

Minutes
Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee
January 08, 2015
Acton Memorial Library

Members Present: Peter Ashton (Chair), Peter Berry, Jeff Clymer, Walter Foster, Amy Green (Vice Chair), Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Ken Sghia-Hughes, Joe Will (Clerk)

Others Present: Roland Bartl (Acton Planning Director), Roland Bourdon (Finance Committee observer), JD Head (Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools (ABRS) Director of Facilities and Transportation), Deborah Bookis (ABRS Director of Curriculum and Assessment), Eileen Sullivan (ABRS Elementary Curriculum Specialist), Holly Ben-Joseph (Landscape Architect), Bill Klauer (Chair, Acton Historical Commission (AHC)), Amber Klauer, Neil Gordon (The Discovery Museums (DM) CEO), Lees Stuntz (Director and former Chair of the Board of Directors of the DM), Jennifer Brooke (Landscape Architect)

Peter A opened the meeting at 7:32 PM.

I. Minutes of December 18, 2014

- It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve the minutes as submitted.

II. Project Hearings

- Nature Play Spaces (ABRS)

JD and Deborah reviewed with slides what ABRS detailed in the application. Slides also showed where each play space would be at the 4 school-building sites (Conant, Parker Damon Building, Douglas, Gates). Other points:

- Possible revitalization of areas needing some care was a factor in selection of sites. So were opportunities to connect various existing play areas.
- Playscape at Ripley School in Concord provides an idea of what the ABRS play spaces could include, but Ripley is much, much bigger (and more costly) than would be any of the Acton sites (which, being purposely small, can each be under the watchful eyes of adults). Acton sites would include nothing extraordinarily expensive.
- Making the sites attractive to all ages (e.g., old folks) would be a way to reach out to other demographics.
- Virtually all of the play spaces will meet handicapped accessibility standards. All of the design and materials must be approved by the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board.
- Would it be possible to “stage” the projects to spread out the costs, e.g., develop one site per year? Deborah: Rather than develop sites one at a time if we have to spread out costs, we would scale back development at all 4 sites.

- There is a plan for a similar nature play space at Blanchard School in Boxborough. This would be pursued next year when Boxborough should have its own CPA funds available.
- There has been some outreach to school PTSOs. When and if it is possible to move forward with this project, ABRS would go promptly to PTSOs to hear their thoughts and try to engage them.
- ABRS is strongly encouraged to leverage community financial support. ABRS is looking for other sources, e.g., local banks. If done through PTSOs, each PTSO would have to apply on its own for its school.
- Seasonally, the play spaces are fairly static, although there are some possibilities for seasonal changes.
- If awarded CPA funds, we probably could put wording into the award letter to head off any requirement of intermunicipal agreements.

- Forest Cemetery National Register of Historic Places (AHC)

Bill Klauer reviewed what AHC detailed in its application, and provided some historical information about Forest Cemetery. Other points:

- There was a proposal a few years ago (\$25K) to place all three Acton cemeteries on the National Register. Problem was that no one asked the Cemetery Commission for its approval. The Cemetery Commissioners, at the time, did not want the cemeteries on the National Register. This time, the Cemetery Commissioners favor doing this for this one (and most appropriate) cemetery to, hopefully, find that such a listing is a positive thing, and then possibly pursue the same for Woodlawn and Mt. Hope Cemeteries.
- For the previous proposal (7–9 years ago), the amount for Forest Cemetery was \$6K, so Bill is comfortable that the AHC could hire an expert to do the work for no more than \$7K this time. For this amount, sending out an RFP is not required.
- This is a Town project but it was not on the list of projects that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) has commented on and ranked. BOS evaluation and ranking of this project is on the agenda for the next BOS meeting.

- Discovery Woods and Creativity Playscape
(Discovery Museums (DM))

Lees gave brief DM background information and introduced Neil and Jennifer.

Jennifer, who works out of the Lemon | Brooke Landscape Architecture office in Concord and whose specialty is nature play spaces (including the Ripley project in Concord), presented a site plan for the DM showing the two new community open spaces as well as related rearrangement of DM parking. Her presentation also reviewed what the DM detailed in its application. Other points:

- 5%, rather than 7%, ramps will provide a greater level of accessibility.
- CPA funding will leverage 7-8 times additional funding.

- There will be no admission charge to the Woods or Playscape although an admission charge to the buildings will continue. The DM grounds will remain as accessible to the public, including community groups, as they are now. There could be a restriction on the land to guarantee that this land would be used for outdoor recreation in the future. Public access to the “door” to the Great Hill (GH) Conservation Area could be a component of this restriction. Public access to the GH woods beyond the door would be an easement. Such restrictions would have to be worked out through Town Meeting.
- The DM is having an ongoing dialogue with Tom Tidman, Acton’s Director of Natural Resources, on public transition between the spaces on opposite sides of what would be the door to GH.
- Given the project schedule, the project should consider the possibility of phased funding.
- Peter A is on the DM Building Committee. He will discuss with Roland his role in CPC deliberations re this project.

III. 2014 Annual Report

The Annual Report is on DocuShare and also in tonight’s packet. Peter A used last year’s report and essentially cut and pasted to complete this year’s report.

No one had changes, so Roland will submit it, as presented tonight, to the Town.

IV. Disposition of gift to CP Fund from Wright Hill Association, LLC

We have check for \$60K from the Wright Hill Association for the excess over their costs for selling the house on Wright Hill. What should the CPC do with the \$?

Peter A proposes to use the \$ to reduce the amount we would have to borrow for the Wright Hill purchase (from \$990K to \$930K). The warrant article for the Wright Hill purchase allows for this. Per Peter, doing so would save us \$75-80K over the life of the loan (based on 2¾% interest rate for 15–20 years).

Other options: Return the \$ to the General Fund to leverage more projects, or to the Open Space set-aside.

Walter moved, Peter B seconded, and it was voted 7-1 (Ken: No) to accept the money returned from the Wright Hill Association and apply it to reduce the amount of the permanent bonding for the Wright Hill purchase.

V. Administrative updates

Roland will have information on money coming back from CPA-funded projects at the 01/15 meeting. He will also have BOS recommendations from its meeting next Monday on proposed Town projects.

9:29 PM — It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn.

Dates:

Approved: 01/15/15

01/15/15 CPC Meeting (Town Hall – Faulkner Room), Project Hearings
(7:35 NARA Restroom, NARA Safety, Skate Plaza, order tbd by Rec Dept;
8:30 Administrative Support)
01/22/15 CPC Meeting (Library), deliberations
02/12/15 CPC Meeting (Town Hall – Faulkner Room), deliberations
02/26/15 CPC Meeting (Library), deliberations
03/12/15 CPC Meeting (Library), Town Meeting prep
03/26/15 CPC Meeting (Library), Town Meeting prep
04/06/15 Town Meeting (ABRHS)