Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes

Town Hall – September 30, 2021

Sturbridge, MA

At 7:03 pm the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Chair called the meeting to order. In attendance: Penny Dumas (PD), Ed Goodwin (EG), Kadion Phillips (KP), Barbara Search (BS), Kelly Emrich (KE), and Lauren Trifone (LT). Ed Neal (EN) arrived at 7:11 pm. Absent: Walter Hersee (WH).

Guest: Jeff Bridges (JB), Town Administrator; Barbara Barry, (BB); Finance Director; Robyn Chrabascz (RC), Facilities Manager; Annie Roscioli (AR), Recreation Director; Brandon Goodwin (BG), Trails Committee Member; Peter Mimeault (PM), Sturbridge Resident.

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting was conducted in person and via remote means, in accordance with applicable law. This means that members of the Community Preservation Committee as well as members of the public were able to access this meeting in person or via virtual means. The meeting was held via the GoToMeeting application and available for public access via the Town’s on demand video broadcast, on cable television, or by telephone access during the meeting.

Joanne Everson (JE), CPC Clerk, read an introduction to the virtual meeting. PD read the agenda and called the roll:

BS, present LT, present KP, present EG, present KE, present PD, present

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

KP moved the motion to accept the September 9, 2021, meeting minutes as presented; KE seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-0.

Roll call vote:

PD, yes BS, yes EG, yes LT, yes KE, yes KP, yes

**Advice on CPC reserve fund balance and bonding for future CPA proposals**

BB explained the status of the CPA fund balances in great detail. She stated that it is possible to bond $3,400,000.00 at current levels and not exceed 100% of the local surcharge to debt service. She added that this would leave the fund balances to be used towards projects. Further discussion concerning the current debt included: Town Hall, expiring 8/2029; OSV land and Heins Farm, both expiring 7/2025; and the Recreation Courts expiring 11/2032. BB explained that the maximum time period for bonding for recreation is fifteen years and twenty years for the Senior Center.

JB stated that the Senior Center renovation would only consider the use of CPA historic funds for the façade as the interior will be totally gutted to renovate. PD and BS explained that the Town Hall and Center School were not gutted and suggested that there are creative ways to renovate which allow for use of CPA funds. JB stated that the Senior Center renovation will seek grants and CPA funds. KP asked if it was possible to pay off bond projects to free up funds. BB explained that it is not possible to do so.

**Recreation Proposal, 60 Cedar Street Ball Field Project**

EG moved the motion to allocate $1,000,000.00 of CPA undesignated fund balance funds towards the field project; KP seconds. After further input from BB, EG rescinded the motion; KP rescinded the second.

EG moved the motion to bond $1,000,000.00 of CPA funds to put towards the 60 Cedar Street recreational project with the caveat that the CPC may consider additional CPA funds be put towards the project; KE seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-1.

Roll call vote:

EG, yes KE, yes KP, yes PD, yes BS, yes

EN, abstained LT, yes

AR stated that the recreation project has a $5,400,000.00 cost but did not ask for a specific dollar amount from CPA funds. Discussion followed regarding whether the project would be best presented at the Special Town Meeting (STM) or at the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) in June.

PD questioned whether EN could vote due to the lack of Housing Partnership quorum. JB read from the Town Charter, explained that the Housing Partnership is transitioning to the Housing Trust, and stated that, in the absence of a new member, the incumbent holds the position until someone else is sworn in.

AR explained that she is looking for grants for the project but the grants all require a full site plan. She added that the cost of the project includes the site plan. JB explained that currently the Town has a concept plan and applying for grants requires a Town approved project with a complete site plan.

BB discussed the technical aspects of the motion on the STM warrant. Further discussion centered on the race track proposal and Senior Center renovation project also on the STM warrant. PD stated that the options are: to bring forward the proposal to this Special Town Meeting and propose an amount to bond; to take $1,000,000.00 from reserve fund balance; or to wait for the ATM to pursue the recreation project.

**Grand Trunk Trail Construction and Improvement Project Additional Funding**

KP moved the motion to allocate $92,000.00 of CPA Open Space Undesignated Fund Balance for the purpose of completing the Westville section shared use path construction and improvement project; EN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

EG, yes BS, yes KE, yes LT, yes KP, yes

EN, yes PD, yes

BG explained the long history of this section of the Grand Trunk Trail from the trail’s current end at the bridge to Farquhar Road. He added that this has been a painful process due to the complex factors involved, but the trail design is complete. He said the trail is Americans with Disabilities Act compliant, wide, and will have a stone dust finish. BG stated that there are funds left from the original grant funds but $300,000.00 must be used by June 2022 or will be forfeited. He requested $92,000.00 to move forward and complete this project.

PD stated that this an example of CPA projects that she likes to place on the STM warrant as the project needs to move forward prior to the ATM. Discussion followed regarding whether to use Open Space or Recreation funds; PD explained the difference between using Open Space versus Undesignated funds for trails.

**Other Topics**

Peter Mimeault, 76 S. Shore Drive, Sturbridge, asked how the CPC evaluates the potential future of each piece of land purchased with CPA funds. PD explained that the proponent of a land purchase explains his or her vision for the acquisition. PM asked how the CPC documents this as the land is purchased. PD explained that the purpose of the purchase of land is stated in the summary box of the motion before the Town at Town Meeting and included in the minutes of the CPC meeting and the Town Meeting. EG stated that there are restrictions on the land if CPC funds are used to purchase land and explained the process of obtaining a Conservation Restriction (CR) on a parcel of land. PD explained that the owner of the CR is the steward of the land. PM asked if the CPC monitors the CPC purchased land each year. PD answered that the Board of Selectmen or the Conservation Commission and the CR holder are the stewards of the land. EG added that the CR holder looks for violations on land under its stewardship.

PM questioned how many of the 15 CR parcels in Town allow for new buildings and asked how to place a building on these parcels. PD stated that the CPC has not brought a proposal to Town for a building on a parcel. She added that no municipal buildings are allowed on CPA funded land purchases. PM questioned whether a 2/3 vote would allow for buildings to be built as the Town needs buildings. PD read the CPC descriptions and stated that the General Fund is used to buy land and to construct buildings on that land.

Next meeting is Thursday, October 28, 2021, at 6:30 at Tantasqua Regional High School.

BS moved the motion to adjourn; EN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:57 pm.

Roll call vote:

PD, yes BS, yes KP, yes LT, yes EG, yes EN, yes

KE, yes

/jme