



# TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Community Preservation Committee

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Approved 12/3/2015

## Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes July 16, 2015

**Members in attendance:** John Campbell, Chairman; Kathleen Polanowicz; Sean Durkin; Michelle Gillespie; Todd Helwig; Peter Martin

**Members excused:** Andy Clark, Chris Kellog, Norm Corbin

**Others in attendance:** Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Trish Settles, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)

### **Discussion RE: Community Preservation Plan**

Ms. Settles explained that, since she was last before the board in April, she has had the opportunity to speak with Town Administrator, John Coderre, and DPW Director, Dan Nason, to get their input for the Community Preservation Plan. She discussed Mr. Coderre's desire to find a way to dovetail the CPC funding stream with the town's capital planning process and to determine how the town and the committee can best work together. Members of the board agreed that having the CPC's priorities, goals and objectives documented will be beneficial as the town moves forward with their projects. Ms. Settles discussed the need to do more preparatory work with applicants and to be better able to guide them to turn ideas into reality. She also commented that the CPC should seek to find other resources to partner with on some of the projects that are proposed.

Ms. Joubert noted that the Town Administrator was not negative about the CPC process, but did emphasize the importance of ensuring that applicants understand that it is highly unlikely that a project can get completed in one year. She discussed the need to educate applicants about the potential that a project may involve a multi-year process because of the many variables involved.

Sean Durkin arrived.

Ms. Joubert noted that more detail is needed in the plan to address the various steps that are necessary before applying to the CPC (i.e. meeting with town staff, determining if an RFP and/or engineering plans are needed, bid requirements, etc.).

Chairman Campbell commented that the Town Administrator had previously indicated that the town does not have sufficient resources to prepare plans and bid packets and take advantage of CPC funding. He voiced his opinion that town residents, who fund the CPC through taxes, should have the ability to demand equal time and, if there is a viable project, it should command more of a priority. He reiterated his desire for CPC projects to at least get equal time and consideration. Mr. Durkin stated that the beauty of the CPA is that an average citizen can bring forth a project for funding, and they should not have to deal with the bureaucracy in order to do so. He expressed concerns that an applicant who is met with such obstacles may abandon the idea and never come back. Ms. Joubert agreed, but reiterated her opinion that more preparatory work needs to be done before an application reaches the CPC.

Chairman Campbell stated that, while the CPC has come to accept that certain projects must have engineered plans, bid packets, and comply with prevailing wage laws, there may be more creative ways to work around it. Ms. Settles asked if there is a certain threshold where these requirements would be triggered. Chairman Campbell voiced his understanding that projects below a certain financial threshold do not need to comply with the prevailing wage laws.

Mr. Durkin indicated that he would like to see more projects brought forth. Ms. Settles voiced her understanding that limited staff resources seem to be interfering with the CPC process. Chairman Campbell expressed a desire to have a more cooperative and less adversarial relationship moving forward.

Michelle Gillespie arrived.

Mr. Helwig recalled that there had been some discussion about hiring additional staff to assist with procurement. Ms. Joubert indicated that the Town Administrator would like to hire a Facilities Manager, and noted that the hiring of an Assistant DPW Director was approved at Town Meeting. Ms. Polanowicz stated that the Selectmen had also previously approved hiring an Assistant Town Engineer and an Assistant Town Planner, but those positions were never filled.

Mr. Helwig asked why the board cannot use CPC funds to pay outside individuals to prepare bid documents. Ms. Joubert reiterated the need to educate the public that certain projects will require the hiring of an engineer to assist with the preparation of bid documents. Ms. Settles noted that the model project in the Community Preservation Plan is a substantial project that involves the various steps and includes details about how the timeline lays out. Ms. Joubert commented that there may be another community that has figured out solutions to some of these issues and developed ways to get applicants through the process, and suggested that some of those examples also be included in the Community Preservation Plan.

Chairman Campbell noted that staff in other towns may work differently in how they treat what to take to Town Meeting and/or may be less concerned about getting specific about the exact costs before doing so. He also asked how the town and the board can be more productive with

using the CPA. Ms. Settles agreed to speak with members of the CPC alliance to see if they have some existing documents that she can incorporate into the revised draft.

Ms. Settles discussed the plan as drafted thus far and asked board members to provide comments/feedback. Ms. Joubert suggested providing multiple project maps to make it easier for people to read and understand. She also agreed to provide Ms. Settles with a comprehensive list of affordable housing units in town, for inclusion in the plan. Ms. Settles commented that, though there is a desire to give the Affordable Housing Corporation some confidence that there will be resources, there is also a desire by this board to know where those resources are needed and being used. She voiced her understanding that the goal of the Affordable Housing Corporation is to work through the waiting list at the Housing Authority and be able to create the units that are in demand.

Ms. Settles noted that, based on her conversations with the Conservation Agent and Recreation Director, it is her understanding that there is an effort to connect neighborhoods with trails and open space. She also suggested that the CPC work to partner with other organizations that can take up some of the non-fundable projects to get those projects completed. She also noted that the former Westborough State Hospital property has a great deal of potential for the town.

Ms. Settles asked Mr. Durkin to provide input on the recreation portion of the plan. She also asked Ms. Polanowicz to provide input on the affordable housing section.

Ms. Polanowicz asked about the town hall gym floor project that has been on hold since 2007. Mr. Durkin recalled that there was an issue with the steam pipe under the floor, and funds were used to re-route the pipe but it did not solve the problem. He also discussed challenges with obtaining a quote because it is difficult to know what is underneath the floor and what type of work might be needed. He commented that the gym is one of the most used facilities in town. Ms. Joubert agreed, and noted that it would be problematic if it were to be out of service for an extended period of time. Chairman Campbell suggested that the Town Administrator would likely give the gym floor the lowest priority of all of the town projects.

Ms. Settles noted that the summary of principles and goals in the draft document still needs considerable work. She reiterated her request for board members to provide comments and input on the content.

**Next meeting** – Members of the board agreed to meet on September 3, 2016.

**Town Common Project** – Ms. Joubert indicated that appraisals are due at the end of July 2016. Ms. Gillespie noted that the Town Common group is working on fine tuning their application and voiced her understanding that they are seeking donors to cover any costs that the town cannot.

**White Cliffs** – Ms. Polanowicz stated that an application is being submitted by Albert Rex to the state for historical designation. She noted that she had walked through the building with a

contractor to get input about costs to upgrade and improve existing systems. She also noted that three companies have provided quotes to do the use study, and a preferred provider has been identified.

Ms. Polanowicz stated that the plan to try to flush out appropriate buyers is moving along. Mr. Helwig asked about the long term plan. Ms. Polanowicz discussed the desire to have a targeted approach to find someone who will buy the property with an interest in a preservation restriction, and noted that the use study report will help determine the path forward. Mr. Martin asked if the use study will provide an estimate of what a preservation restriction would be worth. Ms. Polanowicz agreed to ask.

Ms. Polanowicz explained that most of the building's foundation is built around ledge, and suggested that there will be challenges with demolition and any new construction.

Ms. Gillespie asked if anyone has entertained the idea of splitting the lot. Ms. Polanowicz noted that was some discussion about that possibility. Ms. Joubert suggested that it would be a shame to put a building in front of the White Cliffs.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Rowe  
Board Secretary