**Sturbridge Community Preservation Committee**

**Meeting Minutes of Monday, February 6, 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 7:00 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, Lauren Vivier.

Guests: Town Administrator Robin Grimm; Facilities Director Robyn Chrabascz.

**Approval of Minutes**

— The minutes of the January 9 meeting will be distributed prior to the March meeting.

**Funding request for CPA funds for consulting services either through a private firm or through CMRPC Regional Housing, for the continuation of the implementation of the Housing Production Plan.**

— Robin reported that Town Planner Jean Bubon believes the Housing Production Plan needs another year to get off the ground. The $25,000 of CPA funds approved at last year’s Town Meeting has been encumbered, and another $25,000 is being requested. Once the project is off the ground, the town will decided whether to use the current consultant, or Central Mass Planning, or even a salaried employee, depending on the direction the housing goes.

Wally made a motion to approve up to $25,000 of CPA Housing Fund Balance for the purpose of funding consulting services, either through a private firm or through Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, for the continuation of the implementation of the Housing Production Plan; Ed seconded. Passed 7-0-0.

**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.**

Robin said that while researching potential uses for 60 and 70 Cedar Street over the past few years, it became evident that the recreation area is not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which leaves some residents unable to park safely or access the beach.

Fortunately, all of the design work to bring the area into ADA compliance was done as part of the plans for the proposed ball field on the site and funded with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The estimated cost for the work is $1 million, which is being requested from the CPC, but Robin is cautiously optimistic that much of it could be offset by a “One Stop” grant.

Ed noted that the beach and water are not in ideal condition and may be less than safe for the elderly and disabled to use, so making it accessible to them may pose other problems. Ed suggested that money may be better spent to upgrade the Streeter Beach swimming area. Robin agreed and said she considers Streeter Beach a “wasted gem,” adding that the costs to upgrade Streeter Beach would be manageable, and that the Army Corps of Engineers, on whose property Streeter Beach is, urged the town to move forward with those improvements.

Penny said making the area ADA-complaint is indisputably important, but funding those improvements may not fall under the CPA’s guidelines for “Preservation.” She also expressed concern that the CPC approving the request may prohibit the town from seeking other funding, or decrease the motivation to seek other funding. Robin assured the Committee that she will actively seek funding regardless of whether the CPA approves the request, and that she’d prefer not to use the CPA funds.

Kadion said the Recreation beach is popular and the camp program there is flourishing. Plus, the growing interest in pickleball at the Recreation Area — the tennis courts also serve as pickleball courts — has attracted many seniors, both players and socializers.

Lauren asked if there was an ADA-compliant swing in the playground area, which is something Recreation Director Annie Roscioli, who was unable to attend the meeting, would know. Lauren said she would be more confident if the Committee were able to see a set of rough plans, which were unavailable.

Barbara noted that according to the CPA Coalition, CPA funds can only be used for sidewalks in designated recreation land, not for sidewalks in the public way. Penny will consult the CPA Coalition for advice. Pending that, and in light of the Committee’s unanswered questions and lack of tangible plans, the Committee agreed to hold off on making a final decision and instead simply vote on a placeholder to keep it on the Town Meeting Warrant. Robin agreed that was prudent.

Kadion made a motion to request the Board of Selectmen hold a placeholder for CPA funding of ADA upgrades for 60 Cedar Street Recreation Area to include making sidewalks, parking lot, beach access and building fully ADA compliant and accessible; Lauren seconded. Passed 7-0-0.

**Request for CPA funds in the amount of $1,750,000 for the renovation of the historical Senior Center.**

Robin lamented that Charlie Blanchard, who is most knowledgable about the project and proposal, was unable to attend; then she lamented that as much as she loves saving old buildings like the Senior Center, those rescues come with costs. Currently, those renovation costs exceed the $11 million approved at the 2022 Town Meeting.

Penny wondered whether some of the CPA requests, like removing asbestos, are permitted uses of CPA funds. She would like to check with the CPA Coalition. Robin agreed that things like asbestos removal, necessary to save the building, may not match the spirit of the CPA.

Committee members felt that while things like a slate roof and refinishing old wooden stairs may be an appropriate use of CPA funds, other things, like a guardrail at the main staircase., may not. Penny stressed the importance of drawing a line that keeps the CPA funding within the law.

Ed questioned whether the CPC had enough available funds to pay for the requested renovations without drawing the account below the recommended balance, and if bonding would become necessary.

Ed suggested the Committee hold off on any decision until Charlie was able to attend a meeting and Penny got an opinion from the CPA Coalition about what parts of the construction and renovations are within historical-preservation guidelines.

Ed made a motion to request the Board of Selectmen hold a placeholder for CPA funding of some of the renovation costs for the historical Senior Center; Barbara seconded. Passed 7-0-0.

**Request for funds to restore and repair the Honor Roll and Civil War Memorials at the Library and Town Hall.**

Robyn explained that the Veterans Honor Roll Monument in front of Town Hall needs maintenance because of the years of being subject to weather and car exhaust. The maintenance required at the Civil War Memorial also involves shoring up the hill next to the memorial, which is shifting. Both the Civil War Memorial in front of the library and surrounding landscaping need maintenance as well.

Ed questioned whether the Honor Roll Monument qualifies for CPA historic-preservation funds, as the Monument is only 10 years old. Wally’s interpretation is the historical context of the Monument qualifies it. Penny said it is similar to the CPA’s funds for repairing signs announcing “Entering Historic District.”

The Civil War Monument is more complicated to repair, as Robyn was unable to find one contractor to do all three of the things required: clean up the monument; remove the existing stones and replace the concrete base to eliminate the downhill shifting; and install permanent planters or urns to replace the unsightly plastic urns used for the geraniums donated annually by the American Legion. Robyn will need to be the General Contractor for the restoration, as no one company is able to do all three.

Kadion said there is clearly historic value to the projects, but it is difficult to know exactly where to draw the line of what is and isn’t funded.

Barbara noted she thinks the amount of $15,000 for each project is high. Lauren suggested the town investigate ways to prevent further deterioration, thus avoiding the need for future repairs.

Kadion made a motion to approve up to $15,000 of CPA Historic Fund Balance for the purpose of funding restoration and repair of the Honor Roll and Civil War Memorials at the Town Library and Town Hall; Wally seconded. Passed 7-0-0.

**Request for funds to restore and repair the Gold Star Mother’s Memorial at the Center Office Building.**

Robyn reported that the landscape around the Gold Star Mother’s Memorial at the Center Office building is in desperate need of attention, including some delicate tree-trimming and brick-resetting. General landscaping and monument cleaning and repair are also necessary.

Kelly made a motion to approve up to $15,000 of CPA Historic Fund Balance for the purpose of funding restoration and rehabilitation of the Gold Star Mother's Memorial and landscape at the Center Office Building; Lauren seconded. Passed 7-0-0.

**CPA Funds for Administrative Costs for FY 2023**

Last year the CPC had $20,000 funded for administrative costs, but only dipped into it for things like membership fees for the CPA Coalition, which the committee agreed is a great investment. While the CPC does not expect to use all of the $20,000 this year, it is good to have the funds available if needed.

Ed made a motion to approve $20,000 of CPA Funds for the purpose of Administration costs for FY 2024. Passed 7-0-0.

**CPC Annual Report**

Kelly made a motion to approve the 2022 CPC report; Kadion seconded. Passed 7-0-0.

**Volunteer for Housing Trust member**

Ed Goodwin volunteered to serve as the CPC’s representative on the newly established Housing Trust.

Penny made a motion to request the appointment of Ed Goodwin to the Housing Trust. Passed 7-0-0.

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The next meeting is scheduled for March 6.

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Wally reported that there is talk of Oxhead Tavern being torn down. Because of its historic value, Wally hopes the town can instead invest into an alternate plan, perhaps renovating it into a town museum that would also serve as a facility to hold the town’s collection of historic documents and treasures, or moving it to another location. Charlie Blanchfield plans to speak with Robin Grimm to that end, hoping to have an alternate plan ready to be put on the warrant next year.

**Adjourn**

Kelly made a motion to adjourn at 8:27 p.m.; Ed seconded. Passed 7-0-0.