning they would become airborne if disturbed during the removal process. This included the floor of the upper story that had received about 3 inches of poured cement-like material.

Further discussions with Kiewit revealed that they would have to stop work on the tower until Amtrak made a decision on what to do next and who would pay for it.

At the end of the day, the sub-contractor cleaned up the site and said they would be back when the responsibility details were worked out.

As a last note to this report, Kiewit has been very generous to the FRRS thus far and deserves much kudos. Together with Eugene Vicknair we have offered to create press releases for all media expressions when the time is appropriate, the timing of which is to be determined by the action on the tower and Kiewit.

Doug Morgan

Photos of Magnolia Tower taken Wednesday, April 17.

