

Town of Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
Minutes of October 29, 2015
Great Barrington Fire Station

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM by Chair Karen W. 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/CPA Administrator Chris Rembold

Members absent: none

Administrative Business

Dezieck moved to approve the minutes of October 27, 2015 as amended, Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor.

Review and Evaluation of FY17 Step 2 Applications

Smith suggested the Committee discuss each project in turn, and members can indicate whether they want to fund, partially fund, or not fund. Fick asked what if we include something we cannot afford. Smith said we can wait to make final decisions until we hear from the state.

Fowle did not feel ready to actually rank. Nappo said he is looking at viability right now. Rembold suggested the group go through and see if there is consensus. Abrahams said this is a room full of do-gooders and there is not a single project that is not worthwhile. This is not the part of the process he is looking forward to.

Construct, for housing at 316 State Road: Jackson recused herself. Blauvelt gave this a thumbs up. He said housing is the most pressing issue facing the town and this is ready. It should be fully funded. Nappo agreed. He said it is permit-ready, it has leverage, and we need affordable housing in town. Fick agreed and said it is so ready that if we didn't fund it, it might cause it to fail. Salem was also in favor of full funding, saying it offers the community a long term benefit. Dezieck and Abrahams agreed. Fowle agreed; she said it is a very strong application with real attention to detail. Smith said she also felt very strongly about this. She said this sounds like a project to Committee would fund at the full amount.

CDC, for housing at 100 Bridge St: Blauvelt said he supports this, but maybe not to the tune they are asking. He said it is certainly crucial to get more affordable housing but the amount is very high. Abrahams asked whether, if it was not funded all at once, would that be a problem for the project? Could the funding be stretched out? Dezieck said this funding is needed for the project but wondered if it was needed this year. Nappo said he supports the project and wants to fund it if possible. Fick said she struggles with granting more money to this project. She said everyone wants to succeed and not look at this brownfield for years to come. Funding it would help it be successful. She also said the Applicant has stated that the affordable housing will go ahead even without a commercial tenant. Smith agreed; she said Mr. Geller has been clear on that. Fick said she supports funding it at some amount. Fowle said she wanted to think about stretching it over time or partially funding. Jackson seconded Fowle. She added that we have committed to this, however and we should not back off that commitment. Salem said she fully supports this not only because of the affordable housing but also because in this location it will be a long term benefit. She said it would be great if they could take partial funding. Smith said she feels the Committee has committed to them and they have answered our questions. She said she would like to see this project done, but it might need to be stretched out depending on our other decisions.

St James Community Housing/Bostwick Gardens: Fick thought this is a project that should be done, but she does not think it is ready. She said it is asking for half of our budget and she cannot support that. She said she would like to see it come back next year because we have to be realistic as to what to fund. Blauvelt said he supports it, and might be willing to give seed money but not fund the whole. Salem said she did not see the immediacy of the project. Dezieck agreed, adding that she thought the project was not yet viable. Abrahams said this seems too big just now. Jackson echoed Fick and Blauvelt. She said we need to take care of our elderly but she is not comfortable moving ahead without an appraisal. Fowle said the lack of appraisal at this point is her biggest issue. She thinks there are good intentions, qualifications, and community benefit, but they are not yet ready. She does not support it this year. Nappo agreed. He said it feels premature. Smith agreed with all. She said the other affordable housing projects are ready. Given the budget we have, this cannot be funded.

Town, for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund: Jackson said this should absolutely be funded. She said things like first time homeownership is challenging for people. This money could also grow into other money by getting other grants. Abrahams said we should absolutely fund this. He asked if we could insist that the Town budget match this request. Smith said we can ask, but we cannot be sure what they will say. Abrahams said it should be done every year. Fowle said she would love to fund it fully, but it might have to be partial when we get into final award amounts. Nappo supports this fully, and also in future years. Fick supports funding it. Salem does not support it. She added things up and this just did not fit. Blauvelt could not support. Enough orgs in the community to address housing needs maybe do a better job than the town. He said sometimes the Town struggles with too many initiatives. This is something other groups could do. Dezieck said this is a great idea but she could only support partial funding. She supports Abraham's idea of matching funds. Smith said her first response was to not fund, but then though we really need to start saving for this purpose. She would also support asking for additional money in the Town budget. She would like to fully support it.

CHP for the Health Walks Trail: Blauvelt said he likes this project. He said they are ready to go. Abrahams supported funding. He said this is inexpensive and quick. Nappo scored this very highly. He said it is ready, moderately priced, and will benefit the community. Fick said she was not going to support it because the Committee needs to decide which ones to support or not. She said it is small, but at a certain point you have to keep some and not others. She said there are some trails across the road already. Salem said after making her priorities, she could not fund this. She said it does not have immediacy. Dezieck said she likes this one. She said it is a great idea. She wondered how much use the trail will get. Jackson said she would consider partial funding. Fowle said she would fully fund this. She said it takes effort to apply for even a small amount. She said to partially fund small applications could send applicants scrambling for the extra few thousand dollars. She is sensitive to the exhaustion that can create. Also, she said this will greatly benefit pregnant women. In response to Fick, she said having Route 7 between trails and CHP will not work. She said it might not be an immediate need, but the benefit is so long term she thinks it is a great bang for the buck. Smith said she did not yet support funding because given all the other requests this is not an immediate need. Nor do we have enough funding. There are plenty of trails.

River Walk restoration: Abrahams asked if they required the total amount or partial. Smith said they would prefer the full amount. Dezieck said this is a yes for her. All other members in turn said they fully support this application.

Town, for Memorial Field bathroom and accessibility: Smith asked Dezieck to chair. Blauvelt said he cannot support this one. He does not get the sense there is a burning need for public restrooms here. Salem said this does not fit into her priorities. She would think about partial funding. Fick said there are two pieces here—the restrooms and the accessibility. Restrooms should be closer to Main Street. Perhaps there is a some building in town that is already heated space. Accessibility for the field might be doable. She said the application has to be reexamined. Abrahams said this is at the bottom end

of what he would support. Jackson agreed. Fowle also agreed. She said it is not a priority. It might get some funding depending on other award amounts. Nappo does not support this. Dezieck said she cannot support full funding. She said there's no bathroom for the park and we need one. Smith said this has been a 20 year problem. She thought partial funding could work, but we need to start something at least for Memorial field access is one thing. The bathroom could be somewhere else. Fick said bathrooms should not be funded by the CPA unless part of a park improvement.

BRNC for the Windy Hill APR: Fowle recused herself.

Jackson said yes to this project. She said it is a beautiful area. This is a long lasting project and nobody regrets preserving open space. Fick gave this a definite yes. She said a developer would get big bucks for this, but that would not look good from Monument Mountain. She said this is ready to go. She said if we pass this up, and the owners sell, we will say we should have done something to stop it. Abrahams said he supports this, but if the Committee needs to shave money off the budget we might do it with this one. Blauvelt said he supports this but not the whole amount. He thought the owner could contribute more. Salem said an APR would be an amazing gift to the town. It has present and long term benefits. Nappo supports it but has difficulty with the full amount. There may be equity in the house that could be used for the deal. Narain Schroeder, present for the applicant, said the house is not included because the APR program does not include residential properties. The APR is just about the farmland. Dezieck said funding this is what is best for the town. She thought the owner could do more but overall it is a good project. Smith said she also agrees with the concept but the request is too high. She said however that they do have their ducks in a row.

Rembold asked if the issue was just about the owner's contribution or about the total grant request. Blauvelt said he would like to see the owner contribute more, or the applicant could do more fundraising. Nappo said they need to come up with more money in some way. Dezieck echoed this and said the owners will come out ok.

Jackson said we only get to preserve this farm if they get enough money that they are willing not to sell it. She said this is about whether we preserve this or not. They would have the option of selling it for much more. Smith said she could see that argument. She can see the value of the APR. We live in a place with open space but we still have to pay for it because somebody else would put 12 huge mansions on that hill and it would be disgusting. Abrahams said this is playing chicken with the owner. If we do shave off an amount it should not be more than \$50,000 or \$100,000.

TTOR for Housatonic Village trail: Jackson said she would either vote for no funding or partial funding. She said last year the same applicant asked for funds for similar work. She would consider funding 12,500 for appraisal, environmental and survey. They should do the legal and title. Abrahams said he would wait until we do more of the math, but it's important. Fick said she likes this but it is not ready for us yet. Salem said this is great, but we do not have enough money to fund it. There is not enough of an immediate need. Blauvelt said he could support partial funding like Jackson suggested. He said he does think there is immediate need for Housatonic. Dezieck supported it. Nappo supported it but only at a partial amount. Fowle said she would fully fund for a few reasons. First there is an immediate need because they have a bargain sale on the table. Second, the work done by others years ago on the north end of the site impacted drainage. The sooner this work gets done and addresses that erosion the better. And, she added, this is a component of a much greater project connecting to Monument Mountain, the top thing people come to Great Barrington for. It is part of a huge network that is not just any trail, it is a jewel in the crown of the town. Smith said she has a tough time considering a project that is about evaluating. She said the town has an immense amount of trails. She said when she is looking at housing or trails, trails have lower priority. She said she could agree to partially fund but not fully, given the parameters of what we have available to spend. Fowle said having trail access improves quality of life and it is important to have trail access connected to other areas; Housatonic could really use this. Nappo

agreed, but he said the applicant should do the due diligence first. Then CPA could fund the \$10,000 trail design work. He said he did not want to spend funds on their due diligence. Smith agreed.

Unitarians for preservation of 1089 Main Street: Blauvelt asked if it was on the state register of historic places. Rembold confirmed it is on the state and national registers. Blauvelt said he could support partial funding. Fick agreed. She said the budget has gone up. This year we have got so many things to look at. She would like to fund it to provide stabilization of the building but we don't have all the money they want. Salem and Dezieck agreed with partial funding. Abrahams said he was thinking of a \$70-80,000 amount. Jackson supports funding as high as possible. She said the building is used by the community. It's historical and in a central part of our community. They are generous about giving access to it. This is what we want to reward—taking old structures on and repairing them. Fowle agreed to the idea of funding as much as possible. She said Housatonic really needs and benefits from having gatherings there. She said it is great to have space and vibrancy in the evenings. It is great to be rehabbing historic structures. Nappo said he would partially fund given the magnitude of the budget increase. He said that happens with old buildings, but we should fund structural and life threatening repairs. Fick asked about the proposed historic restriction. Rembold explained that is based on the condition put on the Historical Society last year, and he said that a permanent restriction is not necessarily required. Nappo thought there should be a permanent a preservation restriction.

GBHS Phase 1 B restoration: Dezieck said she would like to fund this. This will be great in the long run for education and field trips. Fick said she would fund the wiring but not the fixtures. Salem would like to fund but is not sure we can fully fund it. There is a good benefit to the town. Blauvelt said he would fully fund. Abrahams said he would fully fund it if we can afford it. Jackson said she would only partially fund because of the limited CPA budget. Fowle said she supports it. She said she sees the need and would fund it all if possible. Nappo totally supports it. Smith agreed. She said it would be a real problem to have wiring but no lights.

Town Historical Commission: Blauvelt said he thought this should come through the town budget and not the CPA. Jackson felt the same way. Rembold reminded them that this is what the CPA is for, and CPA funds are partially matched by the State. Fick said the Historical Commission is chartered to do this. If we don't do an inventory we have no idea what we have, and it will be gone. If we don't give them some money to start this process it will be many years before it is done. Abrahams thought this would be a CPA admin cost. Rembold said no this is a Historic Resources project. Salem said she values this but cannot come up with the funds this year. Dezieck said she likes this project and would fund partially at least. Fowle said she could support partial funding. Nappo said he supports it totally. And he said they could get a full matching grant from MHC, plus they have in-kind support. They are coming up with 60% of the cost of this project. Smith said this is a proposed three-year project at \$15,000 with this request but \$15,000 per year after that too. She said it is a big project. Nappo reminded all that this could be funded partially, and/or not do it every year. Dezieck suggested the Commission could use their own funds from fees for this. Rembold said it is not like Conservation; they do not have fees collected in the bank.

St James Place bell tower: Nappo said he would like to fund this project, if there was enough money. He said he would favor partial funding to continue the support of the overall project. Abrahams said he would support it but at the low end. Jackson agreed that it was important but only partial funding would be possible. Fowle would like to fund it to extent possible. Fick said she wished there was enough to fund the full amount. Salem said she wanted to fund this but then would not be able to afford others. Blauvelt wants to support the project but cannot approve the full amount. Dezieck said full funding seems impossible. Smith said this is a worthy project but we have limited funds. They have pared it back somewhat and we should do what we can.

Citizen's Speak Time:

Michelle Loubert from Housatonic spoke. She has an issue with public tax dollars going to fund a church or religious group she that she may not agree with. She has not done her full research. But she would oppose this funding. Smith said the state has ruled this is not a problem. She understands that some people might have a difficulty with that. Smith said the Committee takes its guidance from the CPA Coalition. She referenced some technical assistance documents in their website.

Will Conklin from Greenagers said that the proposed CHP trail will get quite a bit of use. It will get a different type of use than harder trails. He also said CHP has put a lot of time into securing other funds and working with partners like BNRC.

Mary Feuer of CHP said that the trail on the other side of the road is lovely, but it is hard to take CHP clients off property. That is why this trail is important.

Project Review Discussion, continued

The Committee continued its discussion by attempting to arrive at a consensus on the amounts to fund each project. There was general consensus to fully fund three projects, and to not fund two projects. These consensus items are outlined and in bold type in the table below.

Amounts assigned to all items are understood to be for discussion purposes only. No votes were taken.

Oct 29 discussion	
Construct	\$ 220,000
CDC	\$ 250,000
St James Hsng	\$ -
Town hsng	\$ 20,000
CHP	\$ 10,000
River Walk	\$ 26,412
Mem Field	\$ -
BNRC Windy Hill	\$ 150,000
TTOR Housatonic	\$ 10,000
Unitarian Univ Meeting	\$ 70,000
GB Hist Society	\$ 20,000
Town Hist. Comm.	\$ 15,000
St James Place	\$ 52,600
total projected spending	\$ 844,012
plus admin of 5%	\$ 23,000
total CPA spending	\$ 867,012

Committee Member Reports:

Smith requested from Committee members that they notify the Chair of any correspondence they receive. Also if you cannot attend a meeting let her know, not just Rembold. She said if there is any other issue, please notify the Chair.

Salem reported the Housing Authority has been urged to allow citizens speak at the beginning of a meeting but to have very little or no interaction with the speaker, since the issues are not on the agenda.

Next Meeting:

November 5 at 5:30

Smith said the next meeting will be to further review budgets and funding. She said some applicants including the Unitarians should give us their priority list.

Adjourn: Dezieck moved to adjourn, Blauvelt seconded, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Materials presented or distributed for this meeting:

- Draft minutes of October 27 meeting

Respectfully submitted:

