

Town of Great Barrington, Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
Minutes of December 30, 2014
Great Barrington Fire Station

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chair Karen Smith.

Members present: Ed Abrahams, Thomas Blauvelt, Martha Fick, Suzanne Fowle, Kathleen Jackson, Deborah Salem and Karen W. Smith.

Absent: Jessica Dezieck and William Nappo

Also present: Town Planner Chris Rembold.

Administrative Business

Minutes of December 16: Fowle motioned to approve as amended at the last meeting. Salem seconded. All were in favor.

Minutes of December 18, 2014: Several typos were corrected. Fowle motioned to approve as amended. Salem seconded. All were in favor.

Evaluation and Funding Decisions

Wetherbee Vault: Smith read an email from Rembold which reported that the Cemetery Commission voted in April 2014 to fund the vault repair, and that the Commission had over \$300,000 in lot sales and perpetual care interest. There was discussion that the Commission should not be asking for CPA funds if they already have adequate money to do the project.

Fowle moved to reject the application, Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed 6-0.

Smith then asked the Committee members which projects they would be willing to fully fund, not fund, or partially fund. The results of straw polling were as follows:

CDC housing: all members wanted to fund this, at least partially.

CDC open space: all members wanted to fund this, at least partially.

Berkshire South: all members wanted to fund this, at least partially.

Trustees of the Reservations: all members wanted to fund this, at least partially.

Town Hall: all members wanted to fund this, at least partially.

Mason Library: all members wanted to fund this, at least partially.

Newsboy: all members wanted to fund this, at least partially.

Historical Society for Farmstead: all members wanted to fully fund this.

St James Place: all members wanted to fund this, at least partially.

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center: Blauvelt recused himself. The remaining members wanted to fully fund this project.

The Committee then discussed the two proposals with full support.

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center: Blauvelt recused himself.

Fowle moved to recommend \$30,000 be granted to the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center towards drainage remediation for the preservation of the Mahaiwe Theater with the following conditions:

- a. Funding to be released contingent on the execution of a grant agreement
- b. the project receives necessary municipal approvals
- c. matching funding be in place (commitment or award letters must be provided)
- d. that the work conform with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties
- e. that CPA funding be acknowledged with a sign or plaque on the property

Abrahams seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed 6-0.

Historical Society for Wheeler Farmstead: Abrahams moved to recommend \$50,000 be granted to the Great Barrington Historical Society towards Phase 1 of the preservation of the Wheeler Farmstead with the following conditions:

- a. Funding to be released contingent on the execution of a grant agreement
- b. the project receives necessary municipal approvals
- c. matching funding be in place (commitment or award letters must be provided)
- d. The Historical Society, with the Town Manager and Library Trustees, must develop an agreement and timeline for the relocation of Historic Society artifacts and archives from Ramsdell Library to the Farmstead
- e. that a historic preservation restriction be placed on the property
- f. that the work conform with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties
- g. that CPA funding be acknowledged with a sign or plaque on the property

Fowle seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed 7-0.

Town Hall: Abrahams asked the Committee whether this was something that really was deferred maintenance. Blauvelt said he thought perhaps it should have been maintained years ago, but it is clearly past the tipping point now. Jackson said we do not want people to not do maintenance and count on CPA to fix their mistakes, so it is good that Abrahams keeps pointing this out. Fick asked whether it mattered if this was funded by the capital budget or by CPA. Smith said yes, since the capital budget would be 100% tax dollars and the CPA has a 47% state match, by using CPA we're using less of our money and more of other money.

Fowle moved to recommend \$20,000 be granted to the Town of Great Barrington for historic preservation of Town Hall including eaves investigation to prepare a scope of recommended repairs and bid documents, with the following conditions:

- a. that the work conform with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties to the extent applicable
- b. that CPA funding be acknowledged with a sign or plaque on the property

Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor.

Jackson suggested a grant agreement should be considered even for Town projects. Smith asked Jackson to look into sample language and coordinate with Rembold.

Mason Library: Fowle recommend \$65,000 be granted to the Town of Great Barrington towards the preservation of Mason Library with these conditions:

- a. that the work conform with the Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties
- b. that CPA funding be memorialized with a sign or plaque on the property

Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor.

St. James Place: Abrahams asked the Committee if, when an applicant like this one has the demonstrated ability to raise a lot of funds, and the CPA is a comparatively small pot of funding, should CPA be used to support those who can raise more. Fick said leverage is a good thing. Jackson said it is something that could be considered if we had to judge one needy application against another to decide how much to allocate.

Fowle moved to recommend \$150,000 be granted to St. James Place towards roof replacement for the preservation of St. James Place with the following conditions:

- a. Funding to be released contingent on the execution of a grant agreement
- b. that a historic preservation restriction be placed on the property
- c. that the work conform with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties
- d. that CPA funding be acknowledged with a sign or plaque on the property

Fick seconded. All were in favor.

Jackson asked Rembold to consider what milestones would be included in the funding agreements, and who would be verifying those are met. For example is it the Committee, is it Rembold or other town staff? Rembold will look into this.

Trustees of the Reservations: Fick had a concern that the streets in the area are very narrow. She thought a parking lot would be a big impact in that neighborhood. She wondered if the project could start with trails and do the parking lot later after there was input from residents. Becky Ferguson from the Trustees said there was a lot of work that could be done to rehabilitate existing trails before a parking lot would be needed. She said they would start outreach right away. Smith thought the idea was good but needs more thought. She was not willing to pay for parking until the community was on board. There was discussion of whether \$15,000 would be enough to get the project started.

Jackson thought they at least had to send mailings to announce a meeting or two, even if nobody showed up. They need to figure out where to put the lot, how best to access the lot and so on. Fowle said they would get more input if they started with a concept plan, and show it to the neighbors when doing the outreach. Blauvelt said he could vote to fully fund the project, but make the community engagement a condition of the funding. He has confidence the applicant would do it.

Abrahams suggested the Committee be clear in what it expected to see as community engagement, and what outcome we need in order to move forward with full support. He asked if there was a specific number of people that is a threshold that counts as support? Jackson said regardless of the result of meetings, it will be valuable because somebody could have a great suggestion that hasn't been thought of yet. Smith asked Ferguson to consider this discussion and work on some ideas for engagement.

Fick suggested we should fund it to the level where they can do a concept design and get input. Smith disagreed that the project was ready for any funding.

Salem moved to recommend \$20,000 be granted to the Trustees of the Reservations for the creation of recreational land at Flag Rock including trail planning and creation of an accessory parking lot and the rehabilitation of trails at Monument Mountain, with conditions including the following but to be further discussed:

- a. Funding to be released contingent on the execution of a grant agreement
- b. neighborhood input is sought
- c. Planning Board site plan approval is granted for the creation of the parking area.
- d. Construction funds released only after a trail route and construction plans are finalized
- e. that CPA funding be acknowledged with a sign or plaque on the property

Abrahams seconded. All except Smith were in favor. The motion passed 6-1.

Rembold said he and Ferguson would discuss acceptable conditions might be, what work could be accomplished, and he would bring those back to the Committee for a final vote on the conditions.

Newsboy restoration: Fick said she went to Newsboy and thought the parking there was a little dangerous. She thought it was not very accessible, and it has to be accessible to be appreciated. She thought the funding should be tied to access improvements. Fowle asked again if the monument should be moved to a more visible location. Fick did not think so. Smith thought these discussions were beyond the Committee's purview. She thought it was beyond the historic preservation of the monument. Where it is located and how people get there is not the concern. Some members disagreed and wanted to push for better access.

Salem said the application was classified as open space. She said if it is, it should be accessible. Rembold said he recommends the motion be specific to historic preservation. The activity that is proposed has to do with historic preservation, not open space.

The Committee discussed requiring some sort of discussion between the Historical Society and DPW to try to improve pedestrian access to the site including possibly parking at the site.

Fick moved to recommend \$31,640 be granted to the Town of Great Barrington towards the historic preservation of the Newsboy Monument and Fountain, with the following conditions:

- a. that the Historical Commission and DPW discuss pedestrian accessibility and parking at the site
- b. matching funds of not less than 15% of the total project cost are committed
- c. that the work conform with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties
- d. that the Historic Commission organize an event to celebrate and publicize the Monument and its history
- e. that CPA funding be acknowledged with a sign or plaque on the property

Salem seconded. Six were in favor, one was against (Jackson). The motion passed 6-1.

Berkshire South Community Center: Fick was concerned because she thought this was a case of deferred maintenance. The pavilion should have been better maintained. Abrahams said this organization does a lot for recreation in our area, and if they say they need a path like this I do not think we should second guess that. Also it is the only application left that incorporates handicapped accessibility. Blauvelt agreed Abrahams, saying it is a worthy organization and gives back to the community.

Jackson said she would look for letters from people who will use this, and why this facility is more important than another project. She does not see demonstrated support and she will vote no. Smith said they should fundraise for this, and they have no demonstrated immediate need. She was not in favor of funding to create only 340 linear feet of trail and replacement of a 10 year old structure. She said she supports the organization but she does not see one letter saying there is a need for these improvements.

Salem said the center serves so many people, and this will give them an outdoor venue. She also said she thought their reasons for no cash leverage made sense. They work hard.

Jackson said leverage matters to us, not because we want to give less money, but because it shows that if a group is willing to put up their own money it shows the project is important to them and matters to them. Smith said they have not even explored other funding programs or fundraising for this.

Smith asked for a motion.

Blauvelt moved to recommend \$30,000 be granted to Berkshire South Community Center for the creation of handicapped accessible paths and a new, accessible, open-air pavilion at 15 Crissey Road. Abrahams seconded. Three were in favor, four were against (Smith, Fowle, Fick, Jackson). The motion failed 3-4.

CDC for Housing at 100 Bridge Street:

There was a discussion about a soft commitment for future funding. Jackson said a soft commitment does not technically bind future committees to the decision, but she suggested that a soft commitment is still important. She said you believe that if you have the funds you will recommend the funds. It's not set in stone, but you cannot give it lightly.

There was a general discussion of the mechanics of tax credit funding as well as the affordability levels of the 45 apartments.

Abrahams moved to recommend that \$200,000 of CPA community housing funds be granted to the Community Development Corporation towards the creation of 45 units of affordable housing at 100 Bridge Street with the following conditions:

- a. The first \$100,000 of funding will be released for predevelopment funding contingent on the execution of a grant agreement
- b. The second \$100,000 will be released only after State and Federal funding commitments for the affordable housing are received
- c. A permanent affordability restriction be placed on the housing units per the CPA
- d. that CPA funding be acknowledged with a sign or plaque on the property

Salem seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed 7-0.

Abrahams further moved to recommend an additional \$250,000 of CPA funds for this project be approved by the 2016 Annual Town Meeting, to be released at the time of construction loan closing in the fall 2016. Salem seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed 7-0.

CDC for Open Space at 100 Bridge Street:

There was a discussion about the need for a conservation restriction (CR). Fowle said she would like more information. Rembold said the applicant's goal is to have this be permanent open space, and they are willing to put a CR on the open space.

Fowle said this would be a strange CR, which will not support a much natural habitat and has almost no ecological integrity. It's much different than the Trustees' proposal which is a critical open space link.

Rikki SaNogueira of the CDC said we propose to create permanent open space on very expensive real estate. This is an extra acre that people would otherwise build on. We are proposing a riverfront restoration with native species. Once we restore it we will be controlling invasives and protecting a new native landscape. That narrow strip will support crucial habitat.

Fowle said she had trouble agreeing with this. She said she supports open space, but this is tricky and it's an expensive CR. She thought there is not enough information here for her to agree that it connectivity and ecological integrity are supported to such a level that they are asking. They are asking for even more than St. James Place.

Abrahams said as long as they keep the park a park, why should we care whether the mechanism is a CR or not. He asked if Fowle wants to see more done. Fowle said she wants more attention to bank restoration, and she wants to see the plans from people with expertise in natural riverbank restoration.

Jackson suggested that the grant agreement require the relevant detail and specifics from experts. SaNogueira said they have most of that already and could provide it.

Jackson wondered if partial funding could be considered. Abrahams said it seems like an awful lot of money and suggested \$200,000. He said it's a great project, but it is a lot of open space money for a small chunk of open space. SaNogueira said this is not an easy space to fund. It is expensive. She said the CDC has and will be raising money from a lot of other sources, for this component which costs \$1.3 and also the rest of the project as well.

Jackson wanted to be conservative in funding. Fowle said she remains unconformable with the application. For example walkway lighting does not equate with natural habitat. Fick and Blauvelt both favored full funding.

Blauvelt moved to recommend \$300,000 be granted to the Community Development Corporation for the creation a pocket park and riverfront open space and trail at 100 Bridge Street with the following conditions:

- a. Funding to be released contingent on the execution of a grant agreement
- b. the project receives necessary municipal approvals
- c. matching funding be in place (commitment or award letters must be provided)
- d. a conservation restriction acceptable to the State is placed on the recreational land
- e. that the recreational land be accessible to the general public in perpetuity
- f. that CPA funding be acknowledged with a sign or plaque on the property

Salem seconded. Four were in favor three were against (Abrahams, Fowle, and Jackson). The motion passed 4-3.

Smith suggested Fowle's concerns be incorporated into the grant agreement. Some standards or criteria should be met. There should be a sign off that the river bank ecological restoration is done. Rembold said there are still other municipal approvals required, and one of the proposed conditions speaks to that. He said therefore the Planning Board and Selectboard still have the opportunity to ask for more information and to make sure the project is done correctly.

Based on the decisions of this meeting, the Committee is recommending a total of \$866,640 in projects as detailed in the table below.

Dec 30, 2014

APPLICANT	PROJECT	Amount applied for:			Recommended Award		
		OPEN SPACE & RECREATION	HISTORIC PRESERVATION	COMMUNITY HOUSING	OPEN SPACE & RECREATION	HISTORIC PRESERVATION	COMMUNITY HOUSING
Library Trustees	Ramsdell Library addition, accessibility		\$340,000			\$0	
Berkshire South	Pavilion and trail improvements	\$30,000			\$0		
Mahaiwe PAC	Drainage remediation of historic bldg		\$30,000			\$30,000	
Unitarian Universalists	Restoration of 1089 Main St, Housatonic		\$17,250			\$0	
St. James Place	St. James Place		\$150,000			\$150,000	
GB Historical Comm.	Newsboy Statue & Fountain		\$31,640			\$31,640	
GB Historical Society	Phase 1 Farmstead Preservation		\$50,000			\$50,000	
GB DPW	Weatherbee Vault repairs		\$27,500			\$0	
GB DPW	Town Hall investigation / repairs		\$20,000			\$20,000	
GB DPW	Mason Library repairs		\$65,000			\$65,000	
CDC	open space at 100 Bridge Street	\$300,000			\$300,000		
CDC	housing at 100 Bridge Street			\$450,000			\$200,000
Trustees of the Reservation	Monument Mtn and Flag Rock trails	\$52,000			\$20,000		
		\$382,000	\$731,390	\$450,000	\$320,000	\$346,640	\$200,000
		TOTAL: \$1,563,390			TOTAL: \$866,640		

Next Meeting

Rembold said the next meeting is Saturday, January 3 at 10:00 AM. The Committee should finalize its funding conditions and discuss the process for preparing for Town Meeting. Blauvelt may be a few minutes late.

Adjourn

On a motion by Blauvelt, seconded by Fowle, the meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Materials presented or distributed for this meeting:

- Draft Minutes from December 16 and 18, 2014 meeting
- Email of 12/22/14 from Chris Rembold re: Wetherbee Vault.

Respectfully submitted:

