



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Community Preservation Committee

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Community Preservation Committee

Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2015

Members in attendance: John Campbell, Chairman; Kathleen Polanowicz; Andy Clark; Pater Martin; Todd Helwig; Sean Durkin; Michelle Gillespie

Members excused: Debra Comeau

Others in attendance: Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Trish Settles, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC); Jason Perreault, Board of Selectmen

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

Community Preservation Plan - Ms. Settles explained that, since her last appearance before this board, she has spoken with the Conservation Commission and their agent, Trails Committee, Historical Commission, Town Planner, and Recreation Director. She also mentioned that she had met with the housing group prior to the last CPC meeting that she attended. Ms. Settles indicated that she reviewed her notes from all discussions and, from them, has drafted an outline of the plan as she sees it.

Ms. Settles stated that, since this plan will be for the general public as well as CPC members, it will be important to include details about what CPA funds can be used for, the role of the committee, the application process, and how CPA funds have been distributed in the past. She mentioned that she has started to map a geographic representation of where Northborough's CPA projects are located and, once finalized, she will have it reviewed by Ms. Joubert to ensure that everything has been appropriately captured.

Ms. Settles explained that her original budget included conducting background work and developing draft goals for the plan in order to put the board in the position to present a thumbnail sketch in a public meeting, similar to what was done when the town developed its Open Space Plan. She asked if the members of the board were in favor of this approach or would prefer a more thorough discussion for the public meeting. Chairman Campbell voiced a preference to provide some type of format for discussion. He suggested a draft document detailing what we believe to be the direction and goals for community preservation, and to use public input to revise it accordingly. He noted that the public at large still seems to have questions about the function of this board. Ms. Settles agreed that, to the extent that we can better refine the goals, it will make the dialogue a bit more focused.

Ms. Settles stated that she will use the feedback that she has obtained thus far to draft four goals per topic area for review by the CPC in advance of the next meeting so that she will be better able to address any further input.

Ms. Settles suggested that, during the public meeting, a variety of presenters should speak to the different categories instead of it being just her addressing the town residents.

Ms. Settles reiterated that she will compile a draft of the board's goals and send it to Ms. Joubert for distribution to the board. She would then seek to obtain input from the board to enable us to get to a point that we are comfortable that we have sufficient details to conduct a public meeting. Ms. Joubert asked if a public meeting in May is possible. Ms. Settles agreed that it should be.

Ms. Settles noted the following recurring themes:

1. Desire to reach a broader pool of applicants
2. Desire for more inter-municipal communication between departments
3. Having the ability to better prepare the applicants and have them better understand the process
4. Excitement about collaboration between groups

Ms. Joubert also noted that there is often a desire to do a project but not having the manpower to do either the upfront work and/or execution of the actual project results in frustration. Ms. Settles stated that she will summarize many of these details in her report. She indicated that she has reviewed a number of CPC plans from other communities, so will provide some samples of projects that might dovetail well with what this group is trying to do.

Ms. Settles explained that the CMRPC only has six communities (out of 46) in the region that have passed the Community Preservation Act. Chairman Campbell asked Ms. Settles if, based on her experience, she has any comments about where Northborough sits with respect to some of the plans from these other communities. Ms. Settles voiced her opinion that Northborough is pretty much on par with other communities.

Chairman Campbell commented that the development of the Community Preservation Plan is timely in a number of ways. He noted that the CPA has been in place for over 10 years and recently the board has found itself in the middle of a number of developments (desired preservation of White Cliffs, open space parcel in the center of town, etc.) where the CPC has been asked to re-evaluate and put into some context as to how these projects might qualify for CPA funds while at the same time we are crafting a plan for future goals, objectives, and directives. He suggested that if there is any way to blend these issues, it would be beneficial.

Ms. Settles explained that she will also present examples of other processes and methods, particularly with how other communities handle the affordable housing issue.

Chairman Campbell noted that the town has heavily invested in Open Space in the past, and offered to provide Ms. Settles with some data and charts that he has presented at previous Town Meetings as a summary of what the board has done to date.

Ms. Settles stated that she had seen a map illustrating the locations of CPC projects, but there was no indication as to the amount of funds that went into those projects. Chairman Campbell indicated that the size of the bullets was changed based on funding spent. Ms. Settles noted that her presentation is meant to be more of a plan for moving forward, rather than a retrospective. She indicated that the charts presented at Town Meeting offer a good summary, but she does not intend to dig deep on the past.

Chairman Campbell voiced a desire to encourage comments during the public meeting. He explained that, early in the process, one of the guidelines was to decide what type of committee the CPC wanted to be; a receiver/reviewer of proposals or more of an outreach body. He noted that, since the board was not clear about how to best execute as an outreach body, it opted for the receiver/reviewer approach. He commented that the CPC now seems to be asked to step into a role of providing more input about creating projects, resulting in more meetings that can be challenging for the board. Ms. Settles stated that the CPC is different from town to town, by design, to allow flexibility for each board to determine what works best for their individual town.

Chairman Campbell asked if, during the research process, anyone had commented about the CPC, its role and its performance in either a positive or negative way. Ms. Settles indicated that they had not, explaining that her interviews were more focused on the process.

Ms. Polanowicz suggested offering a “CPC 101” type of program, prior to the application round, to better educate the public. Ms. Joubert stated that she will be doing just that next week when she meets with the group proposing a town common in the center of town. She explained that a curriculum for a “CPC 101” needs to be developed, but since every applicant and every application is different and there is so much leeway, there really is no standard handbook. She also noted that the DOR has recently established very clear guidelines and CPC has all of the oversight about how projects are funded.

Ms. Joubert noted that Ms. Settles still needs to meet with the Town Administrator and DPW Director. She also stated that the Recreation Director has various recreation projects that she would like to do but has been told that there are higher priorities. Ms. Joubert also explained that although projects may be eligible to be built with CPC funds, the DPW doesn’t always have the resources to manage and/or maintain these projects.

Chairman Campbell reiterated that the goal of the plan is to chart where the CPA could take the town in future years. He noted that, if there are recreation projects that are deemed to be worthy, he would hope that the plan will provide partial ammunition for Town Administration to find the time and money to support these efforts.

Mr. Clark asked about the town's capital planning process. Ms. Joubert explained that it runs in a 6 year cycle. Mr. Clark commented that the town's 6 year cycle and the CPC's 12 month cycle make planning much more challenging. Ms. Joubert commented that this particular issue will likely not be solved with the Community Preservation Plan.

Ms. Joubert also voiced her understanding that the Town Administrator has a list of projects that he will be providing for inclusion in the plan, most of which relate to the Town Hall building. She also indicated that she is hoping to get a list from the DPW Director as well. Ms. Polanowicz questioned why they would be included in the plan and suggested that everyone else's projects should also be included. Ms. Joubert confirmed that the objective is to do just that. Ms. Polanowicz voiced a desire not to give the impression that it is an exclusive list. Ms. Joubert confirmed that it is not intended to be. Ms. Polanowicz also stated that she does not wish to see the CPC become a slush fund for doing capital projects to the exclusion of other proponents. Ms. Settles explained that she will list in the plan the project information that was provided but will also broadly describe the nature of those projects. She spoke in favor of getting capital plans from the Town Administrator and DPW Director as part of the process.

Ms. Settles agreed to draft some goals for the CPC and provide them to Ms. Joubert in advance of the CPC's next meeting. Chairman Campbell explained that Ms. Settles will meet with the CPC one more time and target a public meeting for some time in May.

39 West Main Street – Chairman Campbell explained that he had been asked to provide feedback on behalf of the Open Space Committee and CPC about the potential for this parcel, which has now progressed to the point where residents would like to see an evaluation of all opportunities. He asked the board members what approach the board should take in doing so. He noted that much will depend on whether there is a potential project for which CPC funding is appropriate and applicable. If not, he suggested that the board pass it back to someone else. He questioned whether the board would prefer to look to encourage a project or set of projects or simply wait for applicants to bring their ideas forward.

Chairman Campbell explained that, at their January 29, 2015 meeting, the 39 West Main Street Ad Hoc Committee voted to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that the 39 West Main Street parcel be temporarily retained to allow for investigation into possible municipal uses, including but not limited to open space, park land, affordable housing, or a mixed-use development with affordable housing apartments, and to further charge the CPC with overseeing the process and to provide financial support for the investigative work needed to decide on a preferred alternative for consideration at Town Meeting. He also noted that, in event that the CPC is unable to bring forward a project for implementation with CPC funds for the 2016 Town Meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended that the Board of Selectmen surplus the 39 West Main Street parcel using the RFP process. It was further noted that the Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to accept this recommendation. Mr. Martin voiced his opinion that this recommendation charges the CPC with a function well beyond the scope of

its purview. It was also suggested that this be publicized to determine if there are any other potential projects for the parcel. Ms. Joubert reiterated that the town owns the parcel at 39 West Main Street, but adjoining parcels that are of interest are privately owned.

Ms. Gillespie stated that combining the 39 West Main Street parcel, the landlocked parcel behind it, the 45 West Main Street parcel, and the land where the war memorial sits would comprise approximately 1 acre. Ms. Polanowicz asked if there are any restrictions on the landlocked parcel. Ms. Joubert indicated that she was unsure but agreed to check the deed.

Chairman Campbell reiterated that there has been some interest in using the parcel for open space, and also interest from the affordable housing group. In addition, the Historical Commission has expressed a desire to have another war memorial in that area. Ms. Polanowicz asked if all town boards and committees are aware of the availability of this parcel for a possible project. Mr. Clark voiced his understanding that all were represented on the Ad Hoc Committee.

Ms. Joubert explained that various town departments were previously consulted to determine if they had any use for the parcel. Following that, the Ad Hoc Committee was formed with representatives from various town entities including Housing, Historic, Open Space, Planning, ZBA, Board of Selectmen, and Design Review. Ms. Joubert also noted that the Town Administrator had sent a memo to nearly every town board and commission. Ms. Polanowicz asked if the expectation is that the CPC will come up with a project for the parcel or wait until someone submits an application. Ms. Joubert commented that it will likely be a project brought forth by an applicant. Mr. Martin stated that the CPC must be prepared to advise an applicant if a project does not meet the requirements for use of CPA funds. Ms. Joubert indicated that she and the Town Administrator have advised the town common group that they need to determine whether their proposal qualifies. She stated that they had also suggested that the group meet with the applicable town boards to gain their support. Mr. Helwig voiced his understanding that the town of Bolton is also attempting to develop a town common using CPA funds.

Mr. Helwig asked about the parcel at 45 West Main Street. Ms. Joubert stated that the parcel is owned by Bucky Rogers, who has indicated that he is not willing to sell it for less than \$350,000.

Chairman Campbell stated that the town common group has been encouraged to speak with the Open Space Committee and Recreation Commission about their proposal. Ms. Polanowicz noted that Rick Leif has met with the Housing Authority to determine if there is any interest in developing affordable housing on the parcel. Ms. Joubert reiterated that she will be meeting with the town common group next week to explain the CPC process. Ms. Polanowicz asked if the town common group has discussed the White Cliffs property. Ms. Joubert commented that she is not aware of any such conversations.

Ms. Polanowicz asked what action, if any, the CPC is supposed to be taking this evening. Chairman Campbell explained that the CPC will act as a receiver/reviewer of applications as opposed to creating its own internal committee for research. He also voiced his opinion that the board needs a more cohesive,

detailed plan for consideration. Ms. Polanowicz suggested that there are people in town who might be able to assist the town common group with formulating a plan and defining specifics.

Mr. Perreault commented that there is a structure on the site that is not in good condition and it currently presents a liability to the Town.

Chairman Campbell asked if the CPC needs to do anything different in terms of its meeting schedule. Ms. Polanowicz suggested that the town common group, and any others, should be invited to appear before the CPC once they have something more definitive.

Members of the board discussed the April meeting date and agreed to meet on April 9, 2015. Ms. Joubert stated that she will confirm that Trish Settles is available to attend.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Rowe
Board Secretary