

**Town of Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee (CPC)**

Minutes of October 18, 2016

Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road

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Members present: Ed Abrahams, Thomas Blauvelt, Jessica Dezieck, Jeremy Higa, Kathleen Jackson, Martha Fick, Bill Nappo, Karen W. Smith, and Nan Wile.

Also present: Town Planner/CPA Administrator Chris Rembold

**Call to Order** 5:30 PM by Chairman Blauvelt

**Administrative Items**

Smith moved to approve the October 5, 2016 meeting minutes, Higa seconded. All were in favor.

**Review of Additional FY18 Step 1 Applications**

**Berkshire Natural Resources Council for Thomas & Palmer Reserve**

There was a site visit today before the meeting. Narain Schroeder from BNRC said at the site visit we looked at parking area, the bridge and saw where a wheelchair accessible trail could go. He said BNRC proposing to use CPA funds to make parking area with a permeable surface, to accommodate about 10 cars, which would be contained with a split rail fence. He said the trail would go down across the bridge, which will be repaired with CPA funds, and then BNRC would continue the trail from there. The bridge would be for pedestrians, it but would accommodate equipment needed for trail mowing and trail maintenance. He said they are applying for a habitat management grant for the old apple orchard. They have quotes from Joe Wilkinson to do the bridge work. He said Mr. Domaney who owns the adjacent property has given permission so we can get equipment across the stream at his property, to get to the other side to work on our bridge.

Wile asked what will the surface of the path be? Schroeder said it will be airport mix or similar but not paved. There will be no lights.

Fick said the Master Plan encourages using our cemeteries as recreational spaces and connecting them to other recreation areas. So she would encourage BNRC to connect to Elmwood Cemetery. She said we should look to see if the Town can work with BNRC to connect. Schroeder said he believes that the back part of the cemetery that abuts this preserve is actually owned by the Town. He said he does not think it would too be hard to make this connection but it might involve permitting. He said the BNRC property is open to the public so you can explore it now if you want.

Jackson said she would prioritize a project with the possibility of connections. Instead of just a 1.5 mile trail it would be a longer trail system. Smith said that is a great opportunity but we need to focus on this application.

Schroeder reviewed the bridge design, shown in the application packet.

Jackson said with climate change we are getting worse floods. She asked if higher flood levels in the future would impact the bridge. Schroeder said there was beaver dam near here earlier in the year, so they we have experienced high water here. He said thinks the stream can flow under the bridge.

Smith asked what would they do if they were awarded less money. Schroeder said he would have to look at the budget. He said it might change the bridge or path design. He said if in permitting the Conservation

Commission may want a design that costs us more, that could also impact the budget. We don't know for sure what we will get through the permitting process.

The Committee thanked Schroeder for his time.

#### **Town: Town Hall roof replacement**

Joe Sokul was present and said this is the second phase for Town Hall. He said the Town successfully completed the first CPA project which was design, and now we are ready to construct the new roof. He said the estimated cost is 250,000, which includes construction administration. He said we are asking 150,000 from CPA and will apply to MHC for 100,000. Rembold said the MHC application is likely due in the spring. Sokul said our advantage is that we have full plans ready to go. This would be a 180 day construction period.

Abrahams asked if we are done with Town Hall repairs after this. Sokul said the roof will last 30 years, and we are also working on the Town Hall steps in another project. He said eventually if we want to improve the energy efficiency we might replace windows, but that is very expensive. He said we want to put air conditioning in the meeting room. He said the HDC wants the condenser unit on the roof, not on the outside wall. Our architect says a roof mount should be possible.

Jackson asked if there are other projects that are cheaper to do while doing the roof, like insulation. Sokul said no. The only other thing is the condenser on the roof, which we can prepare for with this project.

Nappo asked about the MHC funds and whether it needs a match. Rembold said yes, and CPA could be a match. Nappo asked if CPA could require a match. Rembold said yes, you could condition CPA award on the receipt of MHC funds.

#### **Town: Housatonic School Preservation**

Rembold gave a summary of the application. Fick said she initially did not like the idea of funding for a vacant building. But she said there are opportunities here; with a little work it could become something good. Abrahams said what this building could be is not yet relevant. He said this is about preservation or not. He said the difference between this project and the Town Hall project is that Town Hall is in use.

There was a question of whether the Town would be interested in putting a Historic Restriction on the building. Jackson asked if such a restriction would tie the Town's hands or a future developer's hands. Or, would it require even more repairs? Abrahams said he was not sure if we would want to put restrictions on it. It's hard to tell at this point. Smith asked if CPA funds for historic preservation require a restriction. Rembold said no, but if you are concerned about future actions, you could require one as a condition of funding.

Smith asked if there have been marketing efforts. Higa said this project will do the work that a future buyer needs to know. He said it's not only money, it's time. This way a developer can be aware of the conditions. Dezieck said if people were ready to buy it they would do this study. They would know what they are doing.

Jackson said she cannot recommend funding yet because we lack the answers to the questions we put forth in the last meeting. We do not know what, if any, kind of marketing, networking or PR has been done to find an interested party. If there have been interested buyers, what was the feedback from those potential buyers as to why they did not choose to buy it? Perhaps people have been interested, but then found out about the poor internet access? Finally, the Committee is also in the dark as to what is the town

prepared to do should they not find an interested buyer, and it comes down to the town investing in making it a usable building, or tearing it down.

Abrahams asked if this grant would make it more likely that the building will remain a historic building. How will it make it more likely?

Higa said if this is an important building, then we should think about this grant, because some day it might cost so much more to fix the building. We have had a history of letting buildings rot away. We can change that. He said we are going to let it rot or we will spend money to take care of it.

Jackson said she does not want to spend 50,000 of CPA funds for nothing.

### **Town: Housing Trust Fund**

Rembold gave an explanation of how a Trust Fund can help advance affordable housing initiatives. He said there are advantages to a trust fund that, once funded, can work faster than waiting on the annual town meeting. It can receive funds from CPA, as many trusts do, or from developers, grants, or gifts or money or land.

Wile asked who would be on the Board and what expertise do they need. She also asked for how long. Rembold said 5-9 members are on the Board. He said it is best to have a range of experience including finance, lending and housing development. The terms are two years. The chief executive officer (Town Manager) appoints the board.

Fick asked why the request is for 50,000, when last year it was less. Rembold said this is a good amount to do something in the first year. He said it could fund maybe two projects like down payment assistance for low income homebuyers, like the Lenox program. He said once the Trust is up and running it might request CPA funds every year.

Higa asked if this fund would position the Town for more housing grant funds. Rembold said it could, and the trust could receive donated funds as well.

Jackson said she would fund this because it can respond to the housing issue, and when there are housing opportunities they won't pass us by. She said it is a social and economic issue that young people cannot afford to live here.

### **Reports from Committee members**

Nappo said the event at Newsboy was a success, with maybe 50 people there.

Smith said the Parks and Recreation will be involved in discussions with the developers on Bridge Street, looking at accessibility and bathrooms at Memorial Field.

**Upcoming Meetings:** October 25, November 3, November 7

**Citizen Speak Time:** None

**Adjourn** 6:30 PM

Materials Presented/Distributed for this Meeting:

- Draft minutes of October 5 meeting
- Step 2 applications

Respectfully submitted:



