

**Community Preservation Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2009**

Members present: John Campbell, Chairman; Jane Fletcher, Todd Helwig, Robert Rosenberg, Joan Clowes (arrived at 7:00PM)

Other present: Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Elaine Rowe, Board Secretary; John Coderre, Town Administrator; Kim Hood, Assistant Town Administrator; Mark Leahy, Police Chief; Lt. Bill Lyver, Northborough Police Dept.

Members excused: Andy Clark, Chris Kellogg, Don Haitzma

Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 6:40PM.

Town Administrator John Coderre appeared to discuss a project for consideration. He explained that the Town's capital planning process runs concurrent with this committee's process, and he is seeking funding for a professional study of the Town Hall building for the purpose of establishing which CIP projects under the CPA should be the priorities.

Mr. Coderre explained that, at the 1999 Town Meeting, the town approved funding for a study to review the major systems of the Town Hall Building. He noted that a portion of the work was funded and the remainder was pushed out 4 to 5 years. He explained that the items that were repaired at that time are now in need of repair again. He also noted that the boiler system, which was originally slated for refurbishment in 2002 or 2003, is now in desperate condition and needs a major overhaul. He also explained that the current condition of the Town Hall does not speak well to the management of the facilities, and commented that the Town's Facilities Manager position has gone unfunded for 6 years. Currently, he is personally handling all facilities issues and repairs.

Mr. Coderre also informed the members of the board that the town is facing a \$650,000 deficit for FY10, which begins July 1. He reiterated that he does not have the money in his capital budget to do what is needed to take care of this building and he is before the board seeking \$15,000 for a study to determine the scope, cost, and priority for what needs to be addressed. He comment that his intent is to be a good steward, but he needs tools in order to do so.

Mr. Coderre cited the 1999 study, which recommended demolition of the existing building and construction of a new Town Hall. He noted that the exterior envelope and HVAC system are in desperate need of repair, as well as additional structural issues that were identified in the 1999 study.

Mr. Rosenberg asked Mr. Coderre his opinion of how this process might apply to other buildings in town. Mr. Coderre stated that every Town Manager is responsible for their own building, but noted that understanding the various systems is likely beyond their field of expertise. He also noted that, as soon as the economic situation improves, it will be a priority for him to hire a Facilities Manager for the Town. He commented that the new systems in the library are complex and will need to be maintained by someone who has the proper education and expertise.

Mr. Rosenberg stated that he had noticed in previous Town Meetings that various Department Managers had to present articles for the repair to their buildings. He voiced his opinion that, per the Town Charter, it is the Town's Administrative Officer who is responsible for capital maintenance of town buildings. Mr. Rosenberg also commented that he would like to see an overall process where the kind of expertise Mr. Coderre is seeking for this building will be applied to all buildings in town. He emphasized the importance of all buildings being properly maintained, and stated that it fundamentally does not make sense for this committee to approve a study for only one of the many town buildings.

Mr. Coderre voiced his opinion that the best way to approach the issue would be to fund the Facilities Manager position, and to have that position isolated from the regular operating budget. He also disagreed with Mr. Rosenberg's opinion that the Police and Fire Chiefs should not be responsible for their own buildings. He also reiterated the difficulties he is facing, especially in light of the anticipated 650,000 budget deficit.

Chairman Campbell questioned whether it is appropriate for this committee to consider funding a study for only one of the Town's buildings. He also suggested that the Committee disregard all other Town Hall projects that were presented for funding this year in favor of this higher-priority issue. He voiced his opinion that it is shortsighted to fund more of the work on the gym floor if there are more serious problems in the building that need to be addressed.

Mr. Coderre commented that the prevailing wage issue, unique to municipal projects, further exacerbates the situation by substantially increasing the cost for these types of projects. He encouraged the board members to write to the legislature in an effort to change the regulations with regards to the prevailing wage issue.

Chairman Campbell noted that the Committee is considering requests for \$86,000 to repair the gym floor and \$35,000 for town records preservation. He voiced concern that the Committee does not have sufficient money in reserve to fund all of these requests. He stated that, given the times and the limited amount of funding available, the Committee must decide on the most sensible course of action. He also noted that the CPA had passed in Northborough in part because of the ability to use funds for the renovation and maintenance of the Town Hall.

Mr. Helwig stated that it appears that we need to retrofit the entire Town Hall building, and there is no way that the CPC can support that. Mr. Coderre commented that he needs help to lay out a plan to fund in part with CPA funds and cover the remaining expenditures in the capital budget. Mr. Coderre also voiced his understanding that the Recreation Director will withdraw her request for funding for the gym floor if the CPC approves Mr. Coderre's request.

Mr. Rosenberg asked about the board's options moving forward. Ms. Joubert noted that, in the absence of a quorum, no decisions can be made this evening. She explained that the CPC will need to request an extension on their deadline for the warrant. Mr. Coderre commented that his request for \$15,000 for historic preservation of the Town Hall building is a legal use of CPA funds, so it is simply a matter of whether this board wants to approve it or not.

Police Department Vehicle – Mr. Helwig informed the board members that the Conservation Commission had voted unanimously not to support this request, primarily because they did not feel it was a worthy use of funds in the current economic climate. Mr. Rosenberg asked if the Conservation Commission had submitted a letter to that effect. Chairman Campbell noted that there appears to be a heightened focus on how wisely the CPC is using their funds. Mr. Helwig stated that he had received some negative comments for funding the Fire Department's Trails vehicle last year, and he questions whether it is prudent to fund a similar vehicle for the Police Department this year.

Joan Clowes arrived, giving the board the necessary quorum. Chairman Campbell questioned whether it was prudent to proceed with rendering some decisions with only five of the nine members present. Ms. Joubert noted that it may be difficult to find another time to meet within the next few weeks and, given the closing deadline for the warrant, it may be best to address what we can this evening. Mr. Rosenberg voiced his opinion that the board should move forward since there is a quorum. Members of the board agreed. Mr. Campbell reiterated his preference not to operate without all nine members present, but agreed to move forward given the timing for the Town Warrant.

Open Space & Recreation Plan - Ms. Joubert explained that the Department of Recreation and Conservation (DRC) requires an updated Open Space & Recreation Plan to be submitted every five years for their review. If the plan is approved, the town is then eligible for land acquisition grants. She noted that, in the past, the plan was drafted by the Conservation Commission and the Assistant Town Engineer. After losing the Assistant Town Engineer position five years ago, she and the Town Engineer compiled what they could and received temporary acceptance from the state. Ms. Joubert explained that it is now time to update that plan, and that town staff is unable to put together the plan themselves so she is asking this board for \$5445 from the administrative fund to help cover a portion of the cost to have a consultant draft the plan. She

reiterated that, without this plan in place, the town is not eligible to apply for grant money. Given the future acquisitions that are anticipated, it is clear that state grant monies will be needed. Chairman Campbell voiced his opinion that the Open Space Committee would support funding of this request.

Ms. Joubert also suggested that the board can opt to wait until July 1 to pay their coalition dues of \$1500. Members of the board agreed.

Mr. Helwig questioned the \$10,000 request for funding a housing needs analysis, and asked why the board would not have suggested that this amount be taken from the \$300,000 already allocated to the Housing Corporation. Chairman Campbell agreed that this was a valid question, but noted that there were no representatives present from any of the housing groups to address the question. He also noted that this request was not submitted by the Housing Corporation, but by one of the other housing groups. Mr. Rosenberg suggested that the board could fund this request with what is left in the FY09 administrative fund, since we will lose any balance on July 1. Chairman Campbell asked if the board is confident that we are within our right to use administrative funds for this purpose. Mr. Helwig commented that CPC money was intended to pay for big things, and voiced his opinion that we seem to be "frittering it away". Chairman Campbell stated that investments in planning support the bigger picture. Mr. Helwig voiced his opinion that the board's unwillingness to say no to some requests encourages committees to file for frivolous things. Ms. Joubert stated that she feels that this request is in line with what the administrative fund may be used for. Mr. Helwig agreed.

Mr. Rosenberg asked about the scale of the project. Ms. Joubert explained that some of the work will be done by town staff and committee members, while some of the survey and analysis work will be done by the Central Mass staff.

Robert Rosenberg made a motion to approve the allocation of \$5445 from the current administrative fund to fund the Open Space & Recreation plan. Todd Helwig seconded, vote unanimous.

Robert Rosenberg made a motion to pay the 2009 Coalition dues from the FY10 administrative funds when they become available. Todd Helwig seconded, vote unanimous.

Robert Rosenberg made a motion to put an article before Town Meeting to appropriate \$24,500 to the CPC's administrative fund. Todd Helwig seconded, vote unanimous.

Chairman Campbell noted that the application for the housing needs analysis was already approved, with the \$10,000 to come from the administrative fund.

Trails Committee request (\$5,000 for audio kits and \$1,000 for media backpack)

Chairman Campbell stated that the Open Space Committee supports this proposal. Mr. Helwig stated that he is in favor of funding the audio kits but opposed to funding the media backpack.

Todd Helwig made a motion to fund project #1 in the application (\$5,000 for audio kits) but to deny project #2 (\$1,000 for media backpack). Robert Rosenberg seconded, vote unanimous.

Historic Preservation articles (5,6,7,8) plus a new request for \$15,000 to fund a Town Hall preservation survey

Chairman Campbell opened the discussion about the request for \$9,000 for the National Register work. Mr. Helwig voiced his desire to deny this request in full. Chairman Campbell suggested that the Historical Commission could use money from their reserve fund if they believe this to be important. Mr. Rosenberg commented that there were three fairly passive properties selected for designation. Ms. Clowes voiced concern that the National Register might deny the application. Mr. Helwig questioned the benefit of being on the National Register, and whether that benefit warrants the expense.

Todd Helwig made a motion to deny the request in full. Joan Clowes seconded. Vote was 3 in favor (Robert Rosenberg, Todd Helwig, John Campbell) and 2 opposed (Jane Fletcher, Joan Clowes). Motion carries (funding denied). KATHY – can you check your notes on this vote? My transcription notes are cryptic.

Town Hall Building Survey – Chairman Campbell summarized the earlier discussion with John Coderre for Ms. Clowes. He noted that Mr. Coderre is requesting \$15,000 for a professional study of the town hall building for the purpose of establishing which CIP projects under the CPA should be the priorities. It was also noted that Mr. Coderre had indicated that the Recreation Department will withdraw their request for additional funds for the gym floor in favor of this survey. Mr. Rosenberg noted that, though the gym floor is an important community resource, he is comfortable with delaying the next phase of that project for another year. Mr. Helwig agreed that the gym floor is a viable project, but he finds it difficult to support it given the fact that we could not obtain a fair estimate for the work that is needed. Chairman Campbell agreed. Mr. Rosenberg suggested approving a lesser amount than what was requested. Ms. Joubert indicated that the Recreation Department will need at least enough money to put together the bid packet.

Robert Rosenberg made a motion to recommend to Town Meeting that the gym floor replacement be funded for up to \$60,000 and that any unused funds from last year be returned. Ms. Fletcher voiced her desire to wait a year and get a

new application. Ms. Clowes and Mr. Helwig agreed. Mr. Rosenberg withdrew his motion.

Todd Helwig made a motion to deny the request in full. Jane Fletcher seconded, vote unanimous.

Town Records preservation - Mr. Helwig voiced support of this project, and commented that the records are more important than the building. Mr. Campbell suggested postponement of the records preservation project in favor of the Town Hall building study. Mr. Rosenberg voiced his opinion that, since the work on the town records is an ongoing process, asking them to stop the process at this point will be significantly disruptive.

Jane Fletcher made a motion to approve the application in full. Todd Helwig seconded, vote unanimous.

Town Hall Building Survey, \$15,000 – Mr. Helwig stated that he is in favor of supporting this request. In his opinion, since we campaigned for the Community Preservation Act on the promise to use some of the funding for the Town Hall building, we owe it to the residents to do so. Chairman Campbell agreed, but suggested that the purpose of the study be better defined. He suggested that the board approve \$15,000 for a Capital Improvement Needs Analysis for the historic preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of the Town Hall. Mr. Helwig asked if we are sure that this building qualifies. Ms. Joubert agreed to ask the Historical Commission to appropriately designate the historic importance of the structure. Chairman Campbell reiterated the importance of the article being written properly so that he can solicit a favorable vote at Town Meeting.

Todd Helwig made a motion to approve \$15,000 from the Historic Preservation fund for the Capital Improvement Plan Needs Analysis for the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of the Town Hall. Robert Rosenberg seconded, vote unanimous.

Chairman Campbell asked if there was any new information from the Housing Corporation about any of the properties they are pursuing. Ms. Fletcher stated that the starting price at auction price for the Crestwood Drive property was too high, and the bank opted to keep the property at this time.

Ms. Joubert informed the board members that there is a group of town residents that are trying to lower the CPA percentage. Since there is not enough time to get this issue onto the town warrant, it will be on the ballot in the fall. Chairman Campbell suggested that this board work with that group of residents so that they understand how the funds are being used.

Chairman Campbell voiced his opinion that the Open Space Committee, Historical Preservation Committee and Housing Corporation are all pursuing the

same goals. Ms. Joubert commented that both the Housing Corporation and Open Space Committee have real properties that they are targeting. Chairman Campbell voiced his opinion that the potential project for the old senior center seems to be the most promising. Ms. Fletcher suggested that if DHCD opts to do that project, it could free up the town's money for other uses.

Historic Preservation - Mr. Rosenberg suggested scaling back or denying in full the allocation to the Historic Preservation Committee since they have no concrete plans or project priorities at this time.

Mr. Rosenberg made a motion to deny the request from the Historic Preservation Committee, but quickly withdrew the motion and stated that he would be inclined to support approval of a smaller figure.

Robert Rosenberg made a motion to approve \$20,000 for the Historic Preservation fund. Todd Helwig seconded, vote unanimous.

Chairman Campbell stated that he is hopeful that the Open Space Committee's initiatives can be achieved at a lower figure than what he once thought. He noted that major land acquisition projects are in the million dollar plus range, with conservation being less.

Mr. Rosenberg suggested that, given the lack of concrete proposals and the uncertainty of the timing for when anything might come to fruition, it might be best to leave some of the money unreserved so that the board will have uncommitted funds should a viable project need funding. Chairman Campbell agreed.

Todd Helwig made a motion to allocate \$150,000 to the Northborough Affordable Housing Corporation. Robert Rosenberg seconded, vote unanimous.

Open Space Committee, request for \$300,000 – Chairman Campbell voiced his opinion that the initiative the Committee is seeking will be set up for the next Town Meeting cycle, so having funds in reserve will be beneficial.

Robert Rosenberg made a motion to request Town Meeting to appropriate \$150,000 to the Open Space Reserve Fund. Todd Helwig seconded, vote unanimous.

Review of Minutes of the Meeting of January 15, 2009 – Robert Rosenberg made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of January 15, 2009 as submitted. Todd Helwig seconded, vote unanimous.

Review of Minutes of the Meeting of January 29, 2009 – Joan Clowes made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of January 29, 2009 as submitted. Robert Rosenberg seconded, vote unanimous.

Ms. Joubert agreed to ask John Coderre for a one day extension of the warrant deadline. Once drafted, she will send the articles to the members for their review and input.

Next meeting – Chairman Campbell suggested meeting on the last Thursday in March to prepare for Town Meeting. Ms. Joubert and Mr. Rosenberg stated that they would not be available on that date.

Adjourned at 9:44PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Rowe
Board Secretary