

**Town of Great Barrington, Community Preservation Committee (CPC)**  
Minutes of December 9, 2014  
Great Barrington Fire Station

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

Members present: All members were 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 Chris Rembold.

**Administrative Business**

- a.) Minutes of 11/20/14: Dezieck moved to approve the minutes, Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor.
- b.) Abrahams informed the Committee that he had asked the State Ethics Commission whether there was any issue with him participating in discussions regarding the Library Trustees application. He said he got a written opinion that there was not an issue but he filed a written disclosure with the Town Clerk anyway.
- c.) Smith said there are a number of requests asking the Committee to reconsider its late application policy. Dezieck moved that the Community Preservation Committee reaffirm the policy and procedure that no late applications will be accepted for review. Blauvelt seconded. Smith asked for discussion.

Salem said she might want to accept them. Fowle said she would accept them if it would not set a precedent. Abrahams, Jackson, and Nappo said they would support the motion. Fick said we have a tight timeline therefore she would support the motion. Blauvelt said the guidelines were out very early; if we allow late applications it would set a precedent. Smith agreed that it would set a precedent. She said the deadline has been stated repeatedly for several months and it was in bold on the application. Fowle said she understood but that the traffic issue was because of the town. Smith responded saying accepting late applications could be unfair to those who were on time.

Smith called the vote: the motion passed 8-1.

**Evaluation of Step 2 Applications**

1. Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center application for drainage remediation of historic building, \$30,000 request for drainage improvements to the historic building. Blauvelt recused himself from the discussion. Smith reviewed the average scores.

Smith asked why the 2005 renovation did not address the drainage issue. Beryl Jolly, Mahaiwe Director, said the issue was not known until more recently. Nappo thought the proposed repair would not address how the water was getting into the building. It seems like a band aid. Jolly said the scale of the exterior fix was too large, and this is a more manageable approach as recommended by their contractors, Allegrone Companies. Jackson worried if water still came through the foundation it would continue to erode the structure. Tim Schroepfer of the Mahaiwe said high groundwater is part of the issue, and that waterproofing the exterior will not fix the issue. He said renovations next door to the old firehouse could also impact exterior conditions. Nappo did not agree that the proposal would work. Fick said that exterior work can be too expensive and stone foundations always leak. Salem said she has to use the expertise of the applicant team to guide her.

Abrahams asked if this was a maintenance issue. Smith said it seems like a new project.

Dezieck said this application is not proposing any leveraged money. Smith asked why the organization has not committed funds to the project. Jolly said they deal with a \$1.7 million operating budget but have not approved any fundraising for capital projects, but they will use \$5,000 of their projected capital facilities fund grant.

Fowle asked about permits. Jolly said their contractor will file for all permits. Nappo said permits should be straightforward.

For the "project in progress" column, Dezieck thought it was not applicable. Jackson wondered if anything had started. Fick said they have an estimate, they have identified the problem, they have a contractor, but they

have not actually begun permitting or the work. Therefore she scored it a 2. Nappo said it was not in progress, at least not yet. Fowle said she looked at it as part of the entire renovation and scored it a 4.

For community support, Abrahams said they demonstrate support every time they sell out a show.

Rembold read the Committee the definitions for "maintenance" and for "capital improvement" from the CPA statute.

2. St. James Place: \$150,000 for preservation / rehab of former St. James Church, for roof repair and replacement. Smith said it was, on average, the highest scoring application. Nappo asked about the scope of the project. Fred Harris, applicant, said it includes getting new trusses in to the building. Abrahams asked if the project should be counted as open space and historic, since there is some open space on the property. Rembold said they are only applying for historic funding.

Fick said she was impressed to see how much the project costs and how much thought has gone into the entire project including programming. Blauvelt agreed. Dezieck said it was thorough. It shows they have done a lot work and the project is underway.

Jackson asked why they were being conservative in their CPA request. Sally Harris said they are fundraising for more money, but this structural need was the most pressing. They may apply for funds in the future for other work. Nappo said he sees the roof repair as an immediate need.

Jackson said the application clearly fits the historic preservation category. Smith agreed. Fowle said they have worked very well with the Planning Board.

3. GB Historical Society for \$50,000 for portion of the Wheeler Farmstead Preservation

Smith said the application was in the top 4 based on the preliminary scoring. Smith said she appreciated the timeline. Fick asked Debbie Oppermann, Society Director, about the wagon house, woodshed and drover's room. Oppermann said they were all the same structure, but at different times they have been called different things, depending on the use of the time. Fick said now she understands but she had marked it low because she thought they did not have cost estimates for this specific structure.

Nappo asked if the consultants included in their estimate the cost for meeting historic standards. Oppermann said yes.

Smith asked where town archival documents are going. Oppermann said they are now at the Ramsdell. Paul Ivory of the town Historical Commission said there is confusion because Ramsdell houses both Society and Commission documents, which are different organizations.

Fick asked about match. Oppermann said they hope to have a cultural council grant, and they have done additional fundraising to help match the Fitzpatrick grant.

Smith said the bid estimates seemed a little out of date. Oppermann said that is back up material to show that they have done enough background to know the scope and approximate budget.

Jackson asked how many members the Society had. Oppermann said about 150. Smith thought the letters of support we all very clear. Fowle appreciated the one from the middle school teacher—local history education is important and nice to see.

Abrahams said this is the type of thing I would like to fund. Dezieck agreed saying local history and education are things that we said we want to support.

4. CDC for open space at 100 Bridge Street, requesting \$300,000 total.

Smith summarized the scores and said this scored highly, 83%, for the total average. Smith asked about the purchase of the conservation restriction and who receives the money. Rembold said it is a payment to the owner to purchase the development rights and the project developer can use that money as a source of funding.

Fowle said there is reference to connectivity to parks and East Mountain. She asked the applicant to provide some maps showing the connectivity. Tim Geller for the CDC said there is an informal trail that goes east, up the hill along a stream, from Bentley Avenue up to Grove Street park. From there people walk up to East Mountain or out Grove Street to the woods. Jackson said the land at the end of Grove Street is privately owned and there are now signs to keep people out. She added that she would hope the trail is longer, or leads to a larger network. On its own the proposed river trail seems pretty short.

Fowle said she needed more information on invasive plants control and the planting plan.

Geller said some of the costs are high because the pocket park has a lot of hardscape, like a piazza or plaza. The riverfront trail is intended to be more natural space.

Rembold reminded the Committee that an appraisal would be needed to confirm the value of the conservation restriction. For that item, the CPA could not pay more than the appraised value.

Dezieck said the project is well underway. She is very familiar with all of the permitting. The cleanup and the plan is well thought out.

Nappo asked about handicapped accessibility. Geller said the site is pretty flat in this area, so it is possible that the open space could be accessible.

Fowle asked why the Land Conservancy has only agreed "in principle" to hold the conservation restriction and how big the parcel is. Geller said it's a small area to be restricted because it's an urban park—it's not like a farm on the outskirts of town. He said Land Conservancy can't commit to holding the restriction until they know the details.

Geller noted the overall open space budget was more than \$1.3 million and the CPA would be an important part of that.

5. GB DPW for the Wetherbee Vault in Mahaiwe Cemetery. \$27,500 from historic preservation for repairs.

Smith asked why there was not any leverage committed from the cemetery commission. She also thought there was not a public good. The family should have left enough money to keep up the structure. She also asked why the estimate says that it does not include stone replacement. Blauvelt said he struggles with this because he does not see it as significant. Joe Sokul, DPW Superintendent, said there are internments in the vault, that it is not just an empty structure.

Salem asked what if nothing was done. Sokul said the town has a responsibility to take care of it, per state law, or, if the vault fell down, the town would have to remove it and re-inter the remains. Smith thought the remains should be respected. Sokul said repair of burial structures is not unprecedented for the town. In fact after the tornado the town had to repair some structures in the same cemetery. Sokul said the photos included in the application show the interior ceiling falling apart, with cracks and pieces on the floor. Sokul said this estimate is the minimum needed to stabilize the structure and weatherproof it. He said it would cost more to completely restore it by replacing the stone and rebuilding it.

Smith said she did not think the estimate was a good one. Sokul said it is for estimating, and it includes the work we need. It has to be procured through the town.

Fowle said she did not know there was a cemetery fund. Also she rated leverage and community input as "not applicable" because she did not want town employees to feel they had to go out and raise funds in some other way. She did a similar rating for Town Hall and Mason Library.

Jackson said some people like to walk in the cemeteries and the interesting structures can be part of that experience, but in this case there's not obvious public support for the structure. Nappo said the Historic Commission designated the entire cemetery as historic, and that includes this structure.

6. GB DPW for Town Hall, \$20,000 to begin eaves investigations. Smith said it was scored relatively low but it sounded like predevelopment or assessment money. Sokul said yes, and the actual construction, depending on the findings, will be in excess of \$100,000. The balustrades and columns for the front and side doors was \$105,000 itself. Smith said she hoped photos could be provided. Sokul said this project will fund an architect or engineer to be selected. They will develop a scope and cost estimate for the repairs.

Smith thought it was a lot of money just to look at a problem. Jackson said it seemed reasonable because it was about 10 to 20% of the projected construction total. Sokul said that is how he estimated the cost.

7. GB DPW for Mason Library \$65,000 for repairs. Sokul said that unlike the Town Hall proposal, the investigation for the Mason Library has been done, and we know what the actual cost should be. There were questions about the project team and the experience. Sokul said he cannot determine the team because it has to be bid out. Smith said then the category should be "not applicable."

Smith and Fowle asked about wrapped PVC materials. Sokul said the structural materials are pressure treated wood, and the PVC is just a finish material. Nappo said it is often used. Sokul said that is the material used at town hall, and the historic district commission approved it for use at town hall. It's a solid color, it wears well, and can be detailed well.

Jackson asked why these repairs were not done in 2008. Sokul said he does not know for sure. Smith said that project was to put an addition on and provide handicapped access.

Fick asked how quickly this needs to be done. Sokul said there is leaking that happens. They have corrected some of it, but the railing is falling apart and the ceiling leaks. Smith showed the committee the photos included. Sokul said the town has had to spend \$10-12,000 just patching things but they need to fix the problem. Fowle said it could get much worse and cost much more if it is not dealt with.

8. Berkshire South Community Center \$30,000 for pavilion and trail improvements. Smith said it scored in the lowest quartile in part because there is no direct leverage, immediate need was low, and project in progress was low. Smith asked about the team. Janice Lucey, Director of Berkshire South, said Peter Jensen will do the trail work, and the pavilion will be installed by ShedMan.

Jackson asked how long the path is. Lucey said it is just the pathway from the parking to the pavilion. Rembold said it is 340 feet long. The trail that goes up the mountain to Fountain Pond is 1.5 miles one way.

Fick said she was disappointed not to see more letters of support from people in Great Barrington, demonstrating need and support. Lucey said item 8 answers the public benefit question.

She said the existing gazebo is rotted and needs to be replaced. If it's usable in any way they will move it elsewhere on the site. She said that for example they did get a grant for \$20,000 for outdoor classroom space, on the other side of the building. They'll try to tie these projects together. But the new pavilion will be bigger, will be accessible, and will allow for more programming.

Fowle asked why the gazebo won't be located adjacent to the parking lot. Lucey said there is more space on the hill in the lawn. Fowle said she was trying to understand the goal. Lucey said they are trying to make more outdoor classroom and outdoor activity space, and ensure it is accessible. Fowle asked why Jensen's expertise was needed just for the little path. Lucey said he knows the property, he's a regular partner of the Center, and they trust his work.

Smith asked about leverage and why there is no fundraising commitment. Lucey said the leverage is low because the project management component has not been given a cash value. She said this is something that will actually raise more awareness and value overall. Also they have experience fundraising—they have \$100,000 in grants this year and \$700,000 in general support for programming and operations and to keep rates reasonable, but they haven't sought or raised funds for this project.

9. Library Trustees for Ramsdell Library for \$340,000 for an addition and accessibility. Smith read the summary scores and said the average of 30% was relatively low. Holly Hamer of the Trustees discussed document storage and the upstairs room. She said the building is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Fick and Smith both commented that the addition is not actually historic preservation. Fick said it goes well beyond. It would be ok for the ramps, but not new space. Smith said CPA can't be used for all the new space or the entire parking lot for example. Rembold confirmed that this understanding was accurate.

Hamer said the addition is needed because the upstairs community space is not accessible. Any library needs community space, and the less expensive way to do it is to add on to the first floor rather than try to access the upstairs. She said the Town has committed to a larger renovation but it has been put off many times. Smith said the Town has not actually committed any capital improvement funds. Hamer said only the savings and Friends' funds are in hand at this time.

Smith said this project puts the chicken before the egg because Town Meeting has to approve the project, the operations, and the capital funds. Abrahams said the Town has been spending money on the building, including doing the windows this year. Smith said she does not agree there is town-wide support at this time.

Salem said the project has to meet the CPA Plan criteria and some of the plan does not seem relevant. Some of the parking is not related to the historic or to accessibility.

Fowle asked why the driveway is proposed in this place. Hamer said this is just a draft. The property line is very close but the driveway could fit on the right side. Fowle asked if the driveway could be shared with the Unitarians. The curb cut here would be unfortunate and would negatively impact the landscaping. Hamer said they could explore it and hire an architect to do an actual plan.

Blauvelt asked if Mason Library was accessible why Ramsdell also needs to be. He said the library as a system is accessible. Hamer said if you can deliver all the programs in an accessible location then it is ok. But we have some programs that cannot be replicated at Mason. So if they are to provide equal programming in Housatonic, the Ramsdell needs to be accessible.

Jackson asked if there were any historic rehabilitation needs for the building; are the foundations sound, is the roof sound, etc.? Hamer said the windows are being done. She said building systems like furnace and electric will have to be done at some point.

Smith said she is not sure Town Meeting will approve large spending projects. She said that to put money into something that does not have a defined plan or funding path seems suspect at this point.

10. Trustees of the Reservation for Flag Rock & Monument Mountain for \$52,000 for trails and trailhead area. Smith summarized the scores. Rembold projected on screen the map of the area. Becky Ferguson from the Trustees introduced herself.



Smith asked whether CPA can pay for staff salaries, benefits, and overhead. Rembold said during Step 1 discussions the Committee discussed CPA should be for capital improvements, not for operating issues. Jackson said if an organization does not have the operational budget to undertake worthy new capital projects then it seems fair to support those costs.

Fowle said she scored the application higher, partly because she knows the area well. She said it is a perfect fit for CPA. It takes care of a missing link and meets our town plan objectives. It connects the village to a tremendous trail system. She would like to know more about exactly where the parking and trailhead will be. Ferguson said the trailhead would be near Grove Street. The trail routes are not yet finalized because the informal trail that exists might be on other private properties with no existing easements. They need to explore the possibilities. Ferguson said the funds will be used for both planning and as much implementation as we can.

Dezieck thought some of the property has open permits. Ferguson said no, and she will supply a better map for the Committee next time.

Nappo asked about the Hickey Trail repair, and why there is not much money requested for that. Ferguson said it is not a large portion of the trail, but it washes out frequently. He asked if the Flag Rock portion will connect to the mills and the river. Ferguson said no, not directly. Fowle said there are other proposals not in front of the Committee that would make the connection to the mills.

Salem asked if the CPA will make the trails connect to the village. Ferguson said not directly but it begins the process to make the connection.

Jackson asked about the consultant costs versus construction budget. Ferguson said it is for trail planning, route planning, and for the beginning steps of the parking lot access. Smith asked for a more defined budget.

11. Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire for \$17,250 for restoration of 1089 Main St, Housatonic. The Committee had questions but the applicants were not at the meeting. Smith read the score summary. She said it scored relatively low, but they have good leverage and it is a historic building.

Smith asked about the project team qualifications. Blauvelt said the project team seems very weak. He said it was his lowest scoring application and he did not see a big public benefit.

Fowle said Housatonic is in dire need of handicapped accessible meeting space, whether it is here or in the library.

Dezieck and Jackson asked why they did not come. Rembold said he sent the agenda and they were invited. He will check the email. Smith suggested we start with them at the next meeting.

12. GB Historical Commission for Newsboy Statue & Fountain, for \$31,640 for preservation of the monument and fountain. Smith summarized the scores. She said it sounds great for CPA funding. Nappo said there is some leverage.

Salem asked why it was multiple CPA purposes and is it really open space. Blauvelt said it is a park. Rembold asked if the funds being sought are for the historic work only, not for open space. Paul Ivory of the GB Historical Commission said the monument is the core feature of the park, so this would enhance the park.

Dezieck asked why the application talks about a maintenance plan. Ivory said the conservators will train the Commission in long term maintenance, so we can prevent this sort of project in the future. Smith said it doesn't sound like maintenance per se, but it is part of the capital investment.

Dezieck asked about the chemicals needed in the restoration. Ivory said the conservators follow strict codes for handling the chemicals.

Fowle said if this is considered open space, then so should the Wetherbee vault project in the Mahaiwe cemetery. She said the funding is for the fountain itself. The Wetherbee is in open space too, but the funding is only for that structure. Fowle added that the Newsboy is hard to appreciate because there are not good places to park. Can it be relocated? Ivory said no, the monument has always been at this location. Ivory said it is accessible—people do park on the road shoulder. He said the Commission will do a brochure and celebration to highlight the park and educate people about the resource.

Ivory said restoring the fountain aspect is important. Earliest references called it a fountain, not a statue.

13. CDC for community housing at 100 Bridge Street, for \$450,000 total. Smith said the application scored very highly on average and it fits community needs very well. She thinks affordable housing is greatly needed. Smith then read a letter submitted for the record by David Magadini. The letter states the need for affordable housing but says this project did not address that need.

Tim Geller of the CDC said there are 45 units proposed. They would be restricted to families earning not more than certain income levels, measured as a percentage of the area median income or "AMI." Rembold read the amounts as shown in the application.

Dezeick added that the site is under environmental remediation plan and the applicants have a very good team. There was some discussion about the remediation plan.

Smith asked if the funding could be phased. Tim Geller of the CDC said yes, the request is for \$200,000 in one year and \$250,000 in another year. He said the CDC is applying for tax credit funding but it might not be awarded this coming spring. It takes a while to get an award. He said we request some CPA funds at the beginning and the rest when the other funds are committed. He said at that point the CPA money is safe and you can be sure the project will happen.

### **Next Meeting**

The next two meetings will be Tuesday, December 16 and Thursday, December 18, both at 5:30 at the Fire Station. The Committee will continue evaluations and decide which are weakest and which are strongest.

### **Adjourn**

Hearing no further business, Smith adjourned the meeting at 9:45 PM.

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Materials presented or distributed for this meeting:

- Draft Minutes from November 20, 2014 meeting
- 13 Step 2 applications
- Summary sheet of CPC scoring
- Letter from David Magadini regarding community housing

Respectfully submitted:

