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Lewiston-Auburn Railroad Co. awards Grand Trunk Railroad Depot historic renovation project to Great Falls Construction

August 04, 2011 - Northern New England

Construction could begin at the 2,100 s/f Grand Trunk Railroad Depot in a few weeks barring any unforeseen circumstances, said railroad president Gerry Berube after a Lewiston-Auburn Railroad Company board meeting.

The announcement came after board members awarded the project bid to low bidder Great Falls Construction, beating out three other competitors. The award is for the base bid and add alternate one with the cost of the project set at \$298,433.

The architect for the Grand Trunk Depot is Smith Reuter Lull Architects with the principal being Noel Smith, R.A.

Ultimately, the Grand Trunk Depot could be open by the first of the year. The board anticipates the renovation to take approximately three months with an additional two months slated for subsequent work paid for by the potential tenant.

"Initially, there was some skepticism that this project could come in under bid and be completed," said Paul Lacombe, loan portfolio manager at the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council and railroad representative. "You have to take into consideration that this is a historic landmark, abandoned for a number of years, and falls under the United States Department of Agriculture's guidelines and reviews. It's a very tricky process."

The depot was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Four general construction bids were received with Great Falls Construction as the lowest bid. The other bidders included Blane Casey Building Contractors, Inc., E.J. Perry Construction, LLC, and Hebert Construction, LLC.

"It will only take a few short weeks to get the contract and do the paperwork," said Jon Smith, owner of Great Falls Const. "We are looking forward to taking the boards off the windows and turning dirt on this classic building. It'll take a bit to mobilize, but we're going to kick it into high gear to get this project moving forward."

In the meantime, the contract and work orders will be completed, as well as pre-construction meetings held. The project will be paid for with funds from the railroad, the city of Lewiston, a Department of Agriculture grant, and private funding.

"This project has been a long time in the works," said Berube. "Renovating the Grand Trunk Depot will achieve our goal of revitalizing a community landmark that was the Ellis Island of the area. Many of our ancestors walked through those very same doors to start a new life not that long ago. The time is right to create a new life for the building."