

Town of Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

Minutes of October 6, 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 September 8, 2015, Salem seconded. All were in favor.

Review and Evaluation of FY17 Step 2 Applications

Procedures:

Smith asked if the Committee used the score sheet. Abrahams said took notes but will score them later.

Fowle used it, as she did last year.

Jackson said she tried to see applications as part of a wider discussion. She also wanted updates from applicants who got CPA grants last year. She thought the Committee might discuss priorities—is there a vision to prefer one category over another. Maybe some projects take precedence now and other projects can happen in the longer term. She also thought during a meeting we give applicants a chance to describe their projects, but giving direct feedback and criticism might be better done at another time. Sometimes feedback right away is unclear. It might be the wrong time.

Fick said she was looking to see which applications had a sense of immediacy. Are their stars aligned and in order, if they get the funding they need. She also looked at leverage. And she said we should be looking at the Town projects perhaps as a priority.

Nappo said he used the score sheet as a benchmark. He would also like an update on last year's projects.

Salem said she likes Jackson's idea of trying to arrive at a focus each year. She would like to consider it. She didn't use the score sheet yet but she plans to.

Blauvelt said he was impressed with the quality this year over last year. He used score sheet as road map.

Dezieck did the same as Abrahams.

Smith said she used it and may go back after tonight and rescore it. She said what she was considering was need versus want. She said with a limited amount of funding, some projects are just not going to happen.

Smith asked Rembold to see that applicants give a report on last year's funding and their project status.

Smith said one application was late. She wanted the Committee to restate its late application policy. She said that at the May 19, 2015 meeting we discussed the CPA Plan and established the application schedule and deadlines. The deadline for Step 2 applications was October 1 by 4:00. The application

clearly states, in bold type, "For both steps, ten (10) hard copies and one (1) electronic copy (PDF) of the application must be received on or before the deadline."

Smith said based on what we voted and discussed all year, and our actions last year regarding late applications, she would entertain a motion that we not consider late applications in the current funding round.

Dezieck moved that the Committee not consider late applications in the current funding round. Nappo seconded. All were in favor.

Smith wanted to revisit the question of whether the Fairground's cowshed application was eligible for funding. Rembold summarized the situation, including the advice in writing and by phone from Stuart Saginor of the Community Preservation Coalition.

Abrahams said legality and common sense are sometimes different. He looks at rebuilding the cowshed is restoring the site. He said that it seems, however, that we have a clear opinion. Fowle said she also sees it in the context of restoring the historic site.

Jackson said we are talking about a hard and fast rule of the CPA legislation. Stuart is saying you are stuck you cannot do this. It is against CPA law. Fick was disappointed the applicant is coming to us for something we cannot do. Nappo said if they had kept the building, used the Secretary of Interior's standards,

Dezieck moved that we do not consider the Fairground's application to be eligible. Blauvelt seconded. Vote was 7 in favor and 2 against (Abrahams, Fowle).

Evaluation of Applications

1. Construct

Fowle said she would like more information on how they are achieving carbon neutrality. Are the architects LEED certified? She asked if the open space already was protected, and, if so, how. If you are connecting to open space, are there trail plans so that trails are not informally or inappropriately made?

Abrahams wanted to know what would happen if we didn't grant the entire amount. Smith said that is a good question for every applicant.

Salem asked about the total development cost. Smith asked about the construction cost per square foot.

Blauvelt said his main concern is that no other funding sources are committed. He wants to be more comfortable with that.

Smith said she would like to see 10-year financing plan and operating and capital reserves. She also wanted to clarify if they are building on only 1 acre of the 12 acres.

Fick asked if they need a certain percentage from us to allow the other sources to happen. It seems like this cannot be deferred. They want to start next year. Can they clarify this. She said it's close to town, but not real close to town. Can they walk the half-mile to the bus and is there a sidewalk. Tim Geller said one of the support letters is from BRTA, who has agreed to provide bus service.

The Committee decided they would do a site visit.

2. CDC housing

Smith asked if the timeline changes based on the remediation not happening the way they had wanted. Blauvelt said he is concerned if they can go forward without an anchor tenant. Nappo asked, if do not fund this, what happens to the \$200,000 grant from last year? What is the impact of no funding this round? Smith asked about long term revenues stream and reserves. Fowle said the application says the building complex will generate as much energy as it consumes. How will it do this?

3. St James Housing / Berkshire Housing Development for Land Acquisition

Smith asked what the proper CPA box was. Abrahams asked what the option to purchase actually costs, and what happens if they get less. Rembold said an appraisal is being done.

Smith said every support letter is exactly the same. She wants to know how it really impacts the people in town.

Fick thought this was a lot of money for not much useable land.

Fowle said she would like to know who holds the conservation restriction and whether the conservation restriction needs to be modified for trails.

Smith asked if they could provide per square foot costs to develop the units.

Jackson said they should fill out the budget summary table on page 1 of the Application form.

Fick said she might feel a little better about commit housing money if they already had the land. What if housing does not get built? Jackson said we could put conditions on to get the money back.

Dezieck said the conservation mapping is not clear.

Blauvelt said there are no units in the 50% AMI bracket and he is curious as to why.

Salem said they are asking for \$400,000 even if the appraisal comes in less than that. She also asked if the Berkshire Fund leverage was committed.

The Committee decided they would do a site visit.

4. Town Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Nappo said this is a Town Project and number 7 should be Yes. He also said there is no leverage.

Jackson said she would like to know why this fund should exist separate and distinct from CPA, and will it take different types of applications? Fick said she thinks this is a little broader than CPA. Rembold said activities funded with CPA funds must adhere to CPA rules. Dezieck wondered if a CPA member would be on the Fund's Board. It would guarantee funds will be spent on CPA purposes. Fowle asked if there was some reason for the \$20,000 figure. Could it be started with less and still be viable?

5. Parks Commission Memorial Field / Bathrooms

Smith asked Dezieck to chair this discussion. Fowle said there are already restrooms at the Railroad Street Youth building. Is that building owned by the town? She asked what types of toilets will be considered. She said there is nothing in the application that ties this to the Master Plan. Jackson asked what would be the operating cost; we need to think through all the expenses. Nappo said the project will assess all these issues. Smith said the Parks Commission has been discussing public bathrooms for 15 years. Rembold said the application also talks about accessibility to the field. That should be discussed next time since it is not in the engineer's scope of work.

6. GBLC for Housatonic River Walk

Abrahams said they are asking for funding over several years. Can we fund this in pieces or is it needed all at once? Jackson wondered about the progress on the vision to connect this river walk to go southwards down the river. Fowle asked about permitting and whether a permit has been filed.

7. CHP for Healthy Walks trails

Smith asked if there were federal or other grants for this work. She wanted to see CHP's mission statement also. There was a question of whether partial funding would be ok. Smith said they need to put a dollar value on the in-kind contributions. That will show leverage.

8. BNRC – Windy Hill

Smith asked if this were a farm that we spend a lot of money to preserve, can they have a huge cash crop. She also asked what would happen if it is only partially funded.

Fick asked if there was an expiration date for the State's APR grant. She also asked if there is a minimum amount the Town must contribute, and is this in excess in of the minimum.

Nappo asked what the public benefit is. Rembold said it is the permanent preservation of farm land. There does not have to be public access.

Jackson asked if the applicant could discuss the market price and how money they are giving up. Could they lay out the options the landowners currently have, for example selling it. Rembold will send a link to the full appraisal report.

There was a question of whether any other Town boards can provide money, for example the Conservation Commission.

The Committee decided they would do a site visit.

9. The Trustees of Reservations – open space in Housatonic

Rembold said this application is different than the Step 1. This is for much less money and is just to support the acquisition process. Abrahams asked if the applicant can verify the landowner will accept a bargain sale. He also said preacquisition money is risky. So he would like to see how much money has been raised and will more be raised. He asked if that money could be used for preacquisition activities, and the applicant could come back to CPA for the actual acquisition. Fowle also wanted to know if the bargain sale price would hold for another year.

Fowle said some reference to the mills, to the history, should be in the name or discussed in the application. She said she uses their other trails a lot and the public uses them. She thinks the public would

support this too but there is no support evidenced here. She would like to know how last year's project is going.

Smith asked if two check boxes in the CPA matrix was correct.

Jackson had the same question as Abrahams.

Nappo wanted to understand if they could use the land value to leverage or borrow against. Is it collateral? Jackson asked what the assessed value is and why.

The Committee decided they would do a site visit.

10. Unitarian Universalist Church for restoration

Smith asked if there were resumes of the construction contractors. It was commented that they do not know who it is yet. Jackson asked about the proposed 10 year historic restriction. Rembold said it is modeled on the condition the Committee required for the Wheeler Farmstead. Nappo asked if the building is in the National Register. Rembold said yes. Nappo said they did not go to Historic Commission for support. Smith asked about the community benefit, and why the congregation is giving money to other organizations instead of putting money into their own structure. Rembold said they have been putting money in. Jackson asked the applicant to fill in the smaller budget spreadsheet that is on the first page of Step 2. Fick asked why the cost went up from the Step 1 application.

11. Historical Society for Phase 1B

Salem asked if they could take less. What would happen if it is not fully funded this year. Jackson asked for an update on last year's funds.

12. Town of GB Historic Commission

There was a question about how this would be funded if CPA did not exist. Nappo said they would have to raise the money and get grants.

13. St James Place

Fick asked if this had to happen at a certain time, or can it happen at another time. Smith asked what would happen if there was a reduction in the grant amount requested. Fowle asked if we could hear the electronic version of the bells, and will the actual bells ever be used, or is it all electronic? She said there should be screens for pests, i.e., only physical barriers and no poisons. Jackson asked for a concise update for entire building project and an update of last year's grant.

Committee Member Reports

Abrahams reminded everyone about the meeting schedule including Planning Board and Selectboard, for the proposed hotel at the old Searles School.

Jackson said she has fielded some complaints about the tone of this committee. She said applicants need to be treated better. Fowle said we need to remember everyone including applicants are working in the public interest, and we need to remember we are all on same page, trying to do right for the town.

Next Meeting:

The next meetings will be in-depth reviews and presentations, as follows:

October 15 – housing. October 20 – open space and recreation. October 27 historic resources.

Citizen's Speak Time: None

Adjourn: Dezieck moved, Blauvelt seconded, all in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 7:54 PM.

Materials presented or distributed for this meeting:

- Draft minutes of September 8 meeting
- Emails from Stuart Saginor and Bart Ellsbach re: Fairgrounds application
- Step 2 applications from CHP, Parks Commission, BNRC, Project Native, TTOR, Historic Commission, St James Place Inc., GB Historical Society, Fair Ground CRP, CDCSB, Town of GB for housing, and St James Housing/BHDC

Respectfully submitted.

