



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Community Preservation Committee

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Approved 11/6/14

Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes May 8, 2014

Members in attendance: John Campbell, Chairman; Chris Kellogg; Michelle Gillespie; Kathleen Polanowicz; Peter Martin; Debra Comeau

Others in attendance: John Coderre, Town Administrator; Kim Foster, Assistant Town Administrator ; Elaine Rowe, Board Secretary; Dan Nason, DPW Director; Tom Spataro

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

Chairman Campbell voiced his understanding that town staff has a great deal of work, which makes it challenging to manage everything they need to do including CPC projects. He stated that the board is here tonight to gain a better understanding and develop a clear path for moving forward. He noted that the board members have been frustrated with the process in the past, specifically with applications for projects involving town resources.

John Coderre expressed appreciation to the board for scheduling this meeting during a time when CPC issues are not under a strict timeline. He noted that tonight's discussion will include

1. Prevailing wage and his desire for the CPC to assist in attempts to reform the policy.
2. Timing of the CPC process and how it coordinates with his
3. Bringing some resources to bear, particularly on the front end.

Mr. Coderre explained that the town has filed a home rule petition to exempt projects with a cost of \$50,000 or less, which would be a tremendous benefit for CPC projects. Unfortunately, the petition was ignored in the legislature so Mr. Coderre is asking other communities to submit similar petitions in hopes that there will be strength in numbers. He solicited the board's assistance in reaching out to other towns that have passed the CPA to get their support as well.

Chairman Campbell was uncertain about whether the Community Coalition has advocated for this. Ms. Comeau agreed to investigate whether the Massachusetts Historical Commission has as well. Mr. Coderre commented that large town projects often draw the attention of labor organizations and, given the highly public nature of CPC projects, it is imperative that they be done in compliance with the regulations.

Mr. Coderre emphasized that, in the past, the timing for CPC projects has not meshed with the Town's processes with regards to planning, budgeting and staffing. He stated that the CPC's August application deadline only allows four months for review, which makes it nearly impossible to find resources, get assistance with job specifications, obtain contracts and assign the work. In addition, the months of January through April are very demanding for town staff, which only further exacerbates the problem. Given these issues, Mr. Coderre suggested that the board consider separating town projects into two phases to allow more time for vetting them; otherwise he fears that we will constantly run into the same difficulties and challenges we have faced in the past.

Ms. Comeau suggested that the CPC provides some consensus when they approve a project. Mr. Coderre noted that consensus is also needed from Financial Planning, Appropriations Committee, Town Meeting and town staff. He also voiced his opinion that the CPC has previously has issues with not having consensus across the board. Mr. Kellogg noted that, given the tight timeline the project and in an effort to keep it moving forward, the CPC had voted to use administrative funds to get the Memorial Field platform project out to bid.

Mr. Coderre noted that town departments typically plan two to three years out, during which they evaluate the capacity of staff to do the required projects. He explained that when CPC projects come in on short notice, town staff simply does not have the bandwidth to provide the support that is needed. He suggested that getting resources appropriated through the CPC administrative account, it will enable town staff to help hire service providers to get the work necessary done.

Ms. Polanowicz suggested that the CPC may need access to town staff at the beginning of a project in order to determine whether engineering or additional work is needed. She questioned whether there is a way to modify the timing of applications so that town staff can do a quick review and provide input. Mr. Coderre reiterated that projects involving bricks and mortar or public works will need a broader lead time that will not be satisfied with an August application deadline. Ms. Polanowicz reiterated her desire for the CPC to have access to town staff for help in evaluating projects to identify those that may be complicated or problematic. Mr. Kellogg suggested that the CPC could conceivably have submittals as early as April, which would allow the board to identify building projects and use administrative funds to move them forward. He questioned whether town staff could work within that modified timeline, and voiced concern given the fact that the CPC was unable to move forward on the splash pad because of the inability to get the RFP out. Mr. Coderre stated that the CPC should start looking for substantial projects and plan out a couple of years to help facilitate the process. He also voiced his opinion that there is no harm in putting things off to allow sufficient time to be sure we can get them done.

Chairman Campbell indicated that the board could hold a meeting in May with the various groups in town seeking funds to vet out projects prior to the application phase. He suggested that, at that time, the board can advise applicants about the anticipated timeline based on their particular project.

Chairman Campbell discussed the project at Memorial Field that was broken up into phases at the suggestion of town staff. He explained that, though approval to do the engineering phase of the project was granted at Town Meeting, we still had difficulty getting an engineer to do the work. He also voiced his understanding that a specification has been written, though the board has not yet seen it. Since the specification work was completed, Chairman Campbell emphasized the board's expectation that a bid would be written and we would have numbers to take to Town Meeting. He questioned what else the board could have done to facilitate that process.

Mr. Coderre stated that the Memorial Field project was a perfect example of what is not working, and reiterated the importance of understanding and appreciating that these types of projects take time especially if town staff has to make room in the plan for something that was not anticipated. Chairman Campbell suggested that the scope of the Memorial Field project is not the same as those in the Capital Plan. He also voiced his opinion that it is impractical to think that the CPC can operate like the Town Hall's capital planning process.

Mr. Kellogg noted that town residents voted to appropriate funding to the project in April 2013, and the members of the CPC believed that 10 months would be sufficient time to get the plans in order. Given the constraints on town staff, he asked if it is possible to seek additional resources outside of town staff to get the work done. Mr. Coderre agreed that, if the board and town staff can discuss these issues earlier, then staff can point the CPC in the right direction to move the process forward and not have projects being approved on a whim. Ms. Polanowicz took offense to Mr. Coderre's comment and expressed her desire to focus on improving the process. Chairman Campbell asked if there is a completed job specification for the Memorial Field project and asked if the board can use their administrative fund to move the project forward. Mr. Nason explained that he needs time to review the specification before it goes out to the street. Mr. Kellogg commented that using the CPC administrative funds to obtain a more thorough specification is something that the board members have already agreed is a good use for those funds. He also stated that requesting that applications be submitted sooner will allow the board to evaluate and identify areas where we can use administrative funds to move projects forward. Mr. Coderre agreed that doing a better job on the front end so that we do not end up trying to fix something that has gone off track will improve the town's ability to support the process, but he emphasized that the timeline is still challenging.

Mr. Kellogg asked if it is realistic to expect to get a project through the process in a two year timeline, or should we allow even more time. Mr. Coderre stated that imposing a two year timeline would go a long way toward improving the process and resolving some of the issues we have encountered in the past by allowing town staff to work CPC projects into their schedule. Mr. Coderre expressed his desire to get these projects done, but reiterated that the town has limited resources to do so. Ms. Polanowicz asked to what extent the town would be able to incorporate CPC projects into the capital improvement plan (CIP) so that the board can count on the appropriate level of support being there. Mr. Coderre agreed that incorporating CPC projects into the CIP would be beneficial.

Ms. Polanowicz voiced her opinion that there is some value to having town staff do a quick review of the project in the early stages. In response to a question from Mr. Kellogg, Mr. Coderre explained the town's CIP process and planning. Mr. Kellogg also stated that, since the CPC does not have a means by which we can do some of the vetting typically done by town staff, any input from staff would be valuable. Chairman Campbell commented that CPC applications will be submitted in August, and asked if it would be possible for someone on town staff to attend the board's first meeting to flag those projects that might pose an issue. Mr. Coderre agreed to have his staff do so.

Chairman Campbell discussed the Northborough Youth Basketball (NYBA) project. He noted that Tom Spataro had submitted an application for a project on behalf of NYBA, and funding was approved at Town Meeting but somewhere in the process it appears that the School Department got involved. Chairman Campbell asked how and when this became a school project. Mr. Coderre confirmed that, since the School Department has authority over their property, the School Administration needs to be involved with these projects. Chairman Campbell questioned whether CPC money should be channeled to projects on school property, given that the town has a large school budget. Mr. Coderre suggested that, without CPC funding, these types of projects will likely not get done. Chairman Campbell voiced confusion about the fact that this project was brought to the CPC, with Mr. Coderre's knowledge, and it was not until late in the process that the board was made aware of the overlap in authority and purview.

Ms. Comeau voiced concern over the appearance that Mr. Spataro benefited from town support for his project that other applicants did not enjoy, and suggested that transparency would have been better.

Ms. Gillespie voiced her desire to start the process in June, which would allow Ms. Joubert to bring a summary to town staff over the summer months so that the CPC could get some input by early fall. Mr. Kellogg agreed, but would prefer to have applications submitted in May. Mr. Coderre stated that town staff would be willing to provide input early so that the CPC can advise applicants appropriately, but reiterated that the CPC must be willing to accept that not every project can be completed in a one year cycle. .

Ms. Gillespie suggested that the home rule petition be revised to exempt projects up to a value of \$100,000. Mr. Coderre explained that the original proposal did so, but he was advised that it would have no chance of being approved so it was reduced to \$50,000.

Chairman Campbell explained that the intent of tonight's discussion was not to be accusatory toward town staff, but rather to learn so that the CPC could function better from this day forward. He also voiced concern about the apparent number of meetings that may be involved for this committee, given the new timelines and procedures being proposed. Mr. Kellogg emphasized the importance of getting sufficient information to judge projects before wasting anyone else's time. He also stated that the process might not involve more meetings, but may require a shift in when the meetings occur so that they can be more effective.

Chairman Campbell questioned some of the projects proposed and approved in previous years that have never moved forward. He also expressed a desire to revisit the splash pad and town hall gym floor projects with the Recreation Department.

Chairman Campbell also asked about the culvert on Church Street. Mr. Nason explained that, after structural evaluation, it was determined that the project could not be completed as expected.

Mr. Coderre stated that Cheryl Levesque, Business Manager, School Department, will work with Tom Spataro to put out the bid packet for the basketball court project.

Chairman Campbell noted that the Memorial Field project is in Mr. Nason's hands, and the CPC will wait to hear back from him.

Chris Kellogg made a motion to hold the first meeting for FY2017 in May, with an application deadline the month before. Chairman Campbell suggested waiting until the entire committee is present to discuss. Chris Kellogg withdrew his motion pending further discussion.

Mr. Martin suggested revising the application to provide more guidance to the applicant. Ms. Polanowicz asked how quickly Ms. Joubert can get information out to move up this year's application deadline. Chairman Campbell suggested a June 30th deadline for this year.

Chairman Campbell voiced his appreciation to town staff for taking their time to meet with the Committee.

Next meeting is scheduled for June 5, 2014 at 7:00PM.

Michelle Gillespie left.

Mr. Kellogg suggested that the CPC help lobby for the Home Rule petition and agreed to contact Stuart Saginor, Executive Director, Community Preservation Coalition, to get the coalition's support.

Review Minutes of the Meeting of April 3, 2014 – Review of Meeting Minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

Adjourned at 9:21PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine Rowe
Board Secretary