

Town of Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

Minutes of September 1, 2016

Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road

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

Absent: Martha Fick. Also present: Town Planner/CPA Administrator Chris Rembold

Call to Order 5:30 PM by Chairman Blauvelt

Administrative Items

Dezieck moved to approve the August 23, 2016 meeting minutes, Wile seconded. All were in favor.

Review of Additional FY18 Step 1 Applications

Berkshire Housing Development Corporation for Bostwick Gardens Expansion

BHDC President Elton Ogden provided a summary budget for predevelopment funds to create affordable housing. He said some of these are likely to be previously incurred, so the request will be adjusted when we submit a Step 2. So we'll adjust and use some for predevelopment and request the balance of funds for post-closing costs. Predevelopment costs may include architectural, engineering, and legal fees.

Smith asked about total costs. Ogden said acquisition is being paid for by our own funds now, with 65,000 of the \$300,000 is committed now. The total cost is estimated at \$12 million. He said the bulk of that is federal and state low income housing tax credits.

Jackson arrived.

Dezieck said her concern is timing to apply for the project funds. Ogden said their plan is to apply to the state in February, and they would try to close on sources at the end of the year, and then they could build in the coming year. Usually the first funding is not given. Three years out to start construction in reality.

Jackson asked about an appraisal. Ogden said the purchase price exceeds the appraised value. That is one reason we are not asking for acquisition. We are funding that gap because doing this project at this location is the right thing to do.

Smith moved to approve for Step 2. Nappo seconded. All were in favor.

Town: Housatonic School Preservation

Rembold provided a summary of the application which is for historic preservation funding. He said the Town wants to hire an architect to study the building's exterior and ensure it is structurally sound. The study would also scope out any items that need to be repaired in order to ensure the building is preserved for the long term. The Town's goal is to try to accomplish all that it can to attract a potential buyer or tenant.

He said the building is historic, but it is not yet officially on the State or National Register. He said therefore the Town will ask the Historical Commission to affirm the school's significance to the Town, so that it qualifies for CPA funding.

Smith said this building has been on the market before. She asked what makes the Town think keeping it up will be better. Will it make it easier to sell, she asked. She said she does not agree with putting money towards a building that we might sell or somebody might tear down.

Abrahams said the Committee's job at this point is to judge eligibility for Step 2. He said this is clearly eligible for CPA historic preservation.

Dezieck moved to approve for a Step 2 application with the condition that the Town receive the official designation of significance from the Historical Commission. Higa seconded. The vote was 8 in favor with Smith voting against.

Great Barrington Land Conservancy for Riverfront Trail

Janice Kabel and Christine Ward presented GBLC's application for Creation of recreational land (trail). Ward said this project will allow GBLC to continue to move the town forward on several Open Space and Transportation goals. She said the envisioned trail runs from Bridge St to Brookside Rd. She said the GBLC has discussed with all the landowners along the route and have their support. She said engineering and delineation work is the beginning of the trail development process.

Kabel said this will be a walking path from the senior housing, north through Fairground property then through the Dewey Academy (castle) property to Bridge St. This project will also involve survey. She said the route will partially follow sewer easements. The total route will be 1.25 miles. She said they have worked with Peter Jensen and Engineers to come up with the cost estimates.

Smith moved to approve for a Step 2, Abrahams seconded, all were in favor.

Berkshire Natural Resources Council for Thomas & Palmer Reserve

BNRC representatives could not attend so Rembold gave a summary. He said the BNRC acquired 213 acres of land on Route 23 / State Road across from Koi restaurant, along the Thomas and Palmer Brook. They received a large grant from the State's NRD fund for the acquisition last year. Their application here is for creation of recreational land, to build a scenic trail and bridge over the brook. There is a brook crossing that is falling down. They need a bridge in order to get people and trail maintenance equipment back to the trails. This open space and trail is part of a larger vision to link preserved open space.

Smith moved to approve for a Step 2, Dezieck second, all were in favor.

Berkshire Pulse for elevator / access project

Andy Reynolds was present for Berkshire Pulse's application for historic rehab/restoration funds.

Abrahams moved to approve, Higa seconded.

In discussion Smith asked, what is the public benefit of this proposal when the building is privately owned? Jackson said the point of CPA is to preserve historic structures. Who owns it is irrelevant. We are a town that wants to preserve historic buildings.

Reynolds says the funds will help make a historic building handicapped accessible to the public. He said we are required to upgrade the freight elevator. He said Pulse serves the public with classes, with school performances and other events. He said they have a matching grant to leverage the CPA funds.

Abrahams said the public benefit here is not really easy to see but it is real. He said this is like the Mahaiwe Theater application the first year—they needed to fix drainage to stabilize the building.

Reynolds said this application is to make capital improvements to make the building functional for its intended use. He said their use requires a real elevator up to code. We currently have a variance from the code but that only lasts through 2017.

Smith asked if the building owner is contributing. Reynolds said they were rent free for a while during construction, but this our expense. Jackson asked what if there was not an elevator. Reynolds said if it was a private building they would not have to have it, but he said as a dance school they are open to the public, so the AAB code requirements apply.

Blauvelt asked for a vote on the motion. All were in favor

Reports from Committee Members

None

Administrative Update / Existing Projects

Rembold said the Fire District will not submit a Step 2 application.

Upcoming Meetings

Wednesday, October 5

Tuesday, October 18

Tuesday, October 25

Citizen Speak Time: None

Adjourn 6:26 PM

Materials Presented/Distributed for this Meeting:

- Draft minutes of August 23 meeting
- Step 1 applications referenced above

Respectfully submitted:



