

Lenox Community Preservation Committee
February 6, 2008
Minutes

Members present: Roscoe Sandlin (RS), Midge Sandlin (MS), Andrea Winter (AW), Joe Strauch (JS), John McNinch (JM), Olga Weiss (OW), Scott Pignatelli and Fred Keator (FK).

Joseph Kellogg (JK), absent with notification

Also in attendance: Mary Albertson (MA), Town Planner.

RS, Chairman, opened the meeting at 6:40PM.

Town of Lenox - Baker's Pond Restoration Project

Bob Coakley, Chairman of the Kennedy Park Restoration Committee, gave a brief presentation on the history of Baker's Pond. He explained that the Kennedy Park Committee worked very hard to convince the state to donate the 87 acres known as Baker's Pond to the Town of Lenox. The land was deeded to the town in 2002. He displayed a photo album that included pictures from 1934. He stated that Baker's Pond is a treasure waiting to be restored. Originally it was part of the Dormer's Mansion estate. Civil War hero Colonel Richard T. Auchmuty constructed Barker's Pond in 1868 to supply water to his new mansion known as "The Dormers". The pond was named for the Auchmuty estate caretaker and was a popular recreation area for local Lenox residents. The Kennedy Park Committee has worked very hard to raise money to restore the pond. Rob Akroyd explained that Hill Engineering prepared restoration plans and the work is estimated to cost \$45,000. Joe Nolan, member of the Kennedy Park Restoration Committee spoke in favor of the project and asked the CPC to look favorably on the project.

JM asked what is on the property now, and Rob Akroyd explained that the pond is there but its size is greatly reduced. FK asked if the pond will be restored once the spillway is fixed and Rob Akroyd answered yes. Discussion ensued regarding the work to be completed. JS asked what would happen if the project was not funded this year. Rob Akroyd explained that plant growth will continue and it will take longer to restore the pond. OW asked about the size of the pond and it is estimated to be 1/2 - 3/4 of an acre. AW noted she is the Historical Commission representative and explained that because this project is not on the State Register of Historic Places - the Historical Commission needs to vote to declare Baker's Pond a historic asset for CPA purposes. She likes the project but noted that the Historical Commission needs additional information to make this finding. She stated that the Historical Commission meeting is February 11, 2008. She encouraged Bob Coakley and Rob Akroyd to provide additional information on the history of the pond so the Historical Commission can make a favorable finding. It was noted that AW, Bob Coakley and Rob Akroyd will meet prior to Historical Commission meeting.

Town of Lenox - Community Center Window Replacement

Greg Federspiel stated that the Community Center windows are original and the aluminum storm windows are approximately 30 years old. The proposed windows are the same windows that were used in the Town Hall historic restoration project. The historic appearance of the Community Center will be improved because of the removal of the aluminum storm windows.

Window repair was considered but this option does not provide for energy efficiency nor does it allow for the removal of the unattractive aluminum storm windows.

AW noted that the Historical Commission needs to vote to declare the Community Center a historic asset for CPA purposes. AW said that preservationists prefer that the original windows be repaired. Replacement windows are not viewed as a preservation project. She asked if the windows are causing damage to the structure. Greg Federspiel acknowledged that he understands there is a difference of opinion in the historic preservation community regarding replacement windows. He views the windows as a preservation project because the new windows will enhance the façade of the Community Center because the storm windows will be removed. AW asked about the interior storm windows at the Library and it was noted that it was not an alternative for the Community Center. Discussion ensued regarding the need to preserve a building and the need to be "green". There is give and take to protect buildings so they do not fall into disrepair.

SP asked about the match for this project. Greg Federspiel said the 50% match is to come for the General Fund FY09 capital budget. SP suggested this is why he did not support the CPA as this is the type of project that should be the town's responsibility. FK asked if there were any plans to expand the Community Center. Greg Federspiel stated that at one time expansion plans were discussed. Currently, there are no plans to expand the footprint of the Community Center, and he does not see this as a viable alternative in the near future. Recently it was determined that the building electrical system is in better shape than anticipated. The windows are an important project and if CPA money is not available the town will look to fund in the capital budget. RS noted that the windows have been on the capital budget project list for a long time and it is time to complete the project.

Saw Mill Brook Housing

Tim Geller of the CDC South Berkshire, Inc. gave a brief presentation on the project. The CDC is working with Trinity Church to develop a mixed income home ownership project on the "Bartoni property" located on Housatonic Street. There is a Purchase and Sale Agreement – and the project is in Phase 1 of development – the initial feasibility stage. The group is looking for CPA funds for pre-development funding. The group has loan commitments for the Stockbridge Congregational Church and the Western Mass. Episcopal Diocese. The land cost is \$600,000 and the group must determine if they can make the project work. There will be a mix of market rate and affordable units. The exact number of units and the percent dedicated to affordable housing is unknown at this time. It will be between 10 and 60 units and at least 25 percent affordable units. The target is 40 – 50 percent affordable units. The CDC is a non-profit organization and may partner with a developer such as Allegrone Construction. The idea is to share the risk with a for profit developer.

It was noted that Rob Hoogs is the site engineer. AW asked about the building style. Tim Geller noted that it probably will not be single family. Two – four family townhouse structures will probably work the best. Discussion ensued regarding if the CPC should allocate money to a project in the pre-develop stage. If the project does not come to fruition will town residents view this as a waste of money? Tim Geller noted pre-development money is the hardest to get because of the risk involved. He suggested that they would have a better sense of the scope of the project in the next two months. He suggested the CPC could earmark CPA funds for the project. If the feasibility study indicates that the project cannot move forward – the CPC could pull the project prior to Town Meeting.

Jeffery Kittross, Vice President of the Lenox Affordable Housing Corporation spoke in favor of the project. He also noted that he would be happy to try to answer questions regarding the Lenox Affordable Housing Corporation application for funds to develop a website. He noted that the Corporation grew out of the efforts of Trinity Episcopal Church and the Trustees of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts. The organization's focus is to build affordable housing for working families on the Bartoni property. Debbie Burke prepared the CPC application and is unable to be at the meeting. Jeffery Kittross indicated that the CDC application is more important and the CDC should give preference to that application. If there were extra CPA funds the website would be nice. CPA members noted the costs for the website were high and suggested a high school or college student might be able to do this as a class project.

Aspinwell Affordable Housing

Tim Geller stated that he represents the Aspinwell Affordable Housing project. David Case is proposing an affordable housing project at Aspinwell. He proposes 20 units and 11 will be affordable. The project is new construction. He acknowledged that the Conservation Commission denied the project and it has been appealed to the Department of Environmental Protection.

JS stated that he is the Conservation Commission representative to the CPC. He noted that there were many meetings with Mr. Case. The Conservation Commission worked with Mr. Case and allowed him to build his other housing project with the understanding that he would stay out of the wetlands in the future. The proposed project site is the headwaters for the Saw Mill Brook and this will completely destroy the wetlands and ruin the ecology of the area. This is a terrible site for this residential development. AW asked about the requirement in the ZBA Special Permit that required affordable housing. Tim Geller suggested the affordable units were volunteered and not required. AW disagreed and said the ZBA intended Mr. Case to construct affordable units. She asked MA to review the ZBA decision and report back to the committee. Tim Geller noted that he cannot address the entire Aspinwell project as he is only part of the affordable housing project. Tim Geller said the CPA request is for seed money. The request is \$5,000 for predevelopment funding. He suggested that since the town adopted the CPA – the state expects the town to contribute money toward affordable housing. Discussion ensued regarding the Aspinwell projects and the ZBA affordable housing requirement.

OW motioned to approve the minutes for January 30 and February 6 -AW seconded and the motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mary Albertson, Town Planner