

Minutes
Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
January 19, 2017
Acton Memorial Library

Members Present: Bill Alesbury (Vice-Chair), Peter Berry, Tory Beyer, Dean Charter (Associate), Walter Foster (Chair), Amy Green, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Carolyn Kirkpatrick (Associate), Ken Sghia-Hughes, Joe Will (Clerk), Ray Yacouby

Others Present: Roland Bourdon (Acton Finance Committee), Eugene Cook (20 High Street, Acton), Cathy Fochtman (Acton Recreation Director), Anne Forbes (Iron Work Farm of Acton), Robert Hummel (Acton Assistant Planner), Earl Lamb (West Acton Baptist Church), Genetriz Lamb (West Acton Baptist Church), Phil MacPhee (West Acton Baptist Church), Larry Powers (Powers Gallery of Acton), Tom Tidman (Acton Natural Resources Director)

Walter opened the meeting at 7:30 PM.

I. Citizen Concerns

- Larry shared information on the John Robbins lottery house (home of the Powers Gallery), restorative steps that have been taken, and steps that are yet to happen, and expressed gratitude to the CPC for providing a CPA grant to help with the restoration. A public benefit from the grant is an easement access from Route 2A across the property to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail behind the house. Walter expressed CPC appreciation for the feedback and for Larry being custodian of this “gorgeous” house.

II. Minutes of December 15, 2016

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

III. Project Hearings and Review (See DocuShare file

<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-8353/Document-57519>.)

Cathy gave a PowerPoint presentation (see DocuShare link above) that initially reviewed Recreation Department projects most recently funded. These included an Elm Street Tennis Court and Playground project that has been completed with unused \$6.5K being turned back to the CPC. During the course of her ensuing presentations, Cathy pointed out that the Rec Department operates year-to-year on one single revolving fund.

• Morrison Farm Well

Cathy gave a PowerPoint presentation (see DocuShare link above) detailing this proposal, which is being submitted for a third time. The request is for \$28K. Users' fees will provide an additional \$3K for a total project cost of \$31K. Factual points made in the ensuing discussion:

- Acton Water District (AWD) recommended some years ago that this be done. There would be zero impact on AWD wells.
- Rec Department's revolving fund will assume ongoing electrical costs.

- Completing this project will mean more \$ for electricity and fewer \$ for water from the revolving fund. Overall, what will be the “return on investment” for this project? Cathy will get back to the CPC on this.

- The Rec Department will continue to require that gardeners at all three community gardens follow AWD policy on water use.

- Because the needed depth of the well is unknown, a “fudge factor” is built into the cost estimate. Drilling the Arboretum well was estimated at \$9K and came in at \$7K.

- **NARA Parking Lot Expansion**

Cathy continued her PowerPoint presentation (see DocuShare link above) detailing this request for \$50K. Cathy noted that there would be “internal help” (i.e., Town services) for some of the project. Factual points made in the ensuing discussion:

- These two parking lots are part of the NARA Master Plan that is very close to publication. Cathy will send the CPC a pdf of the Master Plan as soon as she can.

- The location of the new lower parking lot is part of the “gateway” to NARA. A volleyball court would be more attractive than a parking lot in gateway space.

- If beach volleyball would relocate to Jones Field, multiple courts (up to four) are a possibility.

- Re the proposed new upper parking lot and the NARA walking trail: A “more finalized diagram” is in process now. Cathy can forward the CPC the diagram when it’s available.

- Eleven spaces in the existing lower parking lot will be dedicated to users of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT). When those spaces are full, a possibility would be that NARA provides BFRT users a list of other BFRT parking areas.

- Wouldn’t it be better for the Town to pay for infrastructure such as the lower parking lot? In general, a project like this can expect no \$ from the Town’s General Fund. The Town budget process expects the Rec Department to look to the CPA for funding. Peter expects to suggest that the Town explore turning the Rec Department revolving fund into an enterprise fund. [Such a fund would retain any operating surplus at fiscal-year end rather than have the surplus closed to the General Fund.]

- Does storm water runoff infiltrate directly into the NARA pond? No. Cathy and Tom explained the filtration for both lots.

- **NARA Picnic Pavilion Restroom**

Cathy continued her PowerPoint presentation (see DocuShare link above) detailing this request for \$155K. Factual points made in the ensuing discussion:

- One reason for the “expensive” facility is the 40% uptick due to the prevailing wage requirement.

- NARA summer camps use the Picnic Pavilion, and camp staff remains responsible for campers when they leave the Pavilion area to use the Bathhouse restroom.

- Can there be a “green” aspect to this, e.g., a solar roof, a composting toilet? A composting toilet on ledge (the case here) needs a big chamber below it. Also, heavy-volume use would overrun the capacity of such a unit.

- A possible alternative: A jitney service that would transport people to the Bathhouse restroom.

- **20 High Street Carriage House Restoration**

Note: As an abutter to the project site, Bill recused himself from this presentation/discussion and left the meeting room, returning only after it concluded.

Eugene gave a PowerPoint presentation (see DocuShare link above, clicking on the “CPC Application” link therein) summarizing the information provided in this proposal. The request is for \$62K. Points made in the ensuing discussion:

- The building is on the Massachusetts Historical listing, but as a building at 22 High Street, the original address of its location, rather than at 20 High Street, the current address.
- The proposal could be strengthened with a description of how the project will benefit the general public. Any financial leveraging should also be noted for the CPC.
- The project would also consider restoring an original window at the front of the building.

• 5% Administrative Support

Robert reviewed a Memorandum from Steve Ledoux requesting \$ to help provide for a continuation of the Town’s CPA support services (see DocuShare link above, clicking on the “CPC Application” link therein). The request is for the maximum allowed 5% of 2017 CPA funding. Points from an ensuing general discussion of the Town’s support services:

- Such funding is statutorily limited to 5%.
- The CPC does this so the CPA program would pay for itself. The Town wouldn’t have to use real estate taxes to cover the cost. It is noted that the amount of work has grown over the years. Nonetheless, the CPC’s working relationship with the Town has been good.
- Do other towns use CPA \$ to provide such support? Most town CPCs fund this at 5% as standard operating procedure, but it is up to each CPC each year.
- Town costs include CPA work by Town Counsel. Town Counsel drafts and reviews award letters and warrant articles. Last year it did the Wright Hill bonding. Town Counsel also reviews projects for their CPA eligibility. It was noted that this year all 2017 projects were reviewed by Town Counsel, contrary to what the CPC had requested, as reviews from previous years are still deemed applicable for 2017 proposals that are quite similar to proposals from previous years, e.g., the Open Space Set-Aside. Why did everything — or did everything — go to Town Counsel this year? The CPC will follow up on this.

IV. Request to apply remaining funding from Skate Bowl project toward Skate Plaza Construction

Per Cathy, there is just over \$24K remaining from the now-completed Skate Bowl project. Cathy is asking whether the CPA (and the CPC) will allow the Rec Department to carry over the extra \$ to help with construction of the Skate Plaza, which will complete the Skate Park. The \$175K Skate Plaza project was funded at \$135K in 2016 with the expectation that Boxborough would fund the remaining \$40K. The Boxborough CPC moved the project to Boxborough Town Meeting where it was defeated. Cathy detailed some of her efforts to make up the \$40K acknowledging the obvious that a \$24K carryover would make that task much easier.

To help it decide, the CPC should have the following information:

- the 2012 Skate Bowl project proposal
- the 2012 Town Meeting Warrant Article excerpt re the Skate Bowl

- the 2012 Skate Bowl project Award Letter
- the 2016 Skate Plaza project proposal
- the 2016 Town Meeting Warrant Article excerpt re the Skate Plaza
- the 2016 Skate Plaza project Award Letter

Whereas the CPC will have to decide that the excess 2012 funds would be spent within the scope of the 2012 project, Cathy should provide the CPC with specific Bowl project line-item costs (e.g. engineering, siting for walkways, benches, landscaping, etc.) that would go into the Plaza project, essentially mapping for the CPC the overlap of the Bowl and Plaza projects. 2012 funds that cannot be used for the 2016 project will have to be returned to the CPC.

Cathy would hope to have a decision from the CPC in February, as she would like to launch a fundraiser in March. The CPC will try to get an answer to Cathy by its 02/09 meeting. Cathy will also ask the Boxborough Rec Commission if it is reapplying for this project for 2017. She will let the CPC know Boxborough's response.

V. Request to apply remaining funding from Pressed Steel Ceiling toward replacement of insulation and knob and tube wiring in attic

Earl represented Nancy Emerson Lombardo and Linda O'Neil, Co-Chairs of the West Acton Baptist Church (WABC) Board of Trustees, and presented information that the Co-Chairs had shared in a letter to the CPC (See DocuShare link above). The WABC has funds left over from one of two 2014 CPA projects and would like to use those funds on what could be related projects. The 2014 Fire Safety Systems project was awarded \$52K in CPA funds. Those funds have been spent. The 2014 Upper Level Pressed Steel Ceiling project was awarded \$37K in CPA funds with ~\$24K unspent. (Someone shopped around and found a firm that would do restoration for a lot less than originally planned. Also, some jobs were combined to leverage their costs.) The WABC would like to use \$11K of the unspent funds to replace some insulation and \$13K of the unspent funds to replace some wiring. Leaving either project undone will, according to the WABC, pose a threat to the ceiling.

Per Walter, the same issue applies here as for the Skate Park funds, namely can the excess Pressed Steel Ceiling funds be spent within the scope of the Pressed Steel Ceiling project?

Having a decision by 01/26 would be quite timely for the WABC, as it would then have an opportunity to bring this together with other jobs. For that meeting, the CPC suggests that the WABC detail the \$ put into the projects because that could leverage the CPC decision. In particular, some on the CPC may find detail of the knob and tube electrical work to be done (diagrams, pictures, locations, etc.) helpful. Nancy will be able to come to the 01/26 meeting to help address CPC concerns. If a decision is not possible by then, the WABC would appreciate feedback on any additional information that the CPC would like to have.

The CPC will try to commit to a decision no later than its 02/09 meeting. In the meantime, the WABC should get any additional information to the Acton Planning Dept., as this will be included in the 01/26 agenda.

VI. Administrative updates

Robert pointed out that the information packet distributed to the CPC includes
– an updated cost estimate for the Jones Tavern project.

– an email from the South Acton Congregational Church turning back its 2016
award.

– information on Wright Hill bonding and debt servicing.

Re the Acton Congregational Church litigation, Peter indicated that the plaintiff's
appeal-filing deadline keeps getting extended and he will try to find out why.

The next CPC meeting is 01/26 to begin deliberations. Walter explained the process,
and that CPC members should come with their opinions on the projects. There will
be a spreadsheet for reference. It should be distributed a few days before the meeting.
If a CPC member becomes aware of any new information on any of the projects, get
it promptly to Robert or to the project liaison.

10:19 PM — It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn.