

Town of Great Barrington, Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
Minutes of December 16, 2014
Great Barrington Fire Station

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM by Chair Karen Smith.

Members present: Ed Abrahams, Thomas Blauvelt, Jessica Dezieck, Martha Fick, Suzanne Fowle, Kathleen Jackson, William Nappo, and Karen W. Smith. Deborah Salem was absent for the start of the meeting.

Also present: Town Planner Chris Rembold.

Administrative Business

Minutes of December 9, 2014: Fowle and Smith made minor changes on page 3. Dezieck moved to approve as amended, Blauvelt seconded, all were in favor.

Evaluation of Step 2 Applications

Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire (UUMSB) for \$17,250 for preservation at 1089 Main Street. Jon Greene and Peter Bluhm were present for the applicant.

Deborah Salem arrived at 5:38.

Smith asked about the expertise of project team. Greene said that those listed in the application are not doing the actual construction. UUMSB will hire somebody to do the work. The church team will oversee the work. Bluhm, who is co-chair of UUMSB property committee with Martha Page, said he will oversee the work for the church. He said bids from different contractors have been received. They sought information from Greene's brother who knows construction and is an assistant building inspector.

Nappo asked about the accessibility work and its scope. Greene said the existing access is noncompliant. We are engaging an engineer to look at all the work we need to do and help us determine what has to be done to be in compliance. Bluhm said they need an engineer to oversee all phases of this project. They do not have one yet but they will know soon. He said currently there is a ramp to two doors, but we do not think that is ADA compliant.

Nappo asked how they came up with the \$5,000 figure for accessibility; he is concerned it is not enough. Bluhm said he is not sure if that will trigger more required compliance work. Maybe we can modularize the work to avoid big compliance issues.

Jackson asked if there were complete estimates that include that plan. Bluhm said they received estimates from contractors. Jackson asked if the roof work is just a partial fix and will it only hold you for a few years? Bluhm said two roof valleys are not supported. We need a beam across the main floor and this will support new roof structure supports. Greens said the rest of the roof is not in danger nor is it rotting. Bluhm said the shingles are in good shape. He said this proposed roof work will be it for the foreseeable future.

Dezieck said the standards you will have to comply with may add more and more work, and without a project team it is hard to visualize now. Greene said yes the ADA compliance could trigger more problems, but the structural issues are localized and more discrete.

Fowle asked if UUMSB has coordinated with the Ramsdell Library, especially the driveway and accessibility. I think there could be a way to streamline efforts and save money. Greene said no but Library Trustee Holly Hamer said yes, there was a meeting with the acting UUMSB chair. They would be glad to share information with UUMSB.

Jackson reminded them not to be discouraged because it meets CPA criteria, and they have 50% of the funding. But she said she would like an engineer's report. Bluhm said he did not know it was

required but they could have one soon. Nappo stated that if there was one a few weeks ago it would have helped. Rembold said the Committee needs all the information to have a complete picture because these applications are very competitive.

Abrahams said that not all applications have complete estimates. We have a lot of great applications and it is clear that a lot of work went into this and we thank you. We are being picky. He was concerned that was not fair because it rules out really everyone who has not hired engineers or architects.

Blauvelt stated they just did not seem ready yet but thought they could come back next year. Salem felt the project has strong merit and she trusts that they have with good estimates. She agreed with Abrahams that a lot of applications do not have full estimates.

Smith suggested the Committee could agree to the roof and floor fixes but that the ADA portion is not ready. She said it does not have to be black and white.

Dezieck said that team experience and viability are big parts of the application and it was clear that we needed to see these things. Bluhm said they understood the application to mean the project team of the church leaders.

Fick when you ask the public body we require more info than you might usually need. When you ask taxpayers for money, you need estimates, plans, and teams. Greene reminded that the applicants got estimates from reputable contractors.

Smith said this seems good but does not know if the money is accurate. She was concerned that there would not be enough money to get started if the project was bigger than expected.

Fowle stated the project would be great for Housatonic—there is great public benefit for the congregation, the village and the town. She could consider funding the roof but not the ADA until there is more coordination with the library next door. She does not want to waste money on uncoordinated work.

Smith took a straw poll fund to see who was in favor of full or partial funding. Five members, a majority, were for funding.

Jackson asked if they could remove the ADA work so they can coordinate next year with the library, and the CPA could perhaps fund just the other work at \$12,250.

Nappo asked if that estimate has been reviewed by an engineer. Greene said no. Nappo asked if that amount could be way off. Greene said it could be. He said but UUMSB is already paying half of the project plus the engineer out of pocket, so if it increases we will pay that too.

Jackson said if an engineer's report would effects all projects should would change her straw vote. Salem said that UUMSB should have the responsibility to find the additional money they might need. Jackson disagreed saying she wants to fund it at a level that they need to get finished to completion. Smith agreed. She wants to know with some certainty that we can get you to completion. Nappo agreed. Blauvelt added that town meeting might not agree for a project that is not ready. Salem countered saying this could happen in any project. Fick said yes but there is lower risk if you have engineers report up front. Salem said they are very committed. Smith said that being picky is ok.

Smith called for a formal motion. Blauvelt moved that the application submitted by UUMSB not be recommended for this funding cycle. Dezieck seconded. In discussion, Fowle hoped they would not be discouraged because it fits the CPA and the Master Plan. Nappo said it will do good things. Abrahams said there not a lot of proposals from Housatonic and we always have opportunities to fund in Housatonic. He felt that was not an irrelevant concern here.

The vote was 6 in favor of the motion, 3 against (Abrahams, Nappo, Salem). The motion passed.

CDC for community housing at 100 Bridge St. for \$450,000 Tim Geller was present for the CDC.

Smith asked the Committee if they had questions. Nappo asked what the predevelopment funds of \$100,000 would be for. Geller said it would be for architects and engineering of final plans. They have good plans now and that would get them to the point where they apply to the state for funding.

Salem asked how that number was arrived at. Geller said it is just a fraction of the predevelopment cost and it seemed like a reasonable amount to ask CPA. Smith pointed out the detailed budget sheets.

Smith asked if the funds could be phased over two years. Geller said yes but the second half of the first \$200,000 would be tied to something such as the CDC getting full state funding. He said that way the CPA avoids the risk by allocating the 2nd payment only after the CDC has all funding in place. The last \$250,000 would be a future year and only after project completion. He said community commitment is imperative to getting state funding.

Fowle wanted clarification on what the funding sources were and how they worked together. For example the mortgage is listed as a source, but it is something that needs to be paid back. The timing and types of development and operating funds were explained.

Fick asked if a commitment of only \$200,000, with an intent to then also fund \$250,000 would jeopardize the state funding? Geller said no, as long as the first was ready and the second was in writing.

Rembold asked if the intent was to appropriate all \$450,000 this coming Town Meeting or to just do \$200,000, and make a soft commitment to fund, or maybe reserve, the last \$250,000. Geller said that is his proposal because there are other good CPA projects and he does not want to have two-thirds of the \$1.2 million alone.

Jackson asked again if only \$200,000 allocation was enough to start. Geller said yes as long as there was some commitment to fund the rest next year.

Smith took a straw poll to see if members would fund the proposal at some level. All said yes. The project remains in contention for possible funding.

CDC for river front open space at 100 Bridge St. for \$300,000. Tim Geller was present for the CDC.

Rembold noted that Geller provided maps showing trail connectivity potential. Fowle thanked Geller and said it also shows this trail is not essential linkage because the streets could be used too. Geller said yes, but there is a potential. Fowle said she would focus on invasives and a planting plan further down the road. Nappo asked if the trail would go through the parking lot. Geller said it is not sure yet, but it could come just on the north side of the southern-most buildings. That way it will go past the housing and parking lot and in order to connect where the creek comes down and meets Bentley Avenue.

Jackson asked if this open space was a few years off. Geller said no, actually the Co-Op building is imminent and we want to make the pocket park and river accessibility available for those tenants.

There was discussion about a conservation restriction (CR) would work, its value, and if the area of the CR would include the market rate housing area.

Abrahams asked how the fund request could be a little smaller. Geller said they are asking for a small portion of a big open space budget.

Fowle said she is not convinced that we need a CR because there are areas of the site that cannot be built on anyway. Geller said some of the areas actually can be built because historically there were buildings there. He said the total open space is 1.3 acres and that would be a major new contribution to open space in downtown. He said the CR would not include the building footprints. The map in the application shows where it would be.

Abrahams asked if CPA can just fund the construction and why do we need a CR? Geller said CPA could fund the open space costs directly, and make the funding contingent on the CDC putting the area in a restriction for public access. He said the CDC is doing this because that our goal is to make this riverfront area open to the public. But that also means we need as much public money as possible.

On a straw poll, six members would be in favor of funding at some level. The project remains in contention for possible funding.

At 7:15, Smith said with only three done so far, it was apparent not all proposals could be discussed tonight. She said everybody on the agenda after Berkshire South could go home and they would be discussed Thursday night.

Historical Commission for Newsboy Statue and Fountain repairs. Paul Ivory of the Historical Commission said he felt their application was thorough with good documentation of the significance of the monument and the park, the deteriorating condition of the monument, the work that is needed, and the cost of the work.

Salem asked if the town pay will pay for maintenance and upkeep after the works is done. Ivory said yes, and it can be inexpensive if you stay on top of it, for example waxing it every year. The Historical Commission and DPW would be trained on how to do that properly on a regular schedule.

Smith asked for a straw poll. All but two were in favor of funding in some way. Fowle said she was undecided. Jackson said it was difficult to decide because there are still many to review. Smith said this is just a straw vote to get a sense of whether it should stay in the process, but at an upcoming meeting you will have to discuss how much to fund it. Fowle said then the straw poll question should be "who does not want to continue forward with this?" Smith asked if there was anybody who wanted to reject it. Nobody did. The project remains in contention for possible funding.

Trustees of the Reservations for Flag Rock and Monument Mountain trails

Rembold said a revised budget and map were provided. Becky Ferguson of the Trustees reviewed them. She said the Trustees propose a cost share on the staff salaries item. That expense is a standard one for them, but since the Committee had a concern we propose sharing it. With regard to the trailhead area, she said it would be in the property at the end of Grove Street, depicted on the map. She said the Trustees now own the property, shown on the map, which goes up the mountain as well.

Smith asked how many cars would be there. Ferguson thought perhaps 20. Salem asked if they have talked to neighbors about this. Ferguson said not yet but part of our proposal is to determine and mitigate any impact. She said they closed on this land only a few months ago. Smith asked how they would engage the neighbors and if they had a track record of doing this? Ferguson said yes, and typically it includes several open meetings and discussions. They also work with local groups that do similar work.

Smith wondered if funding just a quarter of the proposal budget could work. In other words so the Trustees could do some site planning and outreach, and then come back for the construction money a later date. Ferguson said that could be possible.

Nappo asked what portion of the \$12,500 line item is for design? Ferguson said about \$5,000 for just design. Salem said later you could come with a petition showing support. She said it is a great project but she is concerned about neighbors and so many cars at area. It could really change the area.

On a straw poll, no members wanted to reject the proposal. The project remains in contention for possible funding.

Library Trustees for Ramsdell Library

Rembold said a revised budget was sent by email. Smith asked Trustee Chair Holly Hamer to explain the revised budget. Hamer said she spoke with Kathy Roth at the CPA Coalition and learned the addition might not be eligible because CPA historic could not pay for something new. She revised the budget to just pay for the actual accessibility related items and the capital needs of the building such as the furnace.

Smith said it sounds like a new proposal. Abrahams disagreed. After some discussion, Rembold stated that he thought the issue could be that the proposal does not have any information regarding the furnace and HVAC needs, so how could the Committee evaluate the new request.

Jackson stated she would want to see a list of all the needs and why certain things are prioritized and not others. Maybe you even ask for a funding to do that. Kathy Plungis, also of the Trustees, said we have those items already. Smith said that is not anywhere in the proposal.

Hamer said DPW Superintendent Sokul could tell you what those needs and costs are. She said this application may not be as professional as others but that is because she is a volunteer. She said the Town Manager is the chief procurement officer and the DPW is in charge of buildings, so all this has been looked at. She said the applicants did the best they could but they do not spend 40 hours per week on this. She suggested there is less scrutiny for the DPW applications.

Jackson said she would want to see a needs list and priorities. Smith asked if the DPW capital plan has the furnace for FY 17 then why would this proposal need it in FY16. If DPW says FY 17 is ok, then there is not a critical need. Hamer said that is because it was programmed as part of a larger building project which is not feasible. She said if the application was just for these items it could have been simpler.

Blauvelt asked if the CPA application included an addition any longer. Hamer said no. Blauvelt said then the new proposal in front of us is not supported by any information. I don't know where to go. It sounds like a new application after the deadline has passed. Abrahams stated other applications do not have a lot of supporting documentation. Blauvelt said the issue is that we invited a Step 2 based on something else and this now seems different.

Jackson asked how getting a new furnace fits into the other work proposed. Rembold said a possible issue is that if an addition were put on after the furnace, the furnace might not be sized right.

Abrahams said this building was specifically discussed in the Master Plan and hits all these CPA Plan criteria, and it is a town project. It is also the only one left in Housatonic.

Jackson asked Hamer if the Trustees had the studies they needed. Hamer said yes. She added that this is clearly a work in process. Jackson asked if a small amount to do a correct, full, and phased plan with an engineer or architect approval would work. Hamer said that should be done by DPW.

Smith the town should be the ball carrier on this, not the Trustees. That way it can be complete. Nappo suggested a commercial architect with historic experience was needed.

On a straw vote, six members were in favor of rejecting this proposal. Fowle said with more time these plans, with UUMSB, can be phenomenal and we need it desperately in Housatonic. But she said she would vote to not continue, not because she does not love the library but because the plan it could be so much better than this.

Smith asked for a formal motion.

Dezieck moved to pass over this proposal and not recommend it for funding this cycle. Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor with Abrahams voting against. The motion passed 8-1.

Berkshire South Community Center. Janice Lucey and Ethel Patterson were present for Berkshire South.

Smith asked how old the picnic gazebo is. Lucey thought about 11 years. It was given to the center by somebody who did not really need it. We would like to replace it with something better. She said that the Community Center is committed to the public. In 2010 they were part of the Three Mile Hill trail work, and we have provided access to it for all. She said it is a destination. People use our parking lot to get there and the picnic shelter to rest in. She said the Community Center never received any funds for this but they have committed a lot of time staff and resources there. Lucey said the proposed pavilion will be a shade structure free and open to all and a place to offer for space and meetings. The Community Center often provides space for meetings and special events. Here there will be picnic tables can be moved on and off the concrete and the shelter could be used for movement classes.

Smith asked about letters of support. Lucey said Community Center programs would use it but it would be open to everyone. Jackson said even if the Community Center programs are supported, there is nothing here to say there is a need for outside programs at your gazebo too. She said she is not convinced there is now support for this aspect of the center. Dezieck said the Community Center is important for multi-generation connections. Jackson said but the question here is whether the community needs and wants the gazebo.

Ethel Patterson said a big part of the Community Center population is people with special needs and there is not a place for them outdoors. We need shelter and shade out there for them. Smith said there is other funding out there to provide for that. Lucey said she feels this meets the initiatives of the Master Plan and it would benefit all. We don't have the direct leverage but we do everything we can to identify funding sources.

Salem said the Community Center has provided services beyond what she ever thought possible and the staff are committed and devoted. You have demonstrated lots of programming and this is another way to continue to offer programs.

Abrahams said they only scored low on leverage and immediate need. They do a tremendous amount of fundraising for the other programs. Patterson agreed saying the \$2.2 million budget is funded 65% from membership and fees but we have to raise \$800,000 every year and we do not always make that goal. She said we have real financial gaps.

Salem asked if the Center is so strapped then what is plan for maintaining the structure. Lucey said that would be rolled into the operating costs.

Blauvelt agreed with Dezieck and said the return on investment at the Center gives back to the community ten-fold what we put into it. Jackson agreed but she just does not see the need for this project. She would like more letters of support for it.

Smith I have no question as to the benefit they provide overall, but she does not know if this is needed based on all the other stuff we have been asked for, or compared to critical needs in front of us. She is not judging the merit of the institution. She would like it to have more support and more matching money.

There was no desire in a straw poll not to fund the project. The project remains in contention for possible funding.

Other Issues

Smith said Rembold handed out a list of Town buildings and land. She said the Committee should keep in mind that there the potential for a lot of applications in future years. She asked the Committee to think hard about allocating the CPA dollars and the needy projects that will come in as time goes on. She said Town Hall, the Fairgrounds, Ramsdell, will all be back with large needs, so maybe we do not want to give out all the funding this year. Salem thought maybe we would. Smith suggested there be a prudent reserve.

Next Meeting

The next meetings will be this Thursday, December 18, at 5:30. Application review will continue for those that were not covered tonight. The objective is to have a list for December 30 in order to decide on awards recommendations at that time.

Adjourn

Hearing no further business, Smith adjourned the meeting at 8:55 PM.

Materials presented or distributed for this meeting:

- Draft Minutes from December 9, 2014 meeting
- Photos of Town Hall eaves
- Revised budget and maps from the Trustees of Reservations
- Revised budget from the Library Trustees
- Maps and photos of trail connections from the CDC
- List of town buildings and town-owned land

Respectfully submitted: 