



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Community Preservation Committee

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Approved 11/7/13

Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes October 3, 2013

Members in attendance: John Campbell, Chairman; Chris Kellogg; Todd Helwig; Peter Martin; Andy Clark; Sean Durkin; Debra Comeau; Michelle Gillespie

Members excused: Kathleen Polanowicz

Others in attendance: John Coderre, Town Administrator; Josh Richardson; Sue Halpin; Chris Johnson; Dan Nason, DPW Director

Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:08PM.

Discussion with John Coderre, Town Administrator and Kim Foster, Assistant Town Administrator re: Prevailing Wages and Bidding Procedures

Chairman Campbell explained that Town Administrator John Coderre is appearing to address questions regarding prevailing wage regulations. He voiced his desire to comply with the requirements while still maintaining the ability to take advantage of the abundant volunteer work that the board has benefited from in the past.

John Coderre explained that the procurement laws are state laws, and it takes about 80 hours of training to become a state procurement officer. He emphasized that compliance with state procurement laws are mandatory for any work done on town land and buildings, and the town does not have the ability to waive or avoid them.

Mr. Coderre explained the process and the critical information necessary in order to do a project, which includes hiring an engineer, securing detailed plans and designs, and obtaining bids. He noted that the town does not have the ability to choose a contractor, but must award the job to the low bidder. He also stressed the importance of having specific plans to avoid a low quality product and change orders.

Mr. Coderre noted that he, Ms. Foster, and Mr. Nason are state procurement officers who have assisted and advised on projects in the past. He commented that the burden on town staff is tremendous, and the town simply does not have adequate staff to devote the time needed to ensure that project plans being submitted are adequate.

Ms. Comeau asked about the proposed cemetery project, which will involve cleaning and resetting of headstones. She voiced her understanding of the bidding process, but noted that there are few contractors capable of doing this work. Mr. Coderre reiterated the need for a detailed scope of work and timeline for every project. He also noted that prevailing wages add about 30% beyond what a project would cost in the private sector, and suggested that any applicant with a substantial project should be encouraged to do their due diligence. He also commented that the board needs to have a realistic expectation of what can be done in one cycle.

Chairman Campbell stated that the board had attempted to improve their process by allowing a larger window of time before Town Meeting. He also voiced his opinion that the board could allocate funds from their administrative account to cover costs of professional services needed to design project plans. He suggested that this might be a better option than requiring every project to be done in two phases. Mr. Coderre commented that the feasibility of that approach would depend on the specific project.

Mr. Coderre reiterated that any work down on town owned property must comply with the prevailing wage laws that require a detailed description of the work to be sent to the state, which then provides the prevailing wage rate to be included with the scope of work that is given to contractors bidding the project. Chairman Campbell asked if town staff can provide feedback for some of the proposed CPC projects. Mr. Coderre agreed to do so, but noted that these seemingly straight forward projects can often consume a great deal of time that town staff does not always have.

Chairman Campbell asked about the proposed Northboro Youth Basketball Association Court Repair Project. Mr. Coderre stated that he has been working with the applicant, but that more time will be needed than originally anticipated. He reiterated that much of the work that is required will not be able to be done by well meaning volunteers. He cautioned the board about being mindful about the type of work that we are having volunteers perform, and noted that there are limits to what insurance will cover with regards to volunteer work.

Mr. Durkin asked if a local contractor can volunteer to do the heavy equipment work. Mr. Coderre cautioned about doing anything that would put the town in jeopardy. He stated that donations of supplies and funds would be welcome, but labor and heavy equipment is risky. Mr. Durkin commented that donations of materials have enabled us to keep project costs manageable in the past, and Mr. Coderre suggested it would be best to get those commitments in advance and include them in the project specifications.

Mr. Durkin asked if a charitable group would be subject to the same prevailing wage laws. Mr. Coderre stated that any work being done on municipal land, regardless of the source, is subject to prevailing wage laws.

Mr. Durkin asked about an exemption for projects under \$50,000 in value. Mr. Coderre noted that the home rule petition is still sitting with the rules committee where it was delivered the day he submitted it. He voiced his opinion that it will likely not go anywhere.

Mr. Helwig asked Mr. Coderre if he would prefer to see the projects on the 5 year capital improvement plan. Mr. Coderre suggested that it would be preferable for every project to go through one formal, coordinated process.

Mr. Kellogg asked Mr. Coderre how the CPC should work moving forward with applicants who are proposing projects on town land. Mr. Coderre stated that the town is in desperate need of a Facilities Manager, a position that he has not been able to fill since it was classified in 2005. He suggested that the person in this role would work jointly with the town and the schools and could assist with some of these projects.

Chairman Campbell commented that almost every project that comes before the CPC involves town owned property. Mr. Coderre suggested that having a dialogue early in the process will enable the board to identify those projects that may need to be broken up and done in phases. He reiterated that less complicated projects will still need to be done at prevailing wage but can move through the process more smoothly.

Chairman Campbell questioned what approach the board should take with regards to the basketball court repair project. Mr. Coderre indicated that he was not yet sure, as conversations he had with the applicant brought to light multiple things that the applicant had not be aware of so there is additional work to be done.

Mr. Kellogg suggested that, since the CPC is nearly the last stop in the process, we should utilize CPC funds to create a written guideline for applicants. Mr. Martin asked if Mr. Coderre can supply samples of well-crafted bid documents. Mr. Coderre agreed to provide some templates, and Ms. Joubert offered to look into what information the coalition may have available as well.

Mr. Coderre noted that there are two options; hire additional staff or break up the projects and provide funding to have the scope of work created. Mr. Kellogg reiterated the need to help applicants maneuver through the process without discouraging them. Mr. Durkin voiced concern about losing enthusiastic volunteers and discouraging people from pursuing worthwhile projects if they anticipate too many hurdles.

Memorial Field Viewing Deck Renovation – DPW Director Dan Nason noted that there is very little new information to provide. He indicated that a preliminary plan has been drafted, test pits were done to verify soil conditions, and the site plan engineer can now work with the structural engineer to design the wall. He is hopeful that he will have an informal proposal to obtain a rough estimate to present at Town Meeting.

Assabet Park Shading Project – Mr. Nason explained that the town has encountered difficulties in trying to procure a structural engineer. He indicated that a meeting is now planned with both structural and site plan engineers to review the project. Given the situation, he is not confident about making the January deadline. Chairman Campbell commented that, while he would like to be able to go to Town Meeting with Phase 2 on both the Memorial Field and Assabet projects, he understands the time constraints facing Mr. Nason.

Outdoor Classrooms at Northborough Public Schools – Sue Halpin stated that she had heard a lot of information tonight that will require her to do further research before presenting details of the project to this board. Ms. Comeau asked if it is possible to use students from Assabet Technical High School to construct the building. Mr. Nason indicated that he is uncertain whether this would be possible.

Chris Johnson explained that the Principals from the various schools are very interested in moving forward with this project, which has tremendous potential for a variety of reasons. She also noted that it is not uncommon for the schools to receive grant money from donations, private funding sources, etc. She agreed to investigate the option of using Assabet School students to do some of the work, and will be back before the board once she has more definitive information.

Chairman Campbell discussed the criteria used for judging applications for CPC funding, and agreed that this project would meet the criteria. He commented that the creation of outdoor classrooms is applicable to the CPA as it would provide a new recreational facility within the Open Space and Recreation category, so clearly meets the applicability requirements. It was also agreed that this project would be beneficial to both students and the community at large.

Chairman Campbell questioned whether residents would take issue with using CPA funds for work in our schools in lieu of funding it through the school budget. Mr. Clark voiced his opinion that this could be a concern with every project brought before the board.

Chairman Campbell asked if there were any objections to the board continuing to evaluate this project. No objections were raised. Chairman Campbell expressed concerns about ensuring that the structures are safe and legal, especially if they are to be built by students. He also questioned whether this could be done without prevailing wages. Ms. Joubert commented that she did not believe that it could be. Ms. Johnson agreed to further discuss the use of student labor with town staff.

Howard Street Cemetery Headstone Restoration - Debra Comeau noted that the stones at Brigham Street cemetery we recently cleaned and reset, and they look like brand new stones. She also stated that it is now believed that there could be up to 46 probable burials at the site. She agreed to get three bids to support the estimate of \$78,000 for the Howard Street Cemetery headstone restoration.

Hop Brook Trail Parking Area and Trail Construction and/or Repair – Ms. Joubert voiced her understanding that the trails committee is awaiting additional information from the state.

National Register Nomination for Howard Street Cemetery – Ms. Comeau expressed her desire to have a student write up the nomination paperwork. She noted that, once the property is on the National Register, we are eligible to receive 50% matching funds for any work that is needed.

Review Minutes of the Meeting September 5, 2013 – Peter Martin made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of September 5, 2013 as amended. Sean Durkin seconded, vote unanimous.

Next meeting - Nov 7, 2013.

Adjourned at 9:08PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Rowe
Board Secretary