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ACTON

Minutes for Community Preservation Committee Meeting, 5/1/03, Thursday, 7:30 pm-9:45 pm

Attending: Andy Magee, Walter Foster, Catherine Coleman, Peter Grover, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Roland Bartl

Absent: Joe Nagle, Mimi Herington, Peter Berry, Alison Gallagher, Wayne Klockner, Chris Schaffner

Guests: Nancy McShea, Greg Catalano

Vice Chair, Catherine Coleman presided in the absence of Peter Berry.

1. Introduction

- a. Secretary's Report: There was unanimous consent for the amended minutes of 4/15 with comments from Anne Forbes and Walter Foster incorporated.
- b. Old Business:  
Action: Catherine volunteered to take the minutes next meeting.
- c. Earth Day: Alison made a great display; handouts were agreed upon; staffing assignments were made.

2. Discussion of Recreation Priorities for CPA Funding

Handout: Acton Recreation Department Brochure

Nancy McShea, Recreation Director and Dr. Greg Catalano, Chair led the discussion.

Nancy stated that Municipal Recreation was begun 16 years ago. It had been cut and was re-established in '98. They cover everything from programs for 18 month olds through senior citizens. -(see Brochure for comprehensive list of activities, etc.). They run a summer day camp of 400 kids; hold adult classes in soccer, yoga and in line skating; they service adult leagues as well as youth leagues in 4 sports; run the beach at NARA; plan and conduct Winterfest, Acton Day, Halloween Costume Party, July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration, Summer Concert Series; participate in efforts leading to construction of TJ O'Grady Skate park, and Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, etc. They also go to all the fields to assess safety issues and to do turf maintenance.

Funding: Some funding comes from a revolving fund which is generated by user fees (\$347,000); \$75,000 is budgeted for Recreation, and the rest is from donations. They take monies from the revolving fund to do small projects such as landscaping at NARA and making it more handicap accessible. In a few years all programs should be self funded.

- Recreation employs 43 seasonal summer workers at NARA .  
\$92,000 is paid for camp staff and \$66,000 is paid for beach staff.  
Part of the \$75,000 covers 2 FT maintenance men, (1 is seasonal)

Greg stated that a 5-7 member Recreation Commission help to guide Nancy's policies, help with decision making, and volunteer to help with special events.

Greg is concerned with the lack of field space and resources to make them quality fields. They have 60+ acres of athletic fields, which are used on a daily basis. Acton is well below what the standard is.

- They need help developing and identifying fields for recreation purposes.
- They are going to sign a long term lease for a bigger portion of the School St. field off Rt. 2. Though they have gained 10 additional acres at School St., there is no funding to improve the field.
- They have no facility to run indoor programs. Indoor programs are run by Com. Ed., and they can't give the Rec. Commission space.
- They like the idea of a Teen Center - they would have liked part of the Towne Building for that.
- They would like to build things that would benefit all residents such as a picnic pavilion at NARA.
- The Boy Scouts held their jamboree on the soccer fields recently - their Winnebago's left large ruts - they have no funds to repair them.
- They would like to fund the BFRT (multipurpose trail from Wetherbee St. to NARA Park in Acton; will run from Framingham-Lowell when finished) - it would satisfy needs for young people as well as the seniors at the Inn at Robbins Brook

Their 5 year plan wish list items range from \$2500 on up. Town staff asked them not to prioritize the list.

- Andy added that CPA funds could be used as the town's matching funds in addition to state funds, and he mentioned the overlap concept.: combine recreation with open space or other community preservation area.
- Walter added that from a town perspective he asked Don Johnson to ask all departments to become a funnel for prioritization. In a way it mimics what our committee is doing - sorting out and coming up with criteria. The BoS has a 10 year plan.
- Walter's question for Recreation is which project is the most valuable? - recognizing that multiple interests will be important. The CPC will rely on Recreation and the other community preservation areas to do the prioritization as they have the vision for their group. We will need to know their 10 year plan or Master Plan to see how it fits in with the other plans going forward such as the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Master Plan. We will need open channels of communication.

Don Johnson could give the Recreation Com. 3 out of 52 projects to pick from. Nancy said that they would

- first look at safety issues - whether something is a current liability;
- a pavilion could be chosen as it's part of a project yet to be completed;
- they would need to assess the status of the leagues. For example, the baseball league wanted a complex right away. They made a capital request for \$11,000; the league raised the rest, and they built a great complex at 2A and 27.
- What project could benefit other projects? It might be possible to do half a project, such as the Morrison Farm athletic fields
- They will look for multiple use projects such as the Morrison property which can combine open space, conservation and athletic fields

Process: we need an open and fair process which involves outreach.. One idea is to do a mailer to the town to ask what are residents' priorities. The idea is that the Rec. Com. should be able to say they have done an outreach process.

- An example of a project brought forward by an independent group is the TJ O'Grady Memorial Skate Park - the group addressed the Rec. Com and got their backing.

Walter emphasized the importance of communication and information flow.

Greg reminded the committee that we will have Alison working with us, and she can be their voice.

- Andy stated that we will need short term as well as long term proposals which will allow us to leverage other funding for bonding.

Outline of how to give the CPC a proposal:

(The CPC will have around \$800,000/year.)

- Nancy observed that leveraging dollars will be important as well as combining with other interests. Walter stated that it's possible to combine open space acquisition with affordable housing, historic preservation and recreation. It's possible to sell a portion of a parcel of land for houses in order to offset expenses.
- Joining with other groups is a plus as well as having groups put in as much of their funding as possible. The CPC will look for a complete, strong proposal backed by funds.
- Another strategy would be to offset the cost of an item through fundraising events - "Friends of Recreation?" Funds would make it work a little better. Also show how the project fits in with town priorities.

Greg asked if there were rules on how much the CPC can bank.

Walter reiterated the 10% /community preservation area rule, and that Rec. is in the 70% left over area; that the big decision is to use the funds or bank them. The Rec Com could come to the CPC to ask us to bank funds.

- Once the CPC makes their decision and it becomes a Warrant Article at Town Meeting, the CPC will ask Rec. to get out the vote and promote the project.
- Nancy indicated that her perception is that the Rec. Com will bring their priorities to Don Johnson who will then bring them to the CPC.
- It was suggested that we need to meet with Don. Don envisions that this system will prevent a rush of proposals from all the department s coming to the CPC - such as proposals for the Davis monument, 107 Woodbury Lane, etc. He could act as the coordinator.

At Town Meeting Trey had stated that certain things could be taken out of the budget as they could be funded with CPA dollars.

The CPC agreed we need to meet with the BoS and Town Manager to discuss these issues . It's a gray line, and we must be very careful. The CPA is not primarily about accommodating town staff's budgetary priorities

ACTION: Walter will talk with Don about the private and town process and how the criteria for selection will be different from the town's.

- Roland emphasized that we must work on our plan so that people know the rules.

3. Next steps:

- a. Process for writing the Community Preservation Plan: The various subcommittees will meet. They are encouraged to draw from the Bedford Plan, the Stow Plan, or other plans whose models are compelling; they are also encouraged to make full use of relevant planning documents already in existence such as the Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Master Plan, etc
- b. Deadlines for drafts: First draft is due by the end of June
- c. We agreed that we like Bedford's plan.
- d. Roland recommends having a glossary page; he feels there is not enough guidance for proponents; and that we need a better rating system. Does a top priority open space parcel outweigh another top priority proposal? - we need to spell out things. We need to lay out as much of the criteria as possible and how we intend to apply them.
- e. Peter Berry had mentioned that we may not want to bring anything to Town Meeting in the fall. Walter advised that we remain flexible in case something special came up.
- f. Roland advised thinking about projects but not to ask for submissions until we have a procedure or plan.

Time Lines

At our June meetings 6/3 and 6/19 we could discuss our working drafts.

ACTION: Walter will invite Don Johnson to attend our 5/20 meeting in the interest of arriving at a mutual understanding of the project prioritization process and keeping open the channels of communication.

- The BoS will bring the CPC in front of them to find out if they can offer any help.
- Walter could invite Trey to meet with the CPC sometime.
- The FinCom needs to be brought along. Gim Hom is Chair and Jonathan Chinitz is the Vice Chair
- It was suggested that we send out a letter from the CPC Chair inviting FinCom to look at proposals.
- - When the CPC finishes the draft, we will give FinCom a copy.

4. Report from the Communications Committee

- a. Web site: It's the single most important thing we can do to get our information out. Catherine received a proposal from Jim Salem to build our website for \$500.

ACTION: Roland will ask Don if it is necessary to put out a RFP and if it's ok to bill the CPC later for work done earlier. Funds can be appropriated before Town Meeting.

- Catherine indicated that her sister can help Jim with the graphics.
- Jim will need to work off the town site server. The town site may be up by the end of May or June.

The address issue is solved. The domain name, PreserveActon.org is bumped to the town site, and the new address will be the town site.

- Andy made a motion that we approve the proposal with the conditions that the funding is worked out. The motion carried unanimously.

5. New Business

- Roland has a conflict with the CPC meeting on 6/19. We agreed to reschedule it for 6/26.
- Next Meetings: 5/8, 5/20, 6/3 and 6/26 at the Library.
- Walter gave us an FYI that the BoS will meet on Monday night with an organized group of neighbors about the proposed comprehensive permit at 520 Main St. A couple neighbors mentioned how it would be nice for the town to purchase 520 Main St. with CPA funds if the sale fell through.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Mitchell-Hardt