



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Community Preservation Committee

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Approved 3-27-08

Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes January 17, 2008

Members in attendance: John Campbell, Chairman; Robert Rosenberg; Jane Fletcher; Andy Clark; Tom Sartori; Don Haitsma; Joan Clowes

Excused: Todd Helwig, Chris Kellogg

Others present: Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Elaine Rowe, Board Secretary; Arlene Marshall, Historical Commission; Marie Nieber; Historical Commission; Valerie Dagle; Kathleen Pierce; Melanie Magee, Historical Society; Ellen Racine, Historical Society; Robert Ellis, Historical Society

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

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

- **Northborough Historical Commission, \$100,000 for preservation funds**
- **Northborough Historical Commission, \$3,000 for grave site inventory at Brigham Street Burial Ground**
- **William & Valerie Dagle, \$22,850 for restoring existing porch at 71 Church Street (1832 home)**
- **Northborough Historical Commission, \$2,000 for historic district signage**
- **Northborough Historical Society, \$20,000 for handicap bathroom and ramp at Historical Society building**
- **Town Clerk, \$50,000 for preservation of town records**
- **Recreation Director, \$123,800 for carpets in Town Hall**

Presentation by the Historical Commission (Arlene Marshall), requesting \$100,000 for preservation fund

Arlene Marshall explained that, as was the case last year, the Historical Commission is back before the CPC to request additional funds for the historic resource reserve fund. She noted that the Commission is seeking to build up their fund to enable them to have money available for matching grants. Doing so will enable them to pursue the purchase of permanent preservation easements for the preservation of historic resources. She reiterated the Commission's desire to have funds readily available should an opportunity present itself.

Chairman Campbell asked if there are any reserves earmarked for projects at this point. Mr. Rosenberg noted that \$80,000 plus an additional \$30,000 for a survey had been approved at last year's Town Meeting.

Ms. Marshall explained that use of CPA funds requires the CPC to establish separate reserve funds for Open Space, Historic Resources, and Housing. She noted that the Historic Preservation fund has been established and the Historical Commission is simply seeking to add to it.

Mr. Sartori commented that there are numerous proposals for funding for historic preservation projects this year, and he asked about the status of the survey that was funded last year. Marie Nieber explained that Phase 1 of the survey is nearly completed, and Phase 2 will commence following completion of the work for Phase 1. Ms. Marshall explained that Phase 1 and Phase 2 involved the initial work that is necessary to enable the Commission to work toward the next phase, which involves getting eligible properties placed on the National Register of Historic Places. She stated that having this distinction will allow the Historical Commission to apply for grants to further their work.

Ms. Marshall noted that the Historical Commission has approved this request, along with the project on Brigham Street and the request for signage. They have also discussed supporting the work for preservation of town records, but they were not aware that the Town Clerk was bringing the proposal before the CPC.

Chairman Campbell asked if the Historical Commission could provide any information about the scope and cost of projects that were previously done in the area. Mr. Haitsma spoke about the Grange Hall that was recently sold, and voiced his disappointment that the Commission did not have the ability to preserve that resource. He had suggested that the Commission purchase it for use as a meeting hall, but they were not financially prepared to do so. Ms. Joubert voiced her understanding that the property is to be used as a single family home. Chairman Campbell suggested that the Commission consider the option of offering the owner an allowance to retain it as a historical structure. Ms. Marshall stated that, in such cases, the Commission would likely seek a permanent preservation easement with the owner in order to retain the exterior facade. Chairman Campbell asked if the Commission will pursue a historical preservation easement specifically for the Grange Hall. Ms. Marshall and Ms. Nieber confirmed that they will investigate the possibility of doing so, but much will depend on the expense.

Presentation by the Historical Commission (Don Haitsma), requesting \$3,000 for grave site inventory at the Brigham Street Burial Ground

Don Haitsma appeared on behalf of Norm Corbin to discuss a request for \$3,000 for a grave site inventory at the burial ground on Brigham Street. Mr. Haitsma explained that there are currently only 4 headstones standing in the burial ground, containing two different family names. He explained that there is a non-invasive process using radar that can identify each existing gravesite. Though it is not capable of determining how many bodies are present, or who they were, it can at least provide an indication of the

number of graves at the site. He explained that a similar survey in Southborough discovered 321 unmarked graves.

Chairman Campbell asked if the contractor, or anyone else in the business, offers additional services other than what has been proposed. Mr. Haitsma voiced his understanding that they do not. Chairman Campbell asked if the data from the survey is helpful in identifying who is actually in the gravesite. Mr. Haitsma was uncertain. Ms. Nieber commented that, if this project is funded, members of the Commission will be assisting the consultant with the work being done. Mr. Sartori questioned whether this work complies with the allowable spending criteria for CPA funds. Chairman Campbell voiced his opinion that it would be possible to justify it.

Mr. Sartori asked if Brigham Street is included in the inventory currently being done by the Historical Commission. Ms. Nieber stated that it will be covered in Phase 2, if not already included in Phase 1. Chairman Campbell asked about the inventory form, and information captured, for a cemetery. Ms. Nieber noted that the survey will identify it on a map and document burial dates as well as any other available historical data. Chairman Campbell asked if the Historical Commission expects to have any funds left over from their historical inventory project. Ms. Nieber stated that she is uncertain at this time. Chairman Campbell reiterated the need to justify how the cemetery work fits into the CPA spending criteria. He noted that restoring a cemetery would be viable under the criteria, but he does not feel that simply identifying the number of gravesites would be sufficient justification. He suggested that it may be helpful for the Historical Commission to find out whether this could be considered part of their larger project. Ms. Nieber agreed to investigate.

Presentation by the Historical Commission (Don Haitsma), request for \$2,000 for historic district signs

Mr. Haitsma discussed a request for signs for the Historic District in town. He explained that, in 1986, the town voted to designate the area at the junction of Church Street, Howard Street and Whitney Street as a Historic District. His group is proposing to install four signs, one on each corner, to designate the area that comprises this historic district.

Chairman Campbell asked if there have ever been signs in the past. Mr. Haitsma and Ms. Nieber both indicated that there have not, but noted that there is a monument at the intersection of Whitney & Church Streets to identify the militia field.

Mr. Clark asked if the signs are to be installed on town land, or on private property with permission. Mr. Haitsma indicated that they will be installed on town property by the Highway Department. Ms. Clowes asked why signs had not been installed when the designation was approved. Mr. Haitsma noted that there was likely no funding available for it.

Mr. Sartori questioned whether Mr. Haitsma has estimates to confirm the \$2,000 price. Mr. Haitsma stated that he has no estimates as yet, but does not anticipate it will be any more than \$2,000. He explained that the Highway Department has indicated that

installation of the four posts will be approximately \$800 (\$200 each). Mr. Sartori asked Mr. Haitsma to provide the board with details about the size and suggested wording for the signs, including pictures of similar signs being used in other towns.

Ms. Nieber explained that the \$2,000 figure being quoted is based on information she received from the Town of Westborough. Chairman Campbell suggested that tying the signage to the historical survey might make it possible to achieve the same goal for less, and make it easier to justify. Given that the CPA criteria does not provide funding for the creation of historic resources, this proposal is difficult to justify on its own. Mr. Clark agreed. Ms. Marshall voiced her opinion that establishment or expansion of signage at historic sites actually furthers the cause of preservation and, therefore, can be justified. Mr. Campbell asked the Historical Commission to find data that documents this use of CPA funds in prior instances. Mr. Rosenberg voiced his understanding that both Acton and Sturbridge had done so in 2005. Ms. Nieber agreed that signage provides a powerful means to preserve historic resources since it creates a public interest. It also makes property owners aware of the historic nature of their properties, which helps prevent unauthorized renovations from being done. Chairman Campbell asked for examples of what types of modifications can and cannot be done within the historic district. Ms. Nieber explained that there are regulations as to changes to the exterior façade, including paint colors, shutters, etc.

Ms. Marshall explained that the National Register does not have the authority to regulate activity within the historic district but the local Historical Commission does. Chairman Campbell requested that more information be submitted for the board's consideration before the hearing is closed.

Presentation by Valerie Dagle, requesting \$22,850 for restoring an existing porch on a privately owned home at 71 Church Street (home was built in 1832)

Ms. Dagle discussed her application for funds to restore the deck and replace 4 windows on her home at 71 Church Street, which is a historical property. She has received an estimate of \$22,850.

Mr. Sartori asked who determines if renovations to a structure conform to historical norms and if it is in compliance with the integrity of the historical structure. Ms. Dagle explained that the contractor will refer to historical photos of the home to replicate the appearance. Mr. Sartori asked if there is any type of final approval for the historical correctness of the work. Mr. Haitsma stated that the Historical Commission would like to be involved. Ms. Nieber stated that true restoration involves using like materials whenever possible. Ms. Marshall explained that, if CPA funds are used, there will need to be a permanent easement granted for what has been preserved.

Ms. Fletcher asked if anyone has the authority to govern work on structures in the historic district. Ms. Marshall stated that the Historic District Commission was formed for this purpose, but is not functioning at present. Ms. Joubert explained that the Board of Selectmen have jurisdiction in the absence of a Historic District Commission. However, now that the town has an established Historical Commission, she expects that they will be involved to some degree.

Ms. Dagle voiced her understanding that a deed restriction would be required for projects done using CPA funds, though she does not believe it needs to be permanent. Ms. Marshall disagreed. Ms. Joubert agreed to get clarification on the matter of the deed restriction.

Chairman Campbell noted that the estimate covers reconstruction of the porch but does not include final finish work. He stated the CPC would need assurance that the project would not be left unfinished, so all finish work should be included in the project proposal. Mr. Sartori suggested that approval could include a condition that payment is contingent upon completion of the work and execution of the deed restriction. Chairman Campbell indicated that the work must comply with the standards of the US Secretary of the Interior, and he encouraged the Historical Commission to offer some input as to how they will ensure compliance.

Ms. Clowes asked if there is any precedence in other communities for using CPA funds for private properties. Ms. Joubert agreed to research the matter. Ms. Clowes voiced concern about reaction at Town Meeting to a proposal for funding work on a private home.

Chairman Campbell asked to what extent the Historical Commission was willing to support this proposal, and what order of priority they would assign for this use of historic funds. Mr. Rosenberg suggested that a better approach for funding these types of projects might be the establishment of a fund from which grants are distributed. Ms. Marshall suggested that, for future proposals, the CPC should consider including a mechanism to require historic proposals to be submitted to the Historical Commission. Chairman Campbell agreed, and also suggested that the Commission consider the establishment of a grant program as proposed by Mr. Rosenberg.

Ms. Dagle asked about the process for her to proceed. Chairman Campbell requested that Ms. Dagle provide the board with a compliance guarantee and plan for completion of the finish work.

Presentation by the Historical Society (Melanie Magee), requesting \$20,000 for a handicap bathroom and ramp at the Historical Society building

Ms. Magee discussed the Historical Society's application for \$20,000 for the construction of a handicapped-accessible restroom, a ramp around the southwest corner of the building, and a new back door into the kitchen area. She also explained that plans include renovation of the existing ladies room. Ms. Magee explained that these renovations will make the building more inviting and accessible.

Ms. Clowes asked if the building is currently out of compliance. Ms. Magee confirmed that it is not in compliance with much of the ADA standard, but is grandfathered because of the age of the structure. She explained that the Historical Society's goal is to work in stages to gradually improve conformance.

Mr. Sartori questioned the reliability of the architect's estimates, and asked about the timeline for acquiring additional estimates from contractors. He also voiced concern that a contractor's estimate may prove to be much higher than the one provided by the architect. Ms. Magee stated that, if this proves to be the case, the Historical Society will further phase the project. Mr. Sartori commented that the CPC would require completion of all aspects of the project that they approve for funding. Ms. Magee explained that the Historical Society would like to move quickly, especially since they have a commitment from Northborough Septic to do work at no charge if it can be completed during their off season. Ms. Marshall voiced her understanding that any costs not funded by the CPC will be funded by the Historical Society. She also commented about the value of this resource to the community.

Presentation by Town Clerk (Andy Dowd), requesting \$50,000 for preservation of town records

Mr. Dowd discussed his application for \$50,000 for the preservation of town records. He explained that the town has many historic records dating back to the 1700's, and that storage and preservation of these documents is vital. He discussed the importance of doing this work now, before the records are no longer readable or repairable. In addition to being deacidified, re-sewn, and re-bound, the documents will also be scanned to create a digital archive. Mr. Dowd reiterated the importance of this project, and noted that preservation of historical documents is an allowable use of CPA funds.

Mr. Clark asked if this proposal was presented to the Historical Commission prior to tonight's meeting. Ms. Nieber stated the Historical Commission voted to support this proposal at their last meeting.

Mr. Dowd explained that the rough estimate for the entire project is \$150,000, but he has only applied for \$50,000 in funding in order to get the project started. He anticipates he may be back before this board for additional funding in future years.

Chairman Campbell suggested that Mr. Dowd consider adding display cases in his office to display the books once they have been restored.

Chairman Campbell asked Mr. Dowd to provide the CPC with a more detailed proposal, including timeline, costs, etc.

Request from the Recreation Director (Allie Lane) for 123,800 for carpets for Town Hall

Ms. Joubert explained, based on information the CPC received from the Community Preservation Coalition, that this is not an allowable use of CPA funds, and she will ask the applicant to submit a letter withdrawing the request.

Grant Program - Chairman Campbell reiterated his desire for the Historical Commission to pursue the grant program proposed by Mr. Rosenberg. Mr. Clark suggested that Town Counsel be consulted about what is needed to establish and govern this type of funding program.

CPC Application Process - Mr. Rosenberg noted that the procedural process currently in place does not make it clear that the applicant should obtain approval from the applicable Committee before seeking funds from the CPC. He suggested that the CPC consider clarifying item #3 on the application to encourage the applicant to do so.

CPC Signage - Ms. Clowes suggested that the CPC use a portion of their administrative funds to acquire signs to acknowledge and advertise how CPC funds are being used in town. Chairman Campbell asked Ms. Clowes to research the matter and bring a recommendation to the board.

Next Meeting - January 31, 2008 to hear housing and open space/recreation applications.

Tom Sartori made a motion to adjourn. Robert Rosenberg seconded, vote unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Rowe
Board Secretary