



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Community Preservation Committee

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Approved 1/21/16

Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes November 5, 2015

Members in attendance: John Campbell, Chairman; Peter Martin; Kathleen Polanowicz; Chris Kellogg; Norm Corbin; Sean Durkin

Others in attendance: Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Elaine Rowe, Board Secretary; Trish Settles, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC); Rick Leif, 30 Wiles Farm Road; Jo-Ann Sullivan, 103 Church Street; Carolyn Guarino, 8 Park Street; Kevin Carroll, 45 Auger Avenue; Dr. Lyna Watson, 3 Howe Lane; Ellen Adamonis, 395 Main Street; Leslie Harrison, 28 Moore Lane; Marie Nieber, 62 Whitney Street; Karen Ares, 31 Leland Drive; Maribeth Grandpre, 60 Wesson Terrace; Amy Poretsky, 47 Indian Meadow Drive; Kathleen Aldrich, 370 Davis Street; Marie O'Neill, 30 Winter Street; Barbara Garner, 30 Catherine Drive; Amy Sunray, 34 Catherine Drive; Al Aldrich, 370 Davis Street, Terry Giannetto, 5 Gates Lane; Diane Smith, 65 Reservoir Street; Elaine Fite, 63 Smith Road; Fran Habib, 5 Joseph Road; Carolyn Harrington, 67 Summer Street; Gerard Bourque, 19 Jefferson Road; Heather Capes, 26 Fairway Drive; Melissa Leland, 14 Stirrup Brook Lane; Richard Boutilier, 331 Crawford Street; Jack Pantina, 10 Gates Lane; Eric & Eileen Marcus, 10 Tory Lane; Laura & Dan Ziton, 17 Franklin Circle; Julia & Kevin Ledoux, 9 Greenland Circle; Steve Ritchie, 51 Chesterfield Road; Anthony Ziton, 17 Franklin Circle; Edward Bombard, 28 Crawford Street; Debra Davidson, 18 Thoreau Road; Manuela Gauthier, 49 Moore Lane; Russell Berman; 33 Winn Street; Rachelle Berk, 1 Juniper Brook Road; Carolyn Blanchette, 6 Rodney Terrace; Meghan Rossetti, 2 Gladwalt Road; Eileen Palme, 66 Coolidge Circle; Julianne Hirsh, 19 Smith Road; Brendan Early, 23 Samuel Gamwel Road; Madge & Neal Szulga, 4 Meadow Road; Altheaa Berman, 33 Winn Street; Amy Staunton, 6 Gristmill Lane; Melissa Kane, 89 Sunset Drive

Chairman John Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:04PM.

Public Hearing, Community Preservation Plan - Trish Settles, Principal Planner with Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) explained that she was retained by the board to draft a plan, which is an obligation resulting from the town's adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA). She noted that this is the first Community Preservation Plan for the town, and she had previously met with the CPC and several stakeholders (Conservation Commission, Town Administrator, Town Planner, DPW Director, Historical Commission, Open Space Committee, Trails Committee) to gather input about what has been working and how each would like to move forward. Ms. Settles noted that she has provided a representative map of projects previously funded by the CPC.

Ms. Settles noted that the final plan will cover each of the three primary categories (open space, historical, and affordable housing) and will address how decisions are made, where the funding goes and where we would like it to go. She explained that the CPC will adopt the final plan to be used as a guideline moving forward.

Ms. Settles commented that she had looked at plans currently in place for the 3 primary categories and drew from them so that all of the plans will be compatible. She indicated that not all of the goals in the Open Space Plan are fundable by the CPC.

Ms. Settles reviewed the draft plan (copy attached) and solicited comments and additional feedback from the board. She noted that the town has had a fair amount of activity for historic preservation and noted that, while acquisition can be very challenging and difficult, if you do not include it as a goal it will never happen.

Peter Martin arrived.

Ms. Settles stated that she had included additional applicant workshops in the plan in an effort to assist potential applicants with compiling their proposal. She also noted a slight change to the timing of the application process in order to improve cooperation between town entities. She explained that the final plan will address, in more specifics and by providing more examples, how to implement it going forward.

Chairman Campbell asked Ms. Settles if, based on her extensive experience working with communities in Central Massachusetts, there is anything she has learned about what others may be doing differently. Ms. Settles voiced her opinion that Northborough's approach is similar to that of other municipalities, with the exception of the affordable housing that some towns do a bit differently. She also commented that sometimes the desire to want too many specifics can result in a project getting stalled.

Ms. Settles noted that Northborough is one of the larger communities in Central Massachusetts that has adopted the CPA. Ms. Joubert commented that some of the towns she has looked at appear to have a two tiered process, and their boards meet more often to enable them to discuss with the applicant and advise whether the application is ready to move forward or needs more work. Ms. Settles suggested that the scale of projects will dictate how long it will take to pace through the process, and emphasized the importance of proper planning.

Ms. Joubert noted that the plan is still in draft form. She suggested that the plan and summary sheets be posted on the town website for public review, with an official vote on the plan to be done at the December meeting. Members of the board agreed.

Ms. Settles asked the board members to submit any final comments to Ms. Joubert, who will then forward them along to her for incorporation into the final draft. Ms. Polanowicz suggested notifying the Board of Selectmen about the plan, so that it can be announced on air during their upcoming meeting. Ms. Joubert agreed to do so.

Kevin Carroll, 45 Auger Avenue, asked if notification about the plan being available for review on the town's website can be made via the town alerts.

Chairman Campbell expressed appreciation to Ms. Settles for her patience and efforts.

Public Hearing to consider CPA Applications for FY2017

- Historical Preservation Reserve Fund - \$200,000, Historic District Commission
- Two Historic Markers - \$7000, Historic District Commission
- Brigham Street Burial Ground Property Line Survey - \$2000, Historic District Commission
- White Cliffs Preservation Restriction - \$427,000 to \$642,000, Historic District Commission
- Northborough Affordable Housing Corporation - \$325,000

- Conservation Fund - \$200,000, Open Space Committee
- Town Common - \$676,000, Northborough Town Common Committee
- First Parish Restoration & Accessibility Improvements - \$79,469, First Parish Unitarian Universalist
- White Cliffs Renovation & Restoration Project - \$1,000,000, Melissa Pride-Fahs
- Church Street Bridge Historic Enhancements - \$102,000, DPW

Chairman Campbell explained that this is the first night of the public hearing to consider FY2017 CPA applications. He noted that the board typically needs more than one night, and will not be voting on the applications tonight. He stated that the board will start their evaluation process and, once they determine what they believe to be viable projects, they will endeavor to find a way to make it work.

Historic reserve fund – Norm Corbin discussed the request for \$200,000 for the reserve fund. He noted that there are several potential projects that will need funding, including gravestone work in the Howard Street cemetery (\$75,000 - \$100,000) and work on the aqueduct bridge to ensure that it is in proper condition for the walking trail. Ms. Joubert explained that Bob Mihalek from the Trails Committee is working with the MWRA on the aqueduct project and has gotten farther than anyone else has to date. She voiced her understanding that an engineering study has been done, the old aqueduct pipe will need to be removed, fencing will be required for safety, and the power lines that run over the bridge will need to be raised. Mr. Corbin noted that the aqueduct is on the national historic register, so it should be possible to petition for matching funds from the state.

Mr. Corbin stated that another reason to build the historic reserve fund is the high cost of preservation and acquisition. Chairman Campbell noted that the balance of the historic reserve fund is currently \$526,813.

Historic Markers – Mr. Corbin explained that the Historic District Commission is seeking funding for two historic markers; one to be erected near the Unitarian Church (Northborough’s first meeting house) and a second to be erected at Memorial Field in memory of Mark Fidrych.

Brigham Street Burial Ground Property Line Survey – Mr. Corbin discussed plans to have a study done to determine how many burial sites are on the grounds. He also noted that some of the abutters believe portions of the burial ground land belong to them, so there is a need to clearly define the property lines.

Mr. Kellogg asked Mr. Corbin if there was a specific priority for funding of the historical projects. Mr. Corbin indicated that the Historical Commission will be meeting again on November 18th, at which time they will create a priority list.

Affordable Housing – Rick Leif explained that, at last year’s Town Meeting, residents approved \$500,000 for future affordable housing projects with the provision that once a project was identified, the group would be required to go back to the CPC and the Board of Selectmen for approval. He noted that the property adjacent to Trinity Church at 33 and 37-39 Main Street has been identified and determined to be viable for use, and the group is waiting for Habitat for Humanity to design what the renovation will look like. He indicated that the exterior of the structure will remain the same, with renovation of the interior to be done. Mr. Leif explained that the Northborough Affordable Housing Corporation (NAHC) will purchase the property and donate it to Habitat for Humanity, who will raise additional money, secure donations of materials and recruit volunteers to do the work. He noted that the NAHC is currently waiting for appraisals to ensure that the \$325,000 asking price makes sense.

Mr. Leif expressed a desire to build the affordable housing fund back up to \$500,000 to make it possible to act quickly on any future projects that may present themselves. He indicated that the NAHC has two other projects

that they are working on, which include an open lot at Colonial Village where they propose to construct additional senior housing and two units on Hitching Post Lane that have been in foreclosure since 2009. Mr. Leif indicated that the NAHC and Habitat for Humanity will work together to pursue the units on Hitching Post Lane and are hoping that the bank may consider a donation to Habitat. He mentioned that there are many opportunities and NAHC spending could be considerable, and reiterated his desire to rebuild the reserve fund.

Chairman Campbell asked about the estimated sale price for the unit on Hitching Post Lane. Mr. Leif indicated that the state will have to determine what the affordable price will be. In response to a question from Chairman Campbell, Mr. Leif explained that the NAHC will renovate the unit, sell it to a qualified candidate, and reimburse the reserve fund with the proceeds. Chairman Campbell asked if the proceeds have to go back into the reserve. Ms. Joubert stated that this will depend on how the funding agreement is written for the next round of funds. Mr. Leif stated that it is conceivable that the NAHC may have to buy down the unit to get it to the affordable price. Mr. Kellogg asked if the NAHC would pay more than what the state will allow, and suggested waiting until the bank is more negotiable. Ms. Polanowicz asked if at auction the NAHC would take the unit at clear title. Mr. Leif indicated that he will need to clarify that, but first needs to get into the unit to inspect it.

Chairman Campbell asked Mr. Leif to come to the board's next meeting to provide an update. Mr. Leif agreed to do so.

Ed Baum, 28 Crawford St, asked if anyone knows how many habitat families currently reside in town. He voiced concern about giving property to Habitat, as it then may not go to a local family. Mr. Leif noted that local preference is given for 50% of the units. In response to a question from Mr. Baum, Mr. Leif indicated that there are 75 or 80 people on the waiting list for senior housing and over 100 on the list for family housing. Ms. Polanowicz commented that the wait for housing units is over 10 years.

Marie Nieber asked about the two houses on Main Street, which are on the historic inventory. She asked if there is any assurance that the exteriors will not be substantially altered. Mr. Leif stated that there is already agreement to maintain the historic nature and the funding agreement will stipulate such. Ms. Nieber asked if the project can be required to go before the Historic District Commission. Mr. Corbin confirmed that, if a demolition permit is obtained, the Historic District Commission will get involved. Ms. Joubert noted that there have been several meetings with Habitat for Humanity and they are aware of the historic significance of these properties.

An audience member asked if NAHC will help to relocate the people currently living in the units. Mr. Leif confirmed that the tenants have been notified, and if there is any way that NAHC can help, they will certainly try to do so.

In response to a question for Ms. Giannetto, Ms. Joubert explained the lottery process for affordable housing units.

Open Space Committee – Chairman Campbell discussed the request for \$200,000 to replenish the Conservation Fund. He explained that, in the last year, the Tri-town Landscape Partnership has made a concentrated effort to conserve 500 or more contiguous acres within the towns of Northborough, Berlin, and Boylston. He noted that the partnership had obtained \$460,000 in state grants, so Northborough only needs to devote about \$100,000 from the conservation fund for this effort. Chairman Campbell also noted that the CPC passed over the open space funding request last year in order to fund projects that were a higher priority.

Town Common – Terri Giannetto discussed plans to create a Town Common in the downtown area. She explained that the group advocating for this project had put together a CPC application and has met with various town entities to explain their proposal. She noted that there are two town-owned parcels that the group is seeking to combine with another parcel (to be acquired) to create a useable open space. She indicated that the board has been able to do many great things with CPC funds, and this project is just another one that meets the criteria for use of CPA funds.

Ms. Giannetto explained that the group has obtained a letter of intent from the owner of the property at 45 West Main Street agreeing to sell at less than appraised value. She also noted that there is an additional land-locked parcel (20-Rear Gale Street) that, if acquired, would result in a combined area of just over an acre. She expressed a desire to create a town common to beautify the downtown area and provide additional green space.

Ms. Giannetto voiced her understanding that there has been some conversation about developing a portion of the land, which would severely limit what can be done with the remaining ½ acre and we would not be able to achieve what is envisioned. She noted that the budget for the 4 parcels is \$676,000, with the largest portion needed to acquire property and demolish the building that currently houses Hair Divine. She reiterated that the town common project doesn't work well if it doesn't include all 4 parcels. She indicated that, based on her conversations, it appears that residents would prefer the larger green space.

Diane Smith also noted that establishing a town common would increase the amount of space available for recognition of the town's veterans of wars and conflicts that are not currently represented by memorials in town. She noted that plans include providing a place to memorialize Brian Arsenault. Ms. Giannetto commented that the proposed common benefits everyone in town and will accommodate many different uses.

Chairman Campbell commented that the concept and enthusiasm for the town common are both clear. He stated that, as a committee, the CPC tries to make all viable applications work somehow and, in that process, it sometimes has to make them work with the rest of the town entities. He explained the importance of ensuring success at Town Meeting, where all proposals will be well vetted.

Chairman Campbell noted that the applicant had previously appeared before the CPC, at which time they were advised to get feedback from the DPW, Police Chief, and other town interests. He discussed a joint meeting that was held yesterday, and noted that there was a lot of good data in the report that was generated as a result of that meeting. Chairman Campbell asked Ms. Giannetto where the group stands on some of the points raised, specifically with regards to cost estimates voiced by the DPW Director that were higher than those reflected in the budget. He also advised that, since this project is proposed for town land, all work must be done in compliance with prevailing wage laws. Ms. Giannetto indicated that she was not yet prepared to answer because she only just recently received the memo. She noted, however, that she had obtained quotes using prevailing wages, but there were some costs that were not included. She discussed the idea of tiering the project over two years, with acquisition, demolition, and engineering specifications to be done in year one. She also noted that this approach will afford time to determine if the fourth parcel will be available.

Mr. Kellogg voiced his understanding that both the Police Chief and DPW Director had concerns about the proposal. Ms. Giannetto indicated that the Town Administrator and the Police Chief expressed concerns about the area being wooded, which might make it difficult to patrol and control mischief. She noted that the plan is for the land to be cleared and be a flat open green space, with visibility from Route 20 to the rear of the lot.

Ms. Giannetto discussed the possibility of securing CPA funds this year to cover acquisition and demolition costs, with the remainder to be granted next year. Chairman Campbell noted that the Police Chief had indicated that his concerns would be alleviated with the removal of the 20 rear Gale Street parcel. He also stated that the Police Chief is a critical constituent that we need to have on board for the proposal. Ms. Polanowicz asked if any of the stakeholders can be polled about changes in their opinion. Ms. Joubert noted that the opinions represented were in a memo drafted earlier today. Ms. Poretsky recalled that the Police Chief had said that everything has the potential to be overcome. Ms. Smith asked to be allowed the chance to go back to the drawing board to resolve issues noted in the memo.

Ms. Giannetto reiterated that some segments of the population would like to see the Hair Divine and gas station parcels developed. Ms. Joubert noted that the town has met with parties who expressed interest in purchasing the gas station but only if they can get additional land that happens to be the town-owned parcel. She indicated that she does not have an application or a site plan, but the Town Administrator's memo points out that there are other options for the use of the land.

Chairman Campbell commented that there are a number of items that need further review. Ms. Polanowicz asked if anyone had spoken to the owners of the gas station. Ms. Poretsky noted that the town has indicated that they have no interest in buying the gas station. Chairman Campbell commented about the potential for cost increases over what was budgeted in the application. He also cited some substantial obstacles with the project. Ms. Smith emphasized the tremendous amount of support that exists for this proposal. Mr. Kellogg noted that the town only has a certain amount of money, and there are spending allocations that cannot be disbursed differently. He indicated that the only money available for the CPC to contribute is what is in the Open Space/Recreation category. He also commented that, for the CPC to make a decision, it needs something that is actionable. Ms. Smith indicated that the Town Common group will be prepared to address questions and concerns at the board's next meeting.

Ms. Smith reiterated that, if the project needs to be spread out over a couple of funding cycles, the group is willing to do so. Ms. Polanowicz advised the group not to consider the board's comments as push back, but to understand the importance of being able to go to Town Meeting with something that will be supported and approved.

An audience member commented that any development in this area will exacerbate the traffic issues that already exist.

Another audience member requested that the board approve the application so the group can at least secure the property.

Ms. Nieber asked about the mixed-use project previously approved for the Pierce property.

Laura Ziton, 17 Franklin Circle, expressed her love of the Main Street area and suggested that it would be nice to have a green space there. She voiced support for a town common, which would diversify the downtown area and increase foot traffic.

Kevin Carroll voiced support for the project that would allow the town the opportunity to restore its colonial charm.

Ms. Giannetto reiterated her concerns about the alternate proposal to combine the gas station property with the parcel at 39 West Main Street and develop it. Chairman Campbell noted that this is the recommendation

from town staff. He also commented that the alternative does not eliminate green space but simply modifies it. Ms. Giannetto noted that she has over 800 signatures supporting a town common, and voiced frustration that the residents are not being heard. Ms. Poretsky suggested that more than one proposal should be brought to Town Meeting. Ms. Smith commented that the Town Administrator's opinion all along has been that the best option for the town is development of the land, so the group is faced with an uphill battle because the cards are already stacked against them.

Unitarian Church – Gordon Hart discussed the church's request for funding to enable them to make needed repairs to the meeting house and parish hall. He noted problems with the bell tower caused by leaks that, despite numerous attempts, they have been unable to resolve. In addition, he noted that the windows in the parish hall need to be replaced, the upper bell tower needs to be repainted and the clock facings need to be redone.

Mr. Hart explained that the meeting house currently has a handicap-accessible ramp that does not meet the code, and expressed an interest in replacing it with one that does. He also stated that the church would like to remove one of the pews and create an area that will be accessible for wheelchairs.

In response to a question from Chairman Campbell, Mr. Hart confirmed that the church owns both buildings. Mr. Corbin explained that this project falls within the historic category because the buildings are located within the historic district. He also noted that there is also the opportunity to get 50/50 state funding because the church is on the state historic register. He indicated that, while the handicapped accessibility portion and the bell tower work meet the criteria for funding, the window replacement may not be allowable. He suggested that the Historic District Commission will need to work with the applicant on the window replacement.

Ms. Polanowicz asked if the church had obtained multiple estimates for the work. Mr. Hart stated that getting quotes for the work on the bell tower has been a struggle. Ms. Polanowicz commented that a bell tower project was recently done in North Brookfield.

Chairman Campbell reiterated that the Historic District Commission needs to prioritize the projects and make recommendations for funding. In response to a question from Mr. Corbin, Mr. Hart indicated that the steeple work would be their highest priority. Ms. Joubert agreed to consult the coalition about past renovations to churches and what work was and was not allowed.

White Cliffs – Chairman Campbell noted that there are two applications for funding for the White Cliffs, one of which is from a private party who was not able to be here tonight but will attend the December meeting to discuss her request.

Mr. Corbin discussed the Historical District Commission's request for \$430,000 to \$650,000 related to a preservation restriction on the property. He explained that \$5,000 to \$10,000 will be needed to cover legal fees with an additional \$10,000 to \$20,000 to monitor the restriction in perpetuity. He also explained that placing a preservation restriction on the property will result in a decreased property value, so the biggest cost is the compensation to the owner for that loss in value that he estimates will be between \$400,000 and \$600,000. Ms. Polanowicz noted that there is a potential buyer for the property who is also seeking CPC funding. She stated that it is at the CPC's discretion as to whether or not to require a preservation restriction and she recommended doing so.

Realtor Michael Durkin noted that there is currently no offer on the property and no proposal on the table. Mr. Helwig expressed concern that the applicant is seeking a million dollars and is not even here, and suggested that

even considering the application is senseless. He also stated that he does not agree that this project qualifies as historic. Ms. Polanowicz noted that, under CPA, it can be if it is acknowledged as being so by a historic entity in town. She also stated that there is no rule prohibiting an application, and it is up to the committee to decide what can and cannot be considered.

Ms. Joubert noted that the applicant has spent considerable time researching and investigating her options, and the last time they spoke it was her understanding that she would be making an offer after November 5th and before December 3rd. She also noted that, whoever the new owner ultimately is, they will need to agree to the preservation restriction.

Mr. Durkin noted that he has met with Ms. Joubert and Mr. Corbin numerous times, and the current owner has gone out of their way to be accommodating. He voiced his opinion that it stretches the boundaries to consider the application. Mr. Martin expressed an interest in waiting until the next meeting, when there may be more information provided.

Church Street Bridge – DPW Director Dan Nason discussed his request for funds to rehabilitate the entire bridge structure in order to address some structural concerns. He explained his proposal to install a 3-sided box culvert along with increasing the width to add another travel lane.

Mr. Nason explained that he had met with the historical commission, who has an interest in replacing the façade. He also indicated that he does not yet have a budget number but hopes to get the project out to bid shortly. He noted that he had provided an estimate from design engineers that included a large contingency to cover prevailing wage and other factors. In response to a question from Ms. Polanowicz, Mr. Nason indicated that he had not obtained multiple quotes for the project. Mr. Martin asked if there is any way to preserve the bridge. Mr. Nason indicated that there is not because the granite is cracked and there are concerns about vehicle axle loadings. Sean Durkin asked why this project would not be considered to be the same situation as the window replacement at the church. Mr. Corbin indicated that the board needs to determine if the CPC can fund this project, as he believes this to be a demolition. Ms. Joubert noted that she has discussed this with the coalition and needs to provide them with more information before they can offer guidance. Mr. Corbin voiced his understanding that the funding being sought is just to make the bridge look historic, and that the entire project will be over a million dollars. Ms. Nieber commented that, if the town has already paid \$50,000 to look into the bridge, then it seems as though we more or less approved it as historical. Mr. Martin asked about the disposition of the cobblestones. Ms. Joubert noted that the local historical group can deem the project to be historical. Chairman Campbell reiterated that the board needs a ruling about whether the project qualifies for CPC funds. Ms. Joubert agreed to get more information before the next meeting.

Consideration of Minutes – Chris Kellogg made a motion to accept the Minutes of the Meeting of October 8, 2015 as submitted. Kathleen Polanowicz seconded; motion carries by unanimous vote with Norm Corbin abstaining.

Adjourned at 10:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Rowe
Board Secretary