

Town of Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

Minutes of October 5, 2016

Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road

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

Absent: Jessica Dezieck. Also present: Town Planner/CPA Administrator Chris Rembold

Call to Order 5:30 PM by Chairman Blauvelt

Administrative Items

Wile moved to approve the September 1, 2016 meeting minutes, Higa seconded. All were in favor.

Review of Additional FY18 Step 1 Applications

Berkshire Housing Development Corporation for Bostwick Gardens Expansion

Fick asked if the applicant is using the funds to pay for things they already would have completed, by the time the funds are available. They cannot do that. She also asked if they are applying for state funds before they get our approval. She suggested they restructure their application and timing of use of CPA funds.

Higa asked about the planned bedroom sizes and income levels, and whether the rents would be restricted, and for how long.

Town: Housing Trust Fund

Blauvelt said he sees that this application is consistent with the Master Plan. There is a need for this. Wile said the lack of affordable housing issue is only going to get to worse. Nappo said we should anticipate funding this in future years as well.

Jackson asked when a Housing Trust Board of Trustees would be approved. Rembold said it could happen at Town Meeting in May.

Town: Lake Mansfield engineering and design

Rembold explained the project request. He said this is to produce engineering and design documents, not to create another new concept.

Wile said there are a lot of other funds that will be accessed.

Abrahams confirmed the Selectboard approved the CPA application, and the Lake Mansfield plan, but did not definitively decide the road should be one way. That can be decided later.

Jackson said we ask other applicants to put money into the project, so should the Town pay for some of this. Higa said whether its CPA or Town budget it is tax payer money either way. Higa said the Town has done a lot of work in the area already, so there is other money involved. Smith mentioned Parks and Recreation improvements as an example. Blauvelt added Knob Hill and Castle Hill work.

Smith said something must be done in this space. To get to the next step we need to fund the engineering.

Berkshire Natural Resources Council for Thomas & Palmer Reserve

The Committee decided to make a site visit before the next meeting.

Narain Schroeder of BNRC explained that they are applying for funds to do the parking lot and bridge repair. The trail budget is something BNRC will contribute. Smith asked why this bridge repair was not part of the purchase agreement. Schroeder said the money for acquisition was an NRD grant and it was for acquisition and not repair. Smith asked if this would be handicapped accessible. Schroeder said they have not discussed it yet. It will be a level surface but it might not technically be ADA compliant. It would be a gentle, 1.5 mile, easily walked loop, and the bridge would be wide enough. Smith asked if this was part of BNRC's high road plans. Schroeder said no but eventually it could connect to a ridge trail, but that is long term. Fick asked if there is any way to access it from the cemetery. Schroeder said it would involve stream or wetland permitting and possibly more bridges. It would never be the primary access point.

Rembold asked if the property was permanently protected. Schroeder said yes as part of the NRD program it is, and it is open to the public.

Great Barrington Land Conservancy for Riverfront Trail

The Committee reviewed the application. Fick asked if the trail might be open in winter for winter recreation. Nappo asked if the easements would be in perpetuity and who would be responsible for liability.

Jackson said this would benefit the town in many ways – it would connect downtown to that south end of Main St and the shopping areas. It would be a tourist draw, something day trippers could easily do. She said she hears people say that when they are downtown they want a walking trail just like this. She asked about what the possible construction costs might. She asked if the Jensen estimate is accurate. Rembold said Jensen has been trail building for decades and is probably accurate.

Great Barrington Historical Society Wheeler Farmstead accessibility

Fick said this would result in \$107,250 to the GBHS if we fund this and asked if there would be more. Abrahams asked the same and added that this work will allow them to open and operate as a museum. Nappo said there is no leverage shown for this phase. Is there fundraising? Will the organization continue to operate for the long term? And what is the long term plan? Rembold said he would send these questions to the GBHS director.

Town: Town Hall roof replacement

DPW Superintendent Joe Sokul said this application is the outcome of the CPA grant to the study the repair needs and develop plans. He said we are ready to bid the project in the spring and start next summer. He said we have the Historic District's Certificate of Appropriateness. He said the Town will seek the balance of the funds from the Mass. Historic Commission.

There was a general discussion of about buildings not being maintained over the years and then needing expensive repairs like this. Sokul said these buildings are over a hundred years old and the town budget has not always focused on them. He said routine maintenance is hard to get funded. We've had to be reactive, he said, but our older buildings are expensive to maintain and there are items that are long deferred.

Town: Housatonic School Preservation

Rembold explained this application is to start a process similar to the Town Hall study, and determine what repairs are needed to preserve the building.

Smith said the Town has done a bad job as a landlord. She does not want to spend another dime on the building.

A member of the audience asked who made the decision to keep the building and preserve it. Rembold said that effectively the Selectboard has made that decision, though not formally, by voting to submit this CPA application, by supporting the research on the building's history, and by applying for and receiving state CDBG grant funds.

Abrahams said we need a little more information about the potential reuse, whether this investment of \$50,000 would come back to benefit the town. What will the result be? Smith said she feels the building should be sold but it is not being marketed well. She said if the Town approves this project and we might actually get something out of it, then good.

Berkshire Pulse for elevator / access project

Fick asked about a historic restriction if we fund this. She also asked about the Owner's responsibility and the tenant's responsibility, and why they should contribute funds.

Abrahams said this is on the inside. It will help tenants inside of a historic building. He said calling it a public benefit is a step.

Jackson said the public benefit is keeping a historic building in use, which will keep it up.

Wile noted there is a large matching grant secured.

Nappo said many kids use the dance studio.

Jackson said any business in the area would benefit from having this historic building preserved. It retains character and retains customers in the area. It's a historic benefit and economic benefit.

Wile said the owner seems invisible. We'd be improving a private asset.

Rembold said the Committee must ensure CPA funds deliver a public benefit and that the benefit continues over the long term.

Fick asked if the dance studio lease would continue if the Owner sold the building. Jackson said that is not relevant because the point here is preserving the building for historic preservation. Whatever the use is does not matter. The public benefit is not necessarily about the school kids, while that is lovely, the public benefit is that it is a historic building not being torn down and being used.

Reports from Committee members

Nappo said the Historic Commission will have a celebration at Newsboy on Monday. The Committee received copies of the Newsboy history booklet recently written by Gary Leveille.

Administrative Update / Existing Projects

None

Upcoming Meetings: October 18th and 25th

Citizen Speak Time: None

Adjourn 7:40 PM

Materials Presented/Distributed for this Meeting:

- Draft minutes of September 1 meeting
- Step 2 applications

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Cheryl A. Smith", is written over a horizontal line.