**Sturbridge Community Preservation Committee**

**Meeting Minutes of Monday, April 3, 2023**

**Julian Room, Town Hall**

**Call to Order**

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Chair Penny Dumas established that a quorum was present and called the CPC meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. CPC Clerk Elisa Krochmalnyckyj read the meeting notice.

Committee members present: Penny Dumas, Kelly Emrich, Ed Goodwin, Wally Hersee, Kadion Phillips, Barbara Search. Absent: Lauren Vivier.

In-person guests: Finance Director Barbara Barry, Senior Center Building Committee Chairman Charlie Blanchard, and Recreation Director Annie Roscioli, Senior Center Director Leslie Wong.

1. **Approval of Minutes**

Penny offered two corrections in the March 13 minutes. Wally made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected; Kelly seconded. Motion approved 6-0.

**2. Continued review of request for CPA funds in the amount of $1,750,000.00 for the renovation of the historical Senior Center CPA Funds for Administrative Costs for FY 2023.**

Charlie spoke about the Senior Center renovation plans. Last June $11.4 million was approved at Town Meeting; an additional $1.78 million of CPA funds is being requested. The bid for the project is out and is expected to be opened in May, prior to the Town Meeting. Until then, cost-numbers are based on estimates and contingencies.

Penny noted that if the final price comes in lower than the anticipated $11.4 million, the deduction has to be from CPA funds, not the Town Meeting-approved funds.

Penny relayed her conversation with the CPA Coalition, which told her that because the planned windows bring the building closer to its historic nature, CPA funds can be used. CPA funds can also be used to grade and pave the parking area, as it will bring up to code.

With that clearance in place, the next question became: did the CPC want to use CPA funds for that $1.78 million and the proposed $1 million for American Disability Act-compliant upgrades at the Town Recreation Area at 60 Cedar Street?

Penny noted that there is talk that the Barrett Farm, which has been on the CPC’s radar for many years, may come up for sale again. Interest in purchasing that land is high and is included in the town’s Master Plan and Open Space Plan, and has been on the list of the CPC’s high-priority properties for years. The town has the right of first refusal on the Barrett Farm property. Several years ago the CPC’s attempts to bring the purchase forward were unsuccessful.

Penny asked Barbara B for an updated accounting on available CPA balances to see how funding the Senior Center and 60 Cedar Street requests would impact the potential Barrett Farm purchase.

Barbara B advised that the CPC’s debt service cannot be greater than the amount of the local surcharge that is taken in directly, as state funding cannot be relied on for those calculations. The town intake in Fiscal ’23 is $633,900, and was $581,000 in Fiscal ’22. The town is still paying for the Heinz Farm, OSV parcel, Recreation Courts and Town Hall/Center Office Building renovations. Those debts fall off in 2025, 2032, and 2029.

If the Senior Center and/or 60 Cedar funding is approved, any borrowing would be for 20 years. Interest rates, forecasted at 4.75%, are not good, but, Barbara B is hopeful, that is the worst case. If borrowed, payments would be $96,400 a year for 60 Cedar, and $171,000 a year for the Senior Center.

The other option is using available funds. The Undesignated Fund Balance is $1,364,000; Open Space, $503,000; Historic, $377,000, and the Community Housing account, $1,223,000.

The decision on how much to borrow and/or pay for with available funds would depend on the CPC’s philosophy on how much to retain in reserves. Barbara B advised to borrow for larger purchases — so perhaps the CPC could consider using available funds for 60 Cedar and borrowing for the Senior Center, assuming Town Meeting approval of each. Penny noted that Town Administrator Robin Grimm has been seeking a grant for 60 Cedar. In that case, Barbara B explained, there could be a warrant article to reduce the amount CPA contributes.

Either way, Barbara B said, decisions should be made soon about how much to keep in reserve, how to divide the financing for the Senior Center and 60 Cedar, and whether to put those requests in one Warrant article or separate Warrant articles.

Penny suggested that in addition to weighing the costs of the two proposed projects, the funding for sports-fields improvements and potential Barrett purchase, the CPC ask the Recreation Committee if and what funding needs they have coming up.

Annie reported that the Recreation Committee is partnering with Burgess for a potential turf field at Burgess in the upper field, which would be lined for baseball, football and soccer. The last time the issue of turf fields came up, Penny was told they do not qualify for CPA funds.

In regard to the Senior Center renovation, Penny reiterated that purchasing trees is a permitted use of CPA funds. Former Tree Warden Tom Chamberlain — called on when Tree Warden Tony Crane was not immediately available — suggested to Penny that the trees have a caliper between 3-1/2 and 4, as anything larger is less likely to survive being transplanted. Tom also suggested not using more than 25 percent of one species. Ed added that the plantings should not be berry bushes or flowering shrubs, but vertical trees to break the building up,

The revised landscape, using these established trees, has helped the CPC meet the CPA requirements for maintaining as much of the original look of a historic place as possible. The trees will help the new addition fade away, keeping focus on the historic building.

Charlie noted that one of the reasons the architectural firm was chosen was because of its presentation on the importance of treating historic structures properly. He added that the plans were ready to go out for bid, so any further changes would have to be made during the site-plan review.

Penny’s informal poll of CPC members’ support for the project resulted as follows: Wally, enthusiastic support; Ed, support; Barbara S, support; Kelly, support; Kadion, cautious support in light of the cost, especially if estimates come in higher than anticipated.

Charlie noted that the bids are coming in from prequalified contractors, which Charlie hopes will result in very competitive bids.

Ed made a motion to borrow $1,780,000 for the purpose of funding improvements for the Senior Center renovations which can be funded through CPA. Motion approved 6-0-0.

**3. Continued review of request for CPA funds in the amount of $1,000,000 for ADA upgrades for 60 Cedar Street to include making sidewalks, parking lot, beach access, and building fully ADA-compliant and accessible.**

Annie showed the plans for the improvements that will make the Cedar Street Recreation Area compliant with the American Disabilities Act. Plans include 52 parking spaces; sidewalks;, handicapped-accessible parking for the courts; handicapped pathways to the porto-potties; accessible pathways to the building, playground, and water; an expanded playground with a handicapped-accessible feature (nothing in the current playground is handicapped-accessible); and beach mats, which are flexible and can be changed from year to year.

Ed suggested there be a guardrail between the parking and kids’ recreation areas.

Penny reiterated that CPA funds cannot be used to fund sidewalks along the roadway. Annie explained that the total cost would be up to $1.25 or $1.5 million, so not all of the improvements would be covered by the CPA funds and the sidewalks could be funded by the other means. Penny requested a detailed quote to show the cost of each improvement. Annie expects to have a full estimate by mid-April. Barbara S noted that the Finance Committee, which is on a tight schedule, needs to review the plans before their final meeting in mid-May. Annie said she will make getting the quote a top priority.

**4. Begin planning the CPA Community Survey as required by the Act.**

Penny discussed the Community Needs Survey, which requires the CPC to host a public-input session and entails the arduous task of getting in touch with every town board and committee and invite them for public comment and to attend a public hearing. It also requests the CPC make a formal set of goals.

The tentative plan is to have the session in the fall, after the Town Meeting and summer vacations. In the meantime, Penny will search for a past document that very accurately explained what the CPC is, what it can do, and what its goals are, as well as the input it has received from public meetings.

**5. Planning for meeting with the FinCom to discuss warrant articles.**

Ed and Wally have agreed to meet with the Finance Committee when the Finance Committee is reviewing the CPA articles in the upcoming few weeks.

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The next CPC meeting is Monday, May 1.

**6. Adjourn.**

Kelly made a motion to adjourn at 8:56 p.m.; Ed seconded. Motion approved 6-0-0.