

Town of Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
Minutes of November 19, 2015
Great Barrington Fire Station

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

Members present: Ed Abrahams, Thomas Blauvelt, Jessica Dezieck, Martha Fick, Suzanne Fowle, William Nappo, Deborah Salem, and Karen W. Smith.

Also present: Town Planner/CPA Administrator Chris Rembold

Members absent: Kathleen Jackson

Administrative Business

Dezieck moved to approve the minutes of November 5, 2015, Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor. Salem abstained.

Smith said the CPA State Trust Fund distributions were released. Great Barrington will receive 186,411. This is not available until the tax rate is certified next year, so we will continue today with the total fund amount of \$800,000 we have been working with.

Continued Discussion of FY 17 projects

Construct, for housing at 316 State Road:

Dezieck moved to recommend the town grant \$220,000 to Construct to create affordable housing at 316 State Road, with the initial \$110,000 available for predevelopment costs contingent on the execution of a grant agreement and the second \$110,000 to be available only after the applicant closes on their construction financing. Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor.

CDC, for housing at 100 Bridge St:

Abrahams asked the Committee if they would consider funding only what the CDC needs to go forward this year, and then next fiscal year we not accept applications until we fund the CDC balance first. That way we could fund everything this year at least partly. He does not see the downside unless something comes next year that we like better. Fick said the downside is we will have less money next year. We should start next year with a clean slate. Fowle hesitated to do soft commitments again. Blauvelt agreed. Nappo was hesitant to move forward on all projects at the full level. Smith thought it would fiscally immature to fund all partially, adding that we have to evaluate what is in front of us. Abrahams said he is not trying to avoid difficult things.

Blauvelt said he likes this project but would rather at \$200,000. Fowle agreed because that way they could move forward. She added that last year they got 60% of what we gave out. Salem said they would still need the funding of the balance of \$50,000 next year. We should just include it now. Fowle said that \$50,000 could make other projects possible. Salem said there might be some projects that possibly should not get funded. Fick said if we made soft commitment we should honor the commitment. So this year we need to do what we said last year. Nappo said this has to go as is with the full \$250,000 because there is a street and bridge renovation too. It is important now. Dezieck said let's honor our full commitment this year. Smith agreed.

St James Community Housing / Bostwick Gardens:

Blauvelt said we should try and give them seed money. It's housing by an established and known group. We can help them move this along with a grant of \$15-25,000. Salem disagreed saying if we had the money she would. Dezieck, Nappo, Fick, Abrahams, and Fowle agreed. Smith said then it seems clear. She said she agrees partly but to show a commitment to this project is important, because if we do not, then some people will think we do not support it. Nappo said it is not ready. Smith said predevelopment funds can be a risk. Fick said it is not put together.

Town, for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund:

Blauvelt said he does not like the idea of the Town being in the housing business and managing the fund. Fick said we manage a fund; that is what we do here. He said we would be better served by giving these funds to the St James Bostwick project. Nappo said if we don't start now at \$15,000 or it will get kicked down road. Dezieck said she has decided to not fund it. Abrahams said it is important but it is at the bottom of the list. He would cut it this year. Fowle said she could cut it if necessary but would try to fund it. Salem said it has merit but it is not a priority. Fick added that this is a place we can cut but still start with some amount.

CHP for the Health Walks Trail:

Nappo said he would like to fund at \$10,000. Dezieck agreed. Fick said she was going to cut but she agrees to full funding. Nappo said for that amount of money a lot of people will benefit. Salem agreed but she was willing to put this off in favor of other projects. Blauvelt said he supports it. It is a modest investment and a big return. Fowle said hands down it is the biggest bang for our buck. It brings together multiple organizations. Abrahams agreed to full funding.

River Walk restoration:

Smith said last time the group was all in favor. Nappo said the Riverwalk is tied to downtown which includes Bridge Street and those projects. There is no doubt this must be fully funded to completely work.

Town, for Memorial Field bathroom and accessibility:

Nobody was in favor of this.

BRNC for the Windy Hill APR:

Fowle recused herself. Smith said she would like to fund at \$170,000. She said based on the last time that seems to be a level that works. Blauvelt was unhappy that the owner's contribution was not more. Fick said she would be ok at \$175,000. Nappo said over 34% of the town is protected. He said he wants to protect as much land as possible but not at expense of other projects. He would fund it partially at \$100,000. Smith said this site is so visible. She said it is not a personal piece of land – it has value on many levels. She feels very strongly in favor of this. She does not want to jeopardize the project. She said the state is coming in with \$500,000, so \$170,000 here is reasonable. Salem was willing to fully fund. Fick agreed. Dezieck and Abrahams agreed with \$170,000.

TTOR for Housatonic Village trail:

Fick said she is not comfortable with this project; she is uncomfortable funding something that it is not a clear plan with clear costs. Salem said their idea is to acquire this land to improve parking and access. She likes it but it is not a priority and it is not ready. Nappo said we have to give them some seed money to get going on this. Appraisals and environmental surveys need to be done. He would fund at \$10,000. Abrahams said this is at the bottom of his list right now. Fowle agreed at \$10,000. Blauvelt agreed. Dezieck said for two years in a row they came in here not ready. Smith said it is at the bottom for her.

Unitarians for preservation of 1089 Main Street:

Smith said the Committee received input from the organizations about their budget. She said the Committee also received a letter from a citizen today and it was forward to everyone. She said all grants made by this committee are reviewed by Town Counsel.

Abrahams would support it at \$60,000. Fowle agreed saying it is important for Housatonic. Blauvelt supports it at \$60,000. Salem and Fick agreed. Nappo said he is not quite comfortable. In his contracting experience he said projects like this tend to go over budget. Smith said we always use estimates. It's the bid you are looking for. If they come in higher than the bids it is their problem to figure out what they can do. Peter Bluhm said he has estimates only; he has never felt comfortable asking for firm bids unless he

had the money to do the work. He said the estimates varied and they tried hard to prioritize the projects. that is our problem. He said they are using an engineering firm now. He said he would be happy to meet with Bill to make sure scopes are appropriate. Dezieck said this year they worked really hard to give us a complete application.

GB Historical Society Phase 1 B restoration:

Debbie Oppermann said she understands there is still some question and discomfort in paying for the light fixtures. She has removed that part from the budget. She said it is the light's lens that makes the difference. Smith said the asset we are preserving is the building, not your artifacts. Oppermann said she understands; the element that makes the light fixtures museum grade is those lenses. After some discussion Rembold pointed out that the Committee could fund \$24,250. He said reviewing their sources and uses list, this amount would cover architects, electrical, finish work, and project management. The Historical Society contributions would cover the fixtures. None of the CPA funds would be for the fixtures and the balance of the project budget. Rembold CPA may withhold a small amount until the project is completed. All supported the \$24,250 amount.

Town Historical Commission:

All supported this at \$10,000. Salem said for her it is near the bottom of the list.

St James Place bell tower:

Nappo loves this project—hearing the chimes and seeing the clock is emotional—but he does not see how we can afford it. Dezieck said she cannot fit it into the budget. Maybe next year. Abrahams said we should put it off a year. Fick said this is great but we won't make our total. She said they could raise funds for this. We should wait a year. Fowle said she would fund it at 52,600. Blauvelt agreed. He said this is an anchor for Main Street. Salem said she would fund it as much as possible. It's a priority for her.

Rembold reviewed the funding budget and summarized the Committee's positions on each, such as were there was full support, partial support, or no support. There was discussion about how amounts could be changed to meet the CPA budget. Smith asked for straw polls on each project. By removing St. James Place it would bring the total in under the cap. There was a suggestion that the Town housing trust fund could be cut to \$0 and that money could be moved over to the Town Historical Commission project to fully fund it.

Votes on FY17 Funding

Construct: voted previously. No change.

Town Historical Commission: Dezieck moved to recommend the Town grant \$15,000, Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

RiverWalk: Dezieck moved to recommend the Town grant \$26,412, Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Unitarians: Dezieck moved to recommend the Town grant \$60,000, Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

CHP trails: Dezieck moved to recommend the Town grant \$10,000, Blauvelt seconded. Seven in favor. One (Smith) against. Motion passed.

CDC for housing: Dezieck moved to recommend the Town grant \$250,000, Fick seconded. Abrahams said he would be ok funding it less and moving \$50,000 to another project, only if there was a

commitment to fund the balance next year. Six were in favor of the motion. Two (Blauvelt, Fowle) were against the motion. Motion passed.

GB Historical Society: Dezieck moved to recommend the Town grant \$24,250, Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

BNRC - Windy Hill Farm APR: Dezieck moved to recommend the Town grant \$170,000, Fick seconded. Five were in favor. Two (Blauvelt, Nappo) were against. Fowle was recused. Motion passed.

St. James / Bostwick Gardens housing: Dezieck moved to not fund this project, Salem seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Town Memorial Field: Dezieck moved to not fund, Blauvelt seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

The Trustees of Reservations: Dezieck moved to not fund this project; Salem seconded. Five were in favor. Three (Fowle, Blauvelt, Nappo) were against. Motion passed.

Saint James Place: Dezieck moved to not fund this project; Fick seconded. Five were in favor. Three (Fowle, Blauvelt, Nappo) were against. Motion passed.

The final total in recommended FY 17 grants is \$775,662.

Rembold will draft funding conditions to be discussed at the next meeting.

Next Meeting:

January 5, at 5:30.

Committee Member Reports:

Nappo said the Newsboy project funded last year will begin in the spring.

Citizen's Speak Time:

Michelle Loubert said she submitted a letter to the Committee about the Unitarian Universalist application contending CPA funds should not be spent on it. She was offended the Committee made a decision when not all members had read the letter. Fick said after the last meeting when Ms. Loubert brought up her issue, that Fick researched it and did not enter this decision blindly. Smith said the Committee has guidance from the Coalition and all the Committee's decisions are reviewed by Town Counsel before they go to Town Meeting. Fowle said she did read Ms. Loubert's letter but she voted for this project because she believes it serves the public interest.

Adjourn:

Dezieck moved to adjourn, Salem seconded, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Materials presented or distributed for this meeting:

- Draft minutes of November 5 meeting
- Additional budget information from Great Barrington Historical Society and Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire
- Email from Stuart Saginor dated November 13 re: Historical Society - eligibility of fixtures
- Letter from Michelle Loubert re: Unitarian CPA request

Respectfully submitted: 