

Minutes
Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
September 14, 2017
Acton Memorial Library

Members Present: Bill Alesbury (Vice-Chair), Peter Berry, Tory Beyer, Dean Charter (Associate), Walter Foster (Chair), Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Carolyn Kirkpatrick (Associate), Nancy Kolb, Joe Will (Clerk), Ray Yacoub

Others Present: Roland Bartl (Acton Planning Director), Roland Bourdon (Acton Finance Committee), Ann Chang (Acton Memorial Library Trustee)

Walter opened the meeting at 7:31 PM.

I. Citizen Concerns

- The Acton Memorial Library recently acquired a portfolio of etchings, 96 items in all, by well-known Acton artist Arthur Davis (1863-1953). The etchings have been in storage and not well cared for. Ann described a possible “Historic Resources” project — likely under \$10K — that would rehabilitate the etchings, place them in frames or acetone binders, and archive them in the Library collections from which they could also be displayed in public places like the Library or Town Hall. The CPC advised Ann to follow the information in the “Community Preservation Plan 2018” to prepare and submit a proposal for CPA funding of the project.

II. Public Hearing to ascertain the needs, possibilities, resources, & preferences for Community Preservation and to hear comments/questions on the Community Preservation Plan 2018 draft

- The CPC worked through the draft section by section, advising Roland Bartl on changes to be made.

It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve the Community Preservation Plan 2018 as edited.

Roland will publish the Plan on the Town website from which it can be downloaded in Word.

III. Minutes of July 13, 2017

- It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve the minutes with one edit.

IV. Ratification of 2018 CP Plan

- See II above.

V. Fall/Winter Schedule

- The CPC agreed to leave unchanged the second and fourth Thursday “Meetings for 2017” dates for September-December, as it is possible and relatively easy to cancel not-needed meetings on short notice. At the November 16 meeting, the CPC will take stock of submitted proposals and stack them up to develop the 2018 schedule.

VI. Report and Status of Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) Lawsuit

- Peter shared information, and his thoughts, on the case that was argued before the Massachusetts SJC last Thursday. One can link to Suffolk University for the SJC archive and “see everything” on archived video (www.suffolk.edu/sjc/archive.php). The SJC has “100 and some” days to release its decision. Per Walter, the attorneys for the Town did a very good job, one that perhaps moved the Office of the Commonwealth’s Attorney General to file an amicus brief on behalf of the Town. Walter also expressed his gratitude that the Board of Selectmen “stepped up to this.” Per Peter, it’s important to defend the Town Meeting decision to fund this project.

VII. Review Possible Projects for a December Special Town Meeting (STM)

- A “heads-up” to the CPC: Andy Magee, Chair of the Open Space Committee told Walter that the 12/04 STM Warrant may include a request for \$ from the CPA Open Space set-aside fund for acquisition of land on Newtown Road. (The principal reason for the STM is for design \$ for school projects.)
- Should the CPC try to fix the “mistake” (a misread of the Warrant article) made on the April TM floor that resulted in rejection of the Acton Housing Authority (AHA) 2017 funding proposal? Points from the ensuing discussion:
 - The AHA still has \$35K for property development (going back another fiscal year). Some of this will be used for the property on Main Street. The \$ is in a generic fund essentially.
 - For Open Space, the CPC does a set-aside. It is initially not known what the set-aside funds will be used for. When specific projects come in, \$ are allocated out of the set-aside. With the AHA, \$ are in a generic fund that can be used for multiple purposes. There’s a laundry list on how the AHA can use the money. Spending has to be approved by the AHA, not the Town, and the AHA needs to report back to the CPC on its use.
 - Because the AHA must spend in specified categories, AHA \$ could never be used for River Street without an enormous amount of process.
 - AHA funds can only be spent on AHA properties. There is no splitting hairs on this. AHA could hire advisors on the feasibility of building on River Street.
 - The AHA \$ requested in 2017 and denied by TM are in the CPA general fund. It’s unallocated. The 2017 TM-approved funding for housing did not meet the 10% CPA requirement.
 - If AHA needs the \$ this year, it has every right to ask the CPC to revisit a clarified 2017 proposal. It could also propose a grant of \$150K in the normal course of 2018 projects and have the CPC decide whether to award that amount. The AHA would welcome CPC guidance on this — whether to resubmit now or to add on in the Spring.
 - Whether funding is requested at the STM or rolled over into the 2018 proposal, great care should be taken as to how the proposal is summarized in the Warrant. Advice on how the AHA should present such a request was offered, including the AHA identifying what AHA could possibly plan for the funds without naming specific projects, notably anything to do with the River Street parcel.

– Is there an urgency to this? The December STM will be very difficult. Bringing up Open Space would be easy, but bringing out anything controversial would be problematical. STM can be told that AHA got turned down at the regular TM for the wrong reasons, but someone might not be listening to the substance and still protest the funding.

VIII. Project Updates

Not Project Updates, but . . .

- The Cemetery Commission is considering a CPA proposal in the “Historic Resources” category that would request \$50K to add to already committed \$90K from the Commission and \$20K from the Town for \$160K total to renovate the Kennedy Building at Woodlawn Cemetery. The building is within a property that is on the Massachusetts Register of Historic Places and does itself qualify to be on the Town’s Cultural Resource List. On the other hand, the Kennedy Building was described as “a cinder block garage with an office on top — a maintenance building” making it difficult to see a linkage with historic preservation, and therefore difficult to support.
- There may also be a proposal for restoration of the Woodlawn Cemetery gates and part of the cemetery wall along Concord Road.
- The Acton Historical Society is wrestling with the Kelley’s Corner infrastructure project that would widen Main Street in front of the Hosmer House (wider road, bike lane, wider sidewalk). At issue is whether the Hosmer House historical restriction prevents any changes at all to the front including changes to town-owned property. Lawyers are looking into whether the historic preservation restriction on the house would work in favor of preserving the stone wall.

IX. Administrative Updates

- None.

9:17 PM — It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn.

Next CPC meeting is September 28, 7:30 pm.