



Approved 3-27-08

**Community Preservation Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
January 31, 2008**

**Members in attendance:** John Campbell, Chairman; Don Haitzma; Jane Fletcher; Tom Sartori; Todd Helwig; Bob Rosenberg; Joan Clowes; Chris Kellogg

**Members excused:** Andy Clark

**Others present:** Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Elaine Rowe, Board Secretary; Jamie Desautels, Northborough Fire Dept.; Jay Houston, Northborough Fire Dept.; Chief Durgin, Northborough Fire Dept.; Charlie Bradley, Northborough Trails Committee; Allie Lane, Recreation Director.; John Coderre, Assistant Town Administrator; Kara Buzanoski, DPW Director; Kathleen Polanowicz, Housing Authority & Northborough Affordable Housing Corporation; Lynne Giblin, Executive Director, Housing Authority; Rick Leif, Northborough Housing Partnership; Sean McCann; Keith Lane

**Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:10PM.**

**71 Church Street** – Chairman Campbell explained that the Committee received a letter from the applicant for 71 Church Street confirming that they will complete the final finish work on the porch restoration as requested at the last meeting.

**Community Preservation Coalition** – Ms. Joubert noted that she received a copy of the annual report from the Coalition, along with a request for volunteers to participate in their steering committee. Todd Helwig expressed an interest to do so.

**Public Hearing to consider applications for CPA funding for the following:**

- **Northborough Recreation Department, \$55,000 for repairs to Town Hall gym floor**
- **Northborough Trails Committee, \$8,000 for construction materials, awards for letterboxing participants, and equipment for trails volunteers**
- **Northborough Fire Dept., \$21,450 to purchase and outfit a Fire/Rescue vehicle capable of providing emergency services for users on the town's trails network**
- **Northborough DPW, \$15,000 for playground equipment for Ellsworth-McAfee park**
- **Northborough DPW, \$5,500 for benches for in and around downtown area**

- **Northborough Housing Authority & Northborough Affordable Housing Corporation, unspecified amount for the purchase of two affordable housing units at Hitching Post Lane**
- **Northborough Housing Partnership, \$20,000 for a housing needs analysis**
- **Open Space Committee, \$460,000 for Open Space reserve fund**

**Presentation by the Recreation Dept. (Allie Lane), requesting \$55,000 to repair the Town Hall gym floor**

Ms. Lane explained that she was before this board last year seeking funding for the same project, which was approved. She is back this year because no work has been done as of this time and there are additional funds now needed. She stated that some investigation was done to determine the cause of buckling, and to determine the best way to remedy the situation. She now estimates that the cost to replace the floor will be \$70,000, with additional funds being needed to replace a pipe that runs underneath the floor.

John Coderre discussed work done by an engineer, who determined that there is a steam line running beneath the floor in a portion of the gym that appears to be the cause of the buckling problem. The engineer has indicated that simply installing a vapor barrier underneath the new floor will not solve the problem. At this point, the town has a report from the engineer that offers the following three options:

- Pressure test the existing pipes and repair any leaks - while this is fast and the least expensive option, there are no guarantees that the problems will not persist.
- Dig out the existing pipes and replace them – this option offers a reasonable degree of assuredness.
- Bring the return lines above grade, which will require installing a pump in one of the back rooms

Mr. Coderre explained that the town has asked the engineer to provide cost estimates for the three options. Mr. Sartori suggested that the town ask the architect to serve as project manager to sign off that the work has been satisfactorily completed.

Mr. Rosenberg questioned the \$70,000 cost. Ms. Lane noted that the price of the floor is more than originally expected, with additional funds needed to repair the pipe. Ms. Rosenberg voiced concern that the cost of the floor has gone up substantially since it was approved at the last Town Meeting. Chairman Campbell agreed. Mr. Coderre explained that the project will be more costly because it is a public project and must comply with regulations governing municipal projects.

Chairman Campbell noted that \$52,500 was previously awarded for this project, and the applicant is now seeking an additional \$55,000. He stated that the town does not yet have a formal quote for the pipe repair work, and the board will need this information in order to act on the request at their February 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mr. Rosenberg suggested that it may be prudent to address this proposal as two separate projects. Ms. Lane asked if the funds previously awarded can be used to repair the pipes, as that work is necessary before replacing the floor. Chairman Campbell suggested that the applicant come to the next meeting with an update or a revised application to request funding for the pipe repair, and noted that the floor project that was previously funded can remain on hold.

**Carpeting for Town Hall** – Ms. Joubert noted that she had received a letter from the Recreation Director withdrawing the request for funding to replace the carpeting in Town Hall. Chairman Campbell read the letter into the record.

**Presentation by the Trails Committee (Charles Bradley), requesting \$8,000 for three different projects**

Mr. Bradley discussed the three projects, totaling \$8,000 that the Trails Committee is seeking to have funded. The first request is for \$5,000 to establish a fund for the Trails Committee to have money readily available to purchase materials for future trail development. He noted that the Trails Committee has plans to extend the Coyote Trail behind the Birchwood development, which he anticipates will be done as two or three Eagle Scout projects. There is also discussion about constructing a trail on the Algonquin property. Mr. Bradley reiterated the need to have money on hand to be ready to fund these future projects.

Mr. Bradley explained that his group is also seeking \$500 to purchase patches to be used to encourage and recognize use of the trails in Northborough.

An additional \$2500 is being requested to purchase fanny packs and small pruning shears, which are to be given to volunteers who assist with trail building and maintenance. Chairman Campbell voiced his opinion that the patch and the gift programs may not necessarily fit the criteria for CPC funding.

**Presentation by the Northborough Fire Department (Jay Houston), requesting \$21,450 for the purchase and outfitting of a fire rescue vehicle for use on the town's growing trails network.**

Captain Houston presented information about the vehicle and the benefit of having it available for use in the event of an emergency on any of the town's trails. He explained that if a fire were to break out on any of the trails, the Department does not currently have the ability to fight the fire without destroying the trail and surrounding habitat. He noted the following incidents that were reported over the past ten years:

- 18 brush fires
- 4 cases of lost or missing persons
- 2 medical emergencies
- 24 total calls in the trails areas in town.

Captain Houston explained that the apparatus that he wishes to purchase is a small, lightweight, 4-wheel drive maneuverable vehicle that will enable the Fire Department to

respond quickly to emergencies on any of the trails while minimizing damage to the trails and surrounding wildlife habitats. As it stands at this time, response to a fire and/or emergency will result in serious destruction of property. He also noted that, if approved, the vehicle could be outfitted and in service within 4 to 6 months.

Chairman Campbell asked Mr. Bradley if this type of vehicle would be beneficial to the Trails Committee. Mr. Bradley confirmed that it would have made the recent installation of boardwalks on the Coyote Trail much easier. He also agreed that it would be extremely beneficial for preserving trails and habitat.

Chairman Campbell asked if the Fire Department would be able to make the vehicle accessible to the Trails Committee. Captain Houston noted that this would be up to the Fire Chief, who would likely need to consider the amount of time the unit would be unavailable and how easily it could be accessed should an emergency situation arise. Also, once it is fitted with the Fire & EMS unit, it is unclear how effective it would then be for use by the Trails Committee.

Mr. Bradley confirmed that the Trails Committee has voted to support this proposal.

Chief Durgin reiterated his Department's opinion that this project is both justifiable and defensible, given the potential for protection of human life and preservation of habitat areas.

### **Presentation by the Northborough DPW (Kara Buzanoski), requesting \$15,000 for playground equipment for Ellsworth-McAfee Park**

Ms. Buzanoski explained that \$11,000 is needed for the purchase of play set equipment, \$2,500 would cover gravel and concrete for setting the equipment, and the remainder would be used as a contingency should any additional work be needed. She noted that she has received numerous requests for playground equipment, which she would like to have installed in the area between the gazebo and the walking trail.

Mr. Sartori asked if playground equipment is on the state's bid list. Ms. Buzanoski stated that she does not believe it is, and that the cost of the project does not make it subject to the competitive bid procedure. Mr. Kellogg questioned whether this is an allowable use of CPC funds, and cited a recent court case involving the City of Newton. Others felt that it might be possible to argue that the creation of a new recreation opportunity would be justification for funding. Mr. Sartori confirmed that the Parks & Recreation Commission has voted in favor of this proposal.

### **Presentation by the Northborough DPW (Kara Buzanoski), requesting \$5,500 for benches to be installed in and around the downtown area**

Ms. Buzanoski explained that a petition with 80 signatures had been presented to the Board of Selectmen requesting that benches be provided throughout town for the benefit of elderly citizens who live in and around the downtown area. Based on input from the Design Review Committee, four different styles of bench and proposed locations have been chosen for consideration.

Chairman Campbell asked for justification for this use of CPA funds. Ms. Buzanoski voiced her opinion that this falls under the creation of Open Space resources, since town-owned property is less useable if there is no provision for an area for respite.

**Presentation by the Northborough Affordable Housing Corporation (Kathleen Polanowicz), requesting \$3,000 for reorganization.**

Ms. Polanowicz explained that the Northborough Housing Authority, authorized by the state and created by the town, is responsible for managing affordable housing in town. The Northborough Affordable Housing Corporation was created to provide support for this effort by creating, fostering, and preserving affordable housing development. She is seeking \$3,000 for the reorganization of the Housing Corporation, which will allow for more creative use of funding. As an independent entity, the Corporation will have the ability to apply for matching funds, additional grants, and accept contributions, much of which is not currently available to the Authority.

Mr. Kellogg asked what other avenues the Corporation has for funding. Ms. Polanowicz noted that the corporation has not been a functioning entity to this point because they have previously had no funds or sources of funding. Mr. Rosenberg asked how long ago the Corporation was established. Ms. Polanowicz indicated that it was formed approximately 10 years ago, though very little has been done with it or by it.

Mr. Sartori asked who would be the official sounding board for affordable housing projects, given the various entities in town working toward this common cause. Rick Leif voiced his opinion that the Northborough Housing Partnership would act in this capacity. Ms. Polanowicz noted that the Housing Partnership was not in existence when the CPA was voted in, and that she expects that the Housing Authority and Partnership will work together to create affordable housing, with the Corporation being the vehicle for funding.

**Presentation by the Northborough Affordable Housing Corporation (Kathleen Polanowicz), requesting \$260,000 for the purchase of two affordable housing units at Hitching Post Lane.**

Ms. Polanowicz explained that it had recently come to the Housing Corporation's attention that there are two affordable housing units on Hitching Post Lane that are scheduled for foreclosure. She noted that lenders generally do not pay attention to the affordable housing deed riders, and it appears that there are several unapproved mortgages on these properties. When she learned of this, she immediately contacted the DHCD, who sent notice to the banks involved. She also noted that the units have both been empty for over a year, and voiced concern about them falling into disrepair if action is not taken fairly soon.

Ms. Polanowicz stated that she was advised by a Real Estate professional that the price range for these affordable units would be between \$80,000 and \$120,000. Therefore, the Housing Corporation is asking the CPC for \$260,000 in funding to cover worst-case

scenario pricing and legal fees for an attorney to assist with the Purchase & Sale agreement.

Mr. Kellogg asked why the town can't force banks to sell to qualifying buyers only. Ms. Polanowicz noted that the DHCD has recently seen a record-high number of foreclosures on affordable units. Because people don't follow the rules, these two units could have easily been sold illegally. Mr. Kellogg asked how the mortgage holder can be forced to relinquish the deed to the town. Mr. Helwig questioned why the town and the DHCD don't simply enforce the established process.

Mr. Rosenberg voiced concern about condo ownership. Ms. Polanowicz noted that the Housing Authority would like to maintain these as rental units, and reiterated the need for funding in order to facilitate the purchase. Chairman Campbell noted that it is possible to use bonding for housing acquisition, and asked if it would be possible to get a dollar figure for purchasing these two units within the next two weeks. Ms. Polanowicz agreed to pursue it, and noted that the Housing Authority could not afford to build two units. She reiterated the need to act quickly.

Mr. Rosenberg suggested that it might be useful for the CPC to hear a proposal whereby the Housing Corporation negotiates the purchase of one unit, processes it through the lottery to return it to private ownership, then does likewise with the second unit. In his opinion, this would make it possible to complete the transaction with \$150,000 and not have the town be the landlord. Ms. Polanowicz noted that the Housing Authority is already working in this capacity, and simply looking to add an additional two available units to their rental inventory. .

Keith Lane of 30 Assabet Drive stated that the town has a serious issue with affordable housing, with many people passing away before they make it off the waiting list. He also commented about the amount of money being granted for Open Space and suggested that the Committee reconsider their priorities, given that the housing situation is far more serious than Open Space. In his opinion, if the Open Space Committee is given money for a reserve fund, then the Housing Corporation should be afforded the same consideration.

### **Presentation by the Northborough Housing Partnership (Rick Leif), requesting \$20,000 for a housing needs analysis**

Mr. Leif discussed the Housing Partnership's request for \$20,000 for an analysis of where the needs and opportunities are for housing within the Town of Northborough. He stated that he has already spoken with a consultant, who has indicated that she can work in conjunction with the Housing Authority and Housing Partnership to create a plan to suit our needs for a cost of \$20,000.

Chairman Campbell asked about the deliverables to be included in the report. Mr. Leif noted that the report will include a breakdown of population trends, with census data being reanalyzed to determine demographic groups in town, income levels, and their abilities to afford housing that currently exists in town. It will also include an analysis of town-owned property and what potential exists for creation of housing.

Mr. Leif also indicated that the Housing Partnership supports the proposal brought forth by the Housing Corporation as it provides a reasonable opportunity to do something immediately.

Chairman Campbell asked about the timing of the study. Mr. Leif indicated that the consultant is available to start in the spring, and anticipates it will take approximately 3 to 4 months to complete. He stated that he would like to be in the position to be back before the CPC in the fall for the next funding cycle.

Mr. Leif also asked if it would be permissible to use funds currently in reserve to get the study started in May and not have to wait until July when this funding becomes available. Ms. Joubert agreed to clarify with the Town Treasurer whether this is allowable.

**Presentation by the Open Space Committee (Dan Clark), requesting \$460,000 to be allocated to the reserve fund**

Mr. Clark discussed the Open Space Committee's request for an additional \$460,000 to be added to the reserve fund to enable the town to have money readily available should an opportunity present itself. Mr. Kellogg asked if there is a priority list and/or acquisition strategy. Mr. Clark noted that the Mt. Pisgah is and has been a top priority. Mr. Kellogg encouraged Mr. Clark to develop a priority list and acquisition plan. Ms. Joubert commented that a formal priority list would become public record which will result in driving up the prices for desirable properties. The current advice is for the town to develop specific criteria for land should a parcel become available, but not consider any parcel more important than another.

Chairman Campbell noted that there is approximately \$600,000 in the Open Space fund at present, but the purchase of any viable parcel would require millions.

**Next Meeting** - February 14, 2008 to discuss applications and determine warrant articles for 2008 ATM.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:30PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Rowe  
Board Secretary