

Town of Great Barrington, Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
Minutes of January 3, 2015
Great Barrington Fire Station

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM by Chair Karen Smith.

Members present: Ed Abrahams, Thomas Blauvelt, Jessica Dezieck, Martha Fick, Suzanne Fowle, Kathleen Jackson, William Nappo, Deborah Salem and Karen W. Smith.
Also present: Town Planner Chris Rembold.

Administrative Business

Minutes of December 30: Abrahams reminded that the word “memorialize” was changed to “acknowledge.” Blauvelt moved to approve the minutes as amended. Abrahams seconded. All were in favor, with Dezieck and Nappo abstaining.

Fowle and Salem recognized Rembold and thanked him for accurate and timely minutes. Smith recognized the scope and amount of work completed by the Committee in the last year and last few months in particular. She said that Rembold’s administrative work for the Committee is above and beyond his work as Town Planner, and it should be compensated using CPA administrative funds. There are many other towns that do this. Rembold said he will develop a position description with help of the samples on the Coalition’s website, and then have the Town Manager create the position. Abrahams asked that the Town Manager set up the position because she can confirm that the CPA duties are in addition to the regular Town Planner duties and there is no double dipping. All were in support of this course of action.

Funding Decisions

Wetherbee Vault: Smith said Abrahams had some background about the Cemetery Commission discussions. Abrahams said at a meeting of the Selectboard and Finance Committees in February or March 2014 it was suggested that the Cemetery Commission take the vault proposal to CPA, to see if could qualify for funding. In April the Cemetery Commission met, and Abrahams attended, and that is when they authorized spending Cemetery Commission funds. He said that the current balance of Cemetery funding was not known by the Selectboard or Finance Committee.

Smith said this shows that this Committee must dig deep and try to find out information when making these funding decisions and Salem agreed. Dezieck said she feels like the Committee was misled at first until we discovered they had a budget. Nappo said the project was given to Joe Sokul to spearhead and the Cemetery Commissioners should have been present. Nappo said that is also why we need to know all of town owned projects that might come forward for future CPA funding. Jackson said it was good we found out before we decided on the award. She suggested we might consider a general statement that if any information or omissions are found then that could be a cause to withdraw CPA funding. All information must be accurate and complete.

Berkshire South: Smith said the vote last time was to not fully fund the project. But it was not clear whether some funding should be considered. She asked for a clear motion and vote to either reject the application or to partially fund it. Abrahams said he thinks the intent of the Committee was to not fund at all, so he will vote that way. Smith said we need clarity. Dezieck said the Committee did a lot of work that she and Nappo were not here for. Nappo said he was not here so he will abstain from this vote. Dezieck said she would also.

Fowle moved to not fund the Berkshire South application, Fick seconded. In discussion, Abrahams said he will vote to not fund, since that is what he feels the Committee meant to do last time. Smith called for the vote: 5 were in favor, 2 were against (Blauvelt, Salem), and 2 abstained (Nappo, Dezieck). The motion carried.

Conditions of Funding

Smith said there are number of good examples of grant agreements on the Coalition website. Some are short and some are longer, but we have good places to start. She asked to go through a few of the funding decisions and make sure we are clear on the conditions.

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center: Smith said this will not be tricky. Fick agreed it will be straightforward; the agreement can be simple.

St. James Place: Smith said there is a lot of work already happening there, and CPA funding should mesh in with that. We're not waiting for any other milestone to happen.

Newsboy Monument/Fountain: Smith said there are some things to include here, in reference to auto and pedestrian access. Fick said the Historical Commission will be happy to have the no parking signs removed. There was also a suggestion that before the grant is closed out the DPW should certify that they have attended the maintenance training and they are prepared to take on regular maintenance.

Historical Society for Wheeler Farmstead: Rembold said the Society and Commission are already discussing the archives storage issue. Smith said discussion is great, but she wanted some idea of what the resolution is going to be and will the Farmstead house some or all of the archives. Jackson said that is important in case in the future somebody else asks for archival storage, we need to be informed as to what the overall picture is.

Town Hall: Smith said the Committee should get the final report once the investigation of eaves repairs is finished. We need to see what was covered and what the projected cost will be for repair.

Invoicing: There was question about how we sign off that the work is done and CPA funds can be released. Jackson said she liked the idea of the Committee seeing the invoices and approving them if the work completed and milestones met. Rembold said he will check with the Coalition about best practices. He said maybe it's the entire Committee, the CPA Administrator, or a small subcommittee. Smith said calling the entire Committee together might be difficult, so maybe the Administrator signs off and reports to the Committee on a regular basis at the meetings.

Mason Library Repairs: Smith said this should be straightforward. Rembold asked for some suggestions about how to ensure the repair work is done in accordance with Secretary of Interior's historic preservation standards. Nappo said the architect and builder should acknowledge the standards and that the work has been done in accordance with them. They would sign off on it.

CDC Open Space at 100 Bridge St: Smith said based on our discussions some of us have concerns about the nature of the open space. She asked Fowle to work with Rembold to make sure the details are included. Fowle was reluctant to do the applicants job for them. Dezieck said the Conservation Commission will be looking at these details in their permitting process. Rembold suggested that once Conservation was okay with the plan, this would be enough to meet our concerns. Fowle said it's just that they are not ready yet. Nappo said once they have all their permits to move ahead that means they are ready to proceed. They will need a lot of review.

Fowle said if applicants have the detail they need to provide it to us. She had the same concerns with this project as she did with the Ramsdell proposal and the Unitarian proposal—that they are just not ready yet. The proper experts have not been lined up and details are still unknown. This is a tricky place for us to be. Dezieck said she understands Fowle's concerns but she said that an environmental consultant is on board and this is part of their Notice of Intent on file with the Conservation Commission.

Fick wanted to clarify whether or not the Conservation Commission will review it again. Dezieck said they started the process three years ago and work with the Commission every step of the way. Fowle said this should have built into their application. Smith wondered whether our application asked for detail to a level of what the plantings would be. Fowle said the application should stand on its own. Salem said when she read the description and the resumes she had all the information she needed to make a good judgment and proceed to fund it.

Jackson said she had the same thoughts about readiness as Fowle. She said we told the Unitarians they were not ready because they had not heard from their engineer yet. Smith said she disagrees. This project is a lot further along than that project. Fowle said we need to put a timeline on this particular project because she can foresee it dragging on for years, and that restoring natural systems takes many years. Smith said she thought 3 years would be reasonable. Salem suggested a timeline be worked out with the applicant.

Smith said this is important information and we should build these sorts of questions and concerns into our CPA funding application.

CDC Housing: Smith this should be easy to write an agreement. Because the project itself will proceed according to phases, our funding should be pretty straightforward. Rembold said since other permits are going to be needed in order to proceed, and other funding will be needed, our conditions are pretty clear.

Trustees of the Reservations: Smith asked the Committee what their expectations were. Fowle said we expect them to rehab the Monument Mountain trails, to start planning the Flag Rock trails connection, and to take a preliminary Flag Rock plan to some public meetings to get input. They should give us a report about their findings. Fick wondered what level of detail we should ask for. Smith said it will likely be just a vision, proposed route, and parking concerns at this point.

Next Meeting

The Committee cancelled the next few meetings in January. The next meeting was set for February 5 at 5:30 PM. Blauvelt said he will not be present. The next meeting after that will be March 19.

Smith asked Jackson to work with Rembold on drafting funding agreements.
Smith asked Rembold to contact applicants to discuss town meeting preparation.
At the next meeting the Committee will discuss press strategies and outreach.

Adjourn

On a motion by Blauvelt, seconded by Fowle, the meeting adjourned at 11:18 AM.

Materials presented or distributed for this meeting:

- Draft Minutes from December 30 meeting

Respectfully submitted: 

