



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Community Preservation Committee

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Approved 11/6/14

Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes April 3, 2014

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

Members excused: Peter Martin; Chris Kellogg; Kathleen Polanowicz

Others in attendance: Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Elaine Rowe; Board Secretary; Brian Smith; Tom Spataro

Chairman John Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:09PM.

White Cliffs - Chairman Campbell voiced his understanding that the White Cliffs property may be on the market. He noted that this is an important town landmark of interest to the Historical Commission. He also stated that, since historic preservation falls under this board's responsibilities, he would support an effort to preserve this property.

Brian Smith, Chairman of the Historical Commission, explained that rumors surfaced several months ago about the White Cliffs property being for sale. He voiced his belief that the plan is to demolish the building and construct housing on the parcel. He noted that the current owner had invested money in renovations back in the 1980s, but they can no longer support running this facility as a function hall. While they have expressed a desire to find a buyer who will preserve the property, but if they find that they are unable to do so, they will develop alternate plans. Mr. Smith indicated that the owners are starting to look for interested parties. He suggested that perhaps Smith & Wesson would be interested, since this is the only remaining former home of Daniel Wesson. He also stated that this is one of the few shingle style country estates existing that is not near the ocean.

Mr. Smith explained that, in considering viable options, he believes one of the best would be to purchase a preservation restriction on the property. He noted that, while the Town likely would not wish to own the property, owning a preservation restriction may be desirable. He also noted that the Town of Weston has taken this approach with several properties in their town. He emphasized the importance of building support for this concept before going back to the owners.

Mr. Smith stated that the assessed value of the property is 2 million dollars. He reiterated that he is seeking support from the CPC and, with that, the Historical Commission could then seek support from the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Helwig stated that we will still need to find a buyer who will use the structure as it is. Mr. Clark asked about the entire property. Mr. Smith indicated that it is 6.5 acres, with the front portion falling in the Business East zone and the back portion lying in Residential.

Chairman Campbell asked Ms. Comeau if, from the Historical Commission's evaluation, would it be safe to say that this presents a top priority. Ms. Comeau stated that the matter came up suddenly and, while it was not on their list, the Historical Commission is now very interested in preserving this town jewel.

Chairman Campbell stated that, if the warrant passes at this year's Town Meeting, there will be in excess of \$500,000 in the historic reserve fund. He asked if the Historical Commission would be in favor of spending that on this property. Ms. Comeau stated that she believes they would be.

Mr. Smith explained that the property owners have signed an agreement with a broker and are looking to have private discussions with some interested parties. He expressed a need to find a buyer by the end of the year, or to at least have some sort of plan. Chairman Campbell stated that it might be impractical to get the town to agree, since the matter will not be on this year's Town Meeting warrant and we do not have the ability to call a Special Town Meeting for an undefined proposal. He suggested the best strategy might be to try to entice the seller to market the property with a preservation restriction so that they approach potential buyers from that angle.

Mr. Smith stated that he will go back to the property owners and their realtor and discuss moving forward with getting an appraisal. Chairman Campbell advised Mr. Smith that he is welcome to come back to the CPC to seek financial help with the appraisal.

Ms. Joubert asked if it appears as though the property owners have any interest in this approach. Mr. Smith indicated that they have expressed a desire to find a solution that will preserve the property, but they have not yet addressed the idea of a historic preservation restriction. Mr. Helwig voiced his opinion that the next step should be to get the seller to explore this option. He does not believe it makes sense to spend money on an appraisal if the seller is not interested in a preservation restriction.

Mr. Smith asked about the historic reserve account. Mr. Joubert noted that the current balance is \$455,000, with an additional \$75,000 being requested this year. She also noted that the balance in the unreserved account is nearly \$600,000. Chairman Campbell suggested that having funds in a historic reserve account gives Mr. Smith the ability to approach the seller. Mr. Helwig suggested that the demolition delay bylaw could affect this property. Chairman Campbell invited Mr. Smith to reach out to the CPC if there is a need to convene a meeting to discuss appraisal fees or any other matters.

Basketball Court Renovation Project – Chairman Campbell explained that the committee had favorably approved and voted to allocate \$110,000 to this project. Since that time, the Town Administrator discussed the project with the School Department and, unbeknownst to the CPC, the school department paid an engineer to do a survey of the project. Based on the consultant's opinion, it now appears that the project will cost nearly double what was originally estimated. Chairman Campbell asked Tom Spataro how he would like to move forward, given this latest development. Mr. Spataro voiced his opinion that the most expensive part of the project is expected to be the paving, and there is a huge discrepancy between his estimates and those of the consultant. He also noted that the consultant has built in a 15% contingency for miscellaneous fees for almost every court. Mr. Spataro stated that he has had another person look at the project, and he remains comfortable with the \$110,000 figure. However, he noted that Town Administrator, John Coderre has suggested revising the warrant to reflect that the \$110,000 will be used to do as much of the work as possible, possibly with the courts at Peaslee and Lincoln Street dealt with separately.

Mr. Spataro discussed work at the Melican Middle School that was previously done, all at a total cost of \$6600. That work included sealing of cracks on four courts, paving of one court (\$800), removal and replacement of two hoops (\$2500 each), and painting of two courts. He reiterated that the costs estimated by Lamoureux-Pagano are substantially more than the estimate he received from T&K, which was quoted at prevailing wage. Chairman Campbell noted that the consultants estimate for work at Melican Middle School is \$43,000 vs. Mr. Spataro's estimate of \$20,000. He also indicated that the CPC is still interested in supporting the project as long as the applicant is willing to take the risk of potentially not being able to complete all of the work in one funding cycle. Mr. Spataro reiterated his opinion that the consultant's cost estimate is excessive. He also stated that the Northborough Youth Basketball Association (NYBA) is willing to contribute to the project.

Ms. Comeau voiced extreme frustration and disappointment that in her opinion, the Town Administrator chose to do an "end-run" around the CPC to push this project forward, especially given the challenges the CPC has encountered in trying to get the Memorial Field Viewing Platform project done. She stated that, while she has no issue with the applicant, she would be in favor of postponing action on this project until we get the Memorial Field project done. Ms. Joubert suggested that the School Dept. simply took advantage of the availability of a consultant that is currently working on the Lincoln Street School renovation project. Ms. Comeau reiterated that the CPC has been trying for 3 years to get the viewing platform done but has continually been delayed because DPW town staff does not have the time to devote to supporting the effort. Chairman Campbell noted that this committee was led to believe that a two phase approach would make things happen, but there is clearly a flaw in that process. Mr. Spataro emphasized that he did not campaign for any of the consulting work that was performed at the request of the School Dept.

Chairman Campbell stated that the CPC had recently walked the courts and concluded that they would not change the amount of funding being requested. Ms. Joubert explained that the warrant will be revised to stipulate that the money will fund court renovation costs "....at ONE

OR MORE of the following schools..... “. She noted that this will afford the NYBA the ability to start where they wish and complete as much work as possible.

Chairman Campbell stated that, based on the scope of this project, he had the impression that we did not need the same level of bid preparation as was needed for the Memorial Field viewing platform. Mr. Durkin noted that the project cannot be put out to bid until the money is allocated. Chairman Campbell asked what factors allow Mr. Spataro’s bid process to be placed ahead of the viewing platform project, and questioned how the CPC can move forward without support from town resources. He reiterated the need to have a mechanism for getting bid documents done in order to move projects forward.

Ms. Joubert voiced her assumption that Lamoureux-Pagano will put together the bid document for the basketball court renovation project. Chairman Campbell noted that the CPC paid \$8,000 to get a project specification done for the viewing platform and asked why we can’t now pay Lamoureux-Pagano to put together the bid document for that project. Ms. Joubert stated that the Committee could use administrative money to fund the bid work, but mentioned that money has already been allocated to the DPW to get the bid document done. Mr. Durkin voiced his understanding that the DPW Director has all of the information he needs to get the bid packet done and has the paperwork in place, but has not formally put the project out to bid. He agreed to call Mr. Nason on Monday to discuss.

Mr. Durkin asked about the status of the Home Rule petition. Ms. Joubert agreed to check into the matter.

Mr. Clark asked about the likelihood that the consultant that produced the estimate for the basketball project will prepare the bid packet. Ms. Joubert reiterated her assumption that they would but she will verify that. Mr. Clark asked where do the bid specifications come from. Ms. Joubert noted that, typically, the town writes the bid specification and we currently have only three people on staff that are qualified to do so. She also commented that the applicant could be talking to someone about getting the bid package put together. Mr. Spataro commented that he will begin doing so after Town Meeting. Mr. Clark noted that the funds will not be awarded until July, so the work might not actually get done until June of next year.

Mr. Helwig voiced frustration about the overall process, with both the Committee and the town voting to approve projects that then just die. He also voiced his opinion that bid specifications should be done in the order that the CPC approves projects. If that cannot be done, he suggested using the Administrative Fund to take it completely out of the Town Administrator’s hands. He questioned whether we have a single project that we have actually accomplished. Mr. Durkin agreed that this new process is both challenging and frustrating. Ms. Joubert agreed to discuss the matter with John Coderre.

Chairman Campbell asked the Committee members whether they wish to pursue these two projects as agreed, or would they prefer to pass over them. Mr. Helwig commented that he sees no reason to penalize any applicant, so he would suggest moving these forward. Chairman Campbell agreed, but reiterated the desire to use administrative funds to push these projects

ahead. He also suggested that the Committee meet after Town Meeting to further discuss the situation. Mr. Durkin agreed. Members of the Committee agreed to meet on May 8th, assuming the Town Administrator is available to do so.

Review Minutes of the Meeting of February 6, 2014 – Sean Durkin made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of February 6, 2014 as amended. Andy Clark seconded, vote unanimous.

Adjourned at 8:39PM

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine Rowe
Board Secretary