

Minutes
Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
May 10, 2018
Acton Memorial Library

Members Present: Bill Alesbury (Vice-Chair), Tory Beyer, Dean Charter, Walter Foster (Chair), Greg Johnson (Associate), Carolyn Kirkpatrick (Associate), Nancy Kolb, Joe Will (Clerk)

Others Present: Roland Bartl (Acton Planning Director), Chris Dallmus (140 Main Street Condominium Trustee), Susan Mitchell-Hardt (Acton Conservation Trust President), Jackie Igo (140 Main Street Condominium Trustee)

Walter opened the meeting at 7:32 PM.

I. Citizen Concerns

- None

II. Minutes of April 26, 2018

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

III. Appointment – Chris Dallmus; Consultation re: 140 Main Street

- Jackie and Chris shared information (verbal and written) on the First Universalist Church building at 140 Main Street, exploring the possibility of Community Preservation Act funding help for some work needed on the building. Walter expressed appreciation for their appearance as the CPC welcomes preliminary discussion on any possible project proposal. He provided a scope of what the CPC has done for other projects that have sought similar assistance. Points made in the ensuing discussion:
 - Any proposal like this should come to the CPC with a “very defined scope.”
 - This would be in the Historical Resources category.
 - This building is in MACRIS (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System) for Acton, so any permits would trigger Historical Commission review, but that should be no problem as what would be proposed (most likely all exterior work) would be something the Historical Commission would agree to.
 - A CPA grant for a privately-owned historic structure needs a historical restriction. (Refer to the online historic preservation form to get an idea of what this is about.) Any restriction in this case would likely need all condo owners to sign on. If mortgages are involved, banks might have to agree to any restriction as well. This could be complicated and a big stumbling block. The project application may need to include a letter stating that all condo owners are on board, as well as any banks.
 - The Condo Trust is aware that deed restriction is part of the process and feels it is an asset, not a liability.
 - There would be no religious issue since the building is now privately owned.

- The CPC likely would find it difficult to fund an entire project on a private building. Applicants in general, but particularly private owners, are encouraged to leverage their projects, to possibly network to see what else might be available; to look for grants, or other funding sources. To win Committee favor, the CPC would expect private owners to present extraordinary circumstances re the project and propose to cover a sizable share of the cost.
- The suggested costs seem high (which wouldn't be surprising if this were a public project). The Condo Trust could double check this. Also, check with banks (e.g., Brookline Bank) that make loans to condominium associations.
- For townsfolk, funding for private buildings can be a challenge. Something the town looks for is some sort of tangible give-back to the town.
- Private buildings that have had CPA-funded projects — and a public purpose for each — include the Exchange Hall, the Woman's Club, and Powers Gallery.
- The Exchange Hall documented a couple million dollars' worth of federal tax credits. The Condo Trust might want to look into federal tax credits as that could also be used as leverage.
- Roland provided a general timeline for project applications with submission due in the fall, sometime before Thanksgiving.
- Roland (and his Town Planning group) can be a great resource.
- Last year's Town CPA Plan is available for viewing on the Town website (see "Public Documents").
- The CPC would be happy to have Jackie and Chris at another meeting should they need more feedback. Or, they can contact the CPC directly with any questions and the Committee will be in touch.

IV. Issuance of Award Letters

- Acton does a CPA award with a letter. Westford does it with a contract. Greg shared a template for the contract with Walter and Walter will circulate it with the CPC. Per Walter, moving to something like this can be considered in the future, but Acton won't change all of this year's letters at this time.
 - Walter led the Committee in its review of this year's award letters.
 - Roland pointed out that in preparing the letters, the Town has three sets of eyes looking over the letters for typos and "strange things".
 - Joe mentioned that the Acton Historical Society referenced its award in its May newsletter. Susan will forward that newsletter to the Committee.
 - Roland pointed out that changing the three-year time limit for commencing a project would require a Town Charter change.
 - In the T.J. O'Grady Skate Park Completion letter, a bullet should be added, something to the effect: The applicant will make every effort to obtain, and first expend, funds as appropriated by the Town of Boxborough.
 - Re the Support Fund for Open Space Acquisition, what is the process for accessing these funds? Per Roland, most likely the Open Space Committee would authorize and Tom Tidman would be the holder of the purse (to substantiate and then appropriate).
 - It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to accept the letters as presented with a few editorial changes and the additional bullet mentioned above.

V. Summer 2018 Meeting Schedule

- The Committee reviewed its two-per-month meeting schedule and decided its next meetings would be June 28 (in case something comes up) and August 9 (edit the 2019 Plan) only, with the regular schedule resuming September 13 (public hearing on the Plan).

VI. 2019 Community Preservation Plan – Section Assignments

- Before the August 9 meeting, the Committee will send Roland any edits, including Tory on Housing, Joe on Recreation, and Amy on Conservation and Open Space. Greg and Dean can look at the process pieces, with an eye for any improvements. Roland and Planning will update the numbers.

VII. Administrative Updates

- Reminder that at NARA tomorrow the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail ribbon cutting is at 3:30 followed by the Town's Volunteer Reception at 5:30.
- The Board of Selectmen has yet to decide whether it wants to pursue the Congregational Church CPA Award lawsuit any further.
- Per Susan: The 53 River Street Committee had a well-attended, enthusiastic meeting yesterday trying to generate CPA projects. People seemed to favor 1) conservation, 2) historical, and (a distant) 3) housing projects.
- Susan also mentioned that the ACT has received donations in the name of the late Brewster Conant, whose life will be celebrated by his Church and by the Town on June 16. Susan is also very encouraged as to the possible fates of the Conant land in the center of Town (to remain in the Conant family) and the Wetherbee land in East Acton (for which the Town has the right of first refusal should it come on the market).
- Walter will host a barbecue for the Committee, likely sometime in June. Walter will send out possible dates, including to Susan.
- Walter to Carolyn: Maybe the CPC could have one of its upcoming fall meetings at the Woman's Club, maybe even the 09/13 public hearing. Carolyn will pursue the possibility.
- Committee reorganization will occur at the 08/09 meeting.
- The Committee thanks Roland and the Planning staff for its support.

8:43 PM — It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn.

Next scheduled meeting 06/28.