

Minutes
Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
January 25, 2018
Acton Town Hall, Room 204

Members Present: Bill Alesbury (Vice-Chair), Peter Berry, Tory Beyer, Walter Foster (Chair), Amy Green, Greg Johnson (Associate), Carolyn Kirkpatrick (Associate), Joe Will (Clerk), Ray Yacouby

Others Present: Roland Bourdon (Acton Finance Committee), Cathy Fochtman (Acton Recreation Director), Robert Hummel (Acton Assistant Town Planner), Susan Mitchell-Hardt (Acton Conservation Trust President)

Walter opened the meeting at 7:30 PM.

I. Citizen Concerns

- Cathy addressed questions/concerns related to her presentation at the 01/11/18 CPC meeting.
 - Since that meeting Cathy visited with the Boxborough Recreation Commission and discussed its plans to put in a \$20K capital funding request. The deadline for this is early February.
 - On the current use of the existing part of the skatepark, Cathy provided anecdotal information from several individuals attesting to usually seeing from 3 to 20 users when they pass by the skatepark. From their point of view, in general: A skatepark is used every day assuming favorable weather. During this time of year, as long as snow can be removed, kids will be skating.
 - She has spoken with Stantec Corporation, the skatepark designer, as to the need for a timeline going forward. She is working on it from the Town side.

The CPC urged Cathy to provide any additional information before the CPC takes a final vote, likely at its 02/22 meeting.

II. Minutes of January 11, 2018

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

III. Board of Selectmen (BoS) priorities

- An email from Steve Ledoux summarized the BoS rankings. Robert also provided a listing of the rankings. The Committee reviewed the list.

IV. Iron Work Farm – grant opportunity/matching fund need

- A state grant opportunity arrived at the “very last moment” for possible CPC consideration this year. Iron Work Farm has, however, decided to wait until at least next year to submit a proposal.

V. Worksheet Overview

- Walter led a Committee walkthrough of the worksheet provided by Planning, and described how the Committee will proceed in using the worksheet. The Committee suggested some corrections to notation used in the worksheet.

VI. Project Deliberations

Walter led the Committee discussion on the submitted projects.

- 5% Administrative Support (\$56,049.60)
 - Why was this ranked so low (tied for 4th) by the BoS?
 - Administrative support does cost the Town a lot more than it gets from the CPA.
- Open Space Set-Aside and Support (\$420,000 and \$30,000)
 - The Open Space request generally amounts to about 1/3 of available CPA funds.
 - The Newtown Road purchase amount should be deleted from the Open Space Set-Aside balance. Has this happened? Robert will check. The Town paid for the Newtown Road extras that normally would be paid for from the Support fund.
 - How much is in the Support Fund at present? The Open Space Set-Aside balance shown on the spreadsheet does not and will not include any Support \$. It is thought that the Support Fund is down to \$0. If the CPC votes the amount requested, \$420,000 will go into the Set-Aside and \$30,000 will go into the Support Fund. Robert will confirm the amount presently available in Support. The balance in the Support Fund should be a part of the spreadsheet going forward.
- Regional Housing Services Office (RHSO) two years (\$50,000)
 - The Committee has the option of funding \$25K for just one year, as it has done for the past two years.
- Acton Housing Authority (AHA) Development/Acquisition Funds (\$75,000)
 - This is the proposal that was “shot down” at Town Meeting last year because it seemed to reference a particular property. This is not for a specific project, and the AHA has re-submitted its proposal to help avoid any confusion.
- Acton Housing Authority (AHA) McCarthy Village Siding & Decking (\$75,000)
 - This project is well leveraged.
- Habitat for Humanity, 43-45 School Street (\$53,000 and \$38,650)
 - A great project. The house is right in the middle of the South Acton Historic District, but has been a wreck for a long time. The house has “good bones.” It has good \$ leveraging, plus great sweat equity. Acton Community Housing Corporation has not made any funding request this year in deference to this project.
- Hosmer House Campus Landscape/Site Planning Services (\$188,546)
 - Restoration of this historic property, particularly making it more visible, is a really great project.
 - The project doesn’t have any leverage. Perhaps Iron Work Farm (see Item IV above) could help with looking into leverage for this project.
 - The Acton Historical Society (AHS) has yet to work out a resolution with the Kelley’s Corner Improvement Initiative on the future of the front (on Main Street) of this AHS property. The Initiative would take away some of the front yard.

- Acton’s Streetscape Project could fund some of the stone wall and other up-front work, contingent on the AHS working this out with the Town. Any \$ saved due to overlap of this CPA project with Town projects would come back to the CPC. This possibility shouldn’t cause the CPC to award a lesser amount, but the CPC should cover this in the wording of the award letter and/or the warrant article.
- Since some of the land to be restored is property of the Acton Boxborough Regional School District, school involvement/cooperation with the project should be explored. It would be good if the schools can make a contribution to the project.
- Kennedy Building Rehabilitation (\$51,000)
 - Is this project truly eligible for CPA historic funds? This is not a stellar example of preserving a building.
 - Something can be made of cinder block and be historic. This building is on the Town’s Cultural Resources List. The project is not for historic preservation, but for rehabilitation to make the building ADA compliant.
 - Why has this building not been a higher priority for the Town? It should be a Town capital planning project. This is suggestive of the CPA being treated as a slush fund. Fixing the building is not the CPC’s problem.
 - This is a well-leveraged project. The building does qualify as an historic resource. Making it ADA compliant passes legal scrutiny. So, the CPC should be willing to contribute a commensurate amount.
 - Do “interior design and furnishings” (\$15K) qualify for CPA funding?
 - The Town should furnish the building as it sees fit and pay for it.
 - If the CPC is not allowed to do furniture, maybe its funds can be directed at something else.
 - This project is clearly a priority for the BoS. Also, the leverage part is good. The \$15K for design and furniture is a legitimate question. The CPC could vote to shift \$15K back to the Town and vote only the \$36K balance. Or the CPC could ask to have the proposal resubmitted for \$51K with a clarification that none of that amount would be for interior design and furnishings.
 - It would be worthwhile to have Dean Charter (CPC liaison to the project) ask for clarification and confirmation of the planned use of \$, or that the proposal be adjusted.
- Woodlawn Cemetery Gates (\$31,000)
 - What shape are the iron gates in? Are all the pedestrian pillars included in the rehabilitation or just the two on the west gate? How the gates and the pedestrian pillars fit into the picture should be clarified.
- Arthur Davis Etching Restoration (\$12,000)
 - These are very particular to Acton, a wonderful treasure. \$3K is coming from the Library Trustees, a great project. Good stuff like this should be made accessible to the public.
 - The restoration work is the first order of business. Framing at \$6K (by Powers Gallery) seems a pretty lofty amount. Has this been costed competitively? It seems worthwhile to have estimates from a couple other framers. Let’s go back to the applicant about this to see if framing costs can be broken out and if better costs are possible. There would be a range offered by different companies in town.

- Powers Gallery is known to do “extraordinary” work.
- The CPC needs to be objective about framing. It has an obligation to really “scrub this” and follow up with competitive bidding.
- The Acton Historical Commission has deemed the etchings to be “historic resources” to meet the need of Town Counsel for Town Counsel to declare “CPA funding would be permissible” for this project.
- Old North Acton School (\$315,000)
 - There apparently is someone who has a purchase and sale (\$250K) agreement for this property and is not giving up on it, so the project as written isn’t viable. The Town didn’t have an official deal to buy this property (\$280K); it was more of a handshake. If the property is sold to a private buyer, perhaps the buyer would donate the house to the Town and the Town could move it (with CPA funding). The CPC (through Carolyn) can ask for a letter from Matthew Selby, Acton’s Director of Land Use and Economic Development, clarifying the status of the project.
- Camp Acton Accessible Campsite (\$10,012)
- Skatepark Expansion (\$76,010)
 - This is Phase 2 of a project. There is no Phase 3. It would be good to see it finally done.
 - Boxborough votes on \$20K funding for the skatepark at its May 14, 2018, Town Meeting. If approved, the \$20K will be used to help offset CPA funds.
- NARA Performance Improvements (\$6K ramp, \$19K sign)
 - Is an electronic sign important to generating demand for NARA? It is. Such a sign would be very instrumental for “getting the message out.”
 - Is such a sign appropriate for CPC funding? The issue is that it would be a town resource by definition (since other Town departments can use it), so the Town should pay for the sign.

VII. Calendar of meetings – February/March

- After tonight, the CPC has meetings scheduled for 02/22, 03/08, and 03/22. A final vote on awards should be possible on 02/22, and on Warrant Article wording on 03/08. (Note: The Finance Committee has scheduled the CPC to present its April Town Meeting Warrant Article for FinCom review on February 27.)

VIII. Administrative Updates

- Committee members can email the data in their spreadsheet column to Robert in advance of the 02/22 meeting. Nancy Kolb will not be at the 02/22 meeting, but is sending her spreadsheet information.
- The amount appropriated for a project can exceed the amount requested.
- If not all CPA funds are appropriated, is it possible to earmark \$, possibly for projects that have been pulled off the table? Any extra \$ would be \$ to be allocated in the future. The CPC knows of only some of the items that will be in the next set. Also, there could be an emergency need from the CPA general fund.
- The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has waived the Decision-Within-130-Days Rule, so there is no word yet on the outcome of litigation re a CPA award to the Acton Congregational Church

- The condominium across from the entrance to the South Acton Train Station had written the CPC about possible repairs to their structure, originally a Unitarian-Universalist Church built in 1887, subsequently a music store. The CPC will set up a time after this year's cycle for the condo folks to talk with the CPC.

9:28 PM — It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn.