

**Minutes for Acton Community Preservation Committee Meeting, 4/15, 7:30-9:50 pm,
Acton Town Hall**

Attending: Roland Bartl (at 8:30), Chris Schaffner, Walter Foster, Peter Grover Catherine Coleman, Mimi Herrington, Peter Berry, Alison Gallagher Joe Nagle at 8 pm, Susan Mitchell-Hardt

Absent: Andy Magee, Wayne Klockner

Visitor: Susie Phoenix

Guest Speakers: Michaela Moran for Iron Work Farm, Anne Forbes for HDC, Dave Cochrane for Historical Society

1. Introduction

a. Secretary's Report: There was unanimous consent for the amended minutes of 3/18 with comments from Nancy Tavernier and Roland Bartl incorporated.

b. Future Meeting Schedule

The 4/29 meeting is rescheduled to Thursday, 5/1 - presentation by Recreation Commission

The 5/6 meeting is rescheduled to Thursday, 5/8 - presentation by representatives from Open Space organizations.

5/20 meeting: no change

6/3 meeting: no change

The 6/17 meeting is rescheduled to 6/19.

All meetings will be held in the Library Meeting Room.

c. Old Business

Earth Day, May 3, 12-4 pm, Conant School

ACTION: Peter Berry will send a sign up sheet over e-mail with the goal for having each committee member sign up for a 1 hour shift to help staff the table.

ACTION: Walter will check into the possibility of appropriating approx. \$150 for a high quality "table top display" bulletin board to use over the course of at least the next 5 years at the various public outreach venues.

2. Next Steps

- a. Process for Writing the Community Preservation Plan and Timing
- Peter recommended having the subcommittees who have familiarity with a particular area write their different sections and bring them together and to bring together an umbrella of priorities for funding a project.
 - Goal: to get the Plan written by the end of June and to hold a public hearing in the fall. Walter indicated that this is feasible especially since drawing from other plans is acceptable and encouraged.
 - Peter indicated that a plan is a prerequisite for getting a project off the ground.
 - Public hearings follow from the plan. Criteria for selection of projects need to be in place prior to soliciting projects. The plan should be adopted by this committee
 - Proposals may also be requested for the June 30 deadline. Once we have a group of proposals we can ask the public for input.
 - There is leeway as to how and when a public hearing is held.

Discussion of proposals and projects:

- Walter indicated that one task will be to consult with the BoS, ConsCom, Rec Com, etc. for a global perspective on projects/proposals.
- The BoS will bring to the CPC, as part of their capital program for the town, projects which they develop based on town issues... open space purchases aren't included.

It was suggested that since anyone can submit a proposal, the numbers could be large. Mimi suggested that each area subcommittee should prioritize them.

- Peter B envisions subcommittee members consulting with their respective boards.
- Catherine envisions the CPC soliciting proposals first and then writing the plan
- Walter cautioned the group not to rush into recommending a project for the sake of having something for fall STM
- Chris concurred that the focus should be not on choosing projects for the fall but on set up of the process.
- Peter affirmed the importance of being conservative and performing due diligence.
- On the other hand, Catherine advised against potential political fall out for waiting a year and being accused of sitting on the money.
- Walter indicated that in the fall, at the very least we will appropriate money to run the CPC.
- Chris observed that the difficult part will be selecting projects as there are so many good projects out there

b. Subcommittees:

ACTION: Peter B. encouraged people on subcommittees to look at the various plans and to get a feel for what drafting their section will be like.

ACTION: Chris chose to join the Historic Preservation Subcommittee with Peter G.

ACTION: Walter chose to join the Recreation Subcommittee with Alison.

ACTION: Walter and Susan recommended that Wayne join the Open Space Subcommittee as that fits his professional background with the Nature Conservancy.

- We discussed the pros and cons of the terms "Community Housing" vs. "Affordable Housing"

3. Report from the Communications Committee

- Peter Berry recommended voting on the communications documents next meeting.
- Roland commented on the web site that since the CPC is an official town committee, the site of the CPC must be located under the Town's own web site (using the www.town.acton.ma.us path) rather than the CPC having its own site with a link from the town site.

Handout: Catherine passed out an 11 page draft of a Communications Plan mostly borrowed from the Bedford Plan

- The committee agreed that Roland would be the natural person to receive proposals as his office is open for business during working hours, etc.. Also, he's the record keeper as the Town staffer.

Under "Guidelines for Submission":

- Walter seconded the statement which asked for a prioritized list of projects. This is in harmony with the Loan Officer model and is what other boards in town do.
- re: #4, Project Costs: Walter's concern is that we will get good projects but different levels of sophistication in terms of good cost estimation. The skateboard park is a good example of good cost estimation. Good cost estimation is of critical importance.
- re: #2, Requests should be with a 5 year period from FY'04-08. You have to keep the CPA in place until you've covered your commitments.

Discussion re: Controls:

Mimi and Joe expressed concerns as to how do you know the money is spent properly?; can an audit be built in? how long can one hold on to funds? can we have call back if they're not used? Roland advised having some language in the guidelines that refers to the effort to keep control and making these terms part of the appropriation at Town Meeting. We could also have another document which states that all eligible projects will be evaluated by these selection criteria.

- Joe asked, how do we know we're indemnified? Peter B. said that there is bonding and that we will have adequate securities; however we want to be conservative, get the process right

- Roland stated that the CPC will have access to Town Counsel, which will be paid for out of CP funds.
- **Eligible projects** are listed on the CP Coalition web site - we could take that heading and attach it to our web site.

Discussion of Selection Criteria document

RB advises being clear cut - don't use language which is too subjective, such as "preserving Acton's character"; think about each item and how to explain it to the applicant, consistency with Master Plan, etc.

- Chris is uncomfortable with voting on Selection Criteria - he's more concerned with developing a good process.

4. Peter Grover - Historical Commission

The HC controls everything the HDC does not. As stated in their handout their mission is "to protect and preserve the Town's historic character and assets, be they buildings, open spaces, landscapes or historic districts. They maintain the Cultural Resource List of significant structures in town and review proposed plans re: these structures in conjunction with the Building Dept. and Chapter N of the Town's bylaw which is "Procedure for the Demolition of Historically or Architecturally Significant Buildings."

They can help the town decide what to do with buildings such as the Towne School Building and 17 Woodbury Lane (Vaillaincourt House).

Their top priorities for using CP Funds are:

- to update the Cultural Resource list. It covers buildings to about 1920 and has many omissions. The Mass. Historical Society has requested bringing the list up to 1950. They would like to use monies to hire qualified staff to work on the list.
- 17 Woodbury Lane (Vallaincourt House) is high on the list. The building needs structural improvements and handicap accessibility upgrades - it would be great to have another meeting place
- Towne School Adaptive re-use. It has been voted by the Mass. Historical Commission to be eligible for National Register listing. Funds could be used to upgrade the exterior features and details or perhaps the landscape.
- Preservation of old firehouses in town, old stone bridges on conservation lands, etc.; purchase lands that contribute to preservation of the historical landscape. They are also interested in taking actions that would lead to preserving the old farmhouse on the horse farm property on Rt. 2.

Historic District Commission - Michaela Moran, Chair; Anne Forbes is alternate. Local historic districts were voted in in 1990 and became operational in '92 under Chap. 40C, state enabling legislation. They are a regulatory board which reviews changes to properties in the historic districts in town. Their mission is to "protect the physical character of old buildings and their settings within certain sections of town that are designated by law as Local Historic Districts and to assure that exterior changes in those districts will be architecturally compatible with the existing historic buildings there." See Handout "West Acton Historic District."

- Priorities: They would be interested in any projects in the 3 historic districts as they know the condition and threats to the various properties. They could make recommendations.
- Restoration of the Davis Monument is a possibility - it's need maintenance for the past 3 years. Town staff supports its restoration and if they wrote a proposal, the HDC would join in.
- The HDC is not comfortable recommending projects outside the district; they could recommend as individual citizens

Other priorities and possibilities are:

- work on Town Hall - structural or restoration
- 17 Woodbury Lane
- restoration of the fire stations - they are over 50 years old.
- rehabilitation of the common and other town owned buildings.

- historic landscapes - saw mill area in S. Acton; mill pond abutting S. Acton Historic District; acquisition of open parcels establishing background and which contribute to character of the district

- Great need for funding for survey of resources in the town - add to cultural resource list.

- Michaela pointed out the need for acquisition of small pieces of open space in local historic districts which qualify as buildable lots. Their acquisition would help preserve the character of the district. An example would be the former 'sledding hill' lot next to the Congregational Church which was recently developed for a building addition and parking.

- Susie Phoenix added that the Littleton Conservation Commission will buy country corners of old intersections to preserve the feel.

- On these issues the HDC could partner with the Historical Commission, Municipal Properties and Acton Conservation Trust.

- The difference between the National Register District and the Local Historic District is explained in their handout. The Local Historic District regulates changes and the national one is mostly honorary. Exchange Hall is on the National Register which gives it more possibilities for rehabilitation. The owner gets 20% tax credit on rehabilitation.

- Re: using CP funds on private property - approach this carefully.

Iron Work Farm in Acton, Inc. - Michaela Moran, President; Susie Phoenix and Anne Forbes, Board of Directors.

The name is derived from the 1000 acre plantation (now S. Acton) granted in 1654 to a founder of Concord where bog iron was found. It is an educational, non-profit historical corporation chartered in 1964. (See Iron Work Farm in Acton, Inc., handout). They own the Faulkner House and the Jones Tavern - both on the National Register. They are maintained and preserved by Iron Work Farm. They rent apartments in each building which generates enough income to maintain and preserve them. They also got a Mass. Historical Preservation grant to help with maintenance.

- They pointed out that since the first community preservation funds may go to municipal properties, an appropriate grantee for the required preservation restrictions on those properties should be identified fairly soon. Large regional organizations presently require endowments of \$8,000 to \$12,000 to hold preservation restrictions, and granting them to a local non-profit is usually much more cost-effective.

- A preservation restriction is similar to a CR - it's a restriction on the deed of the property granted to a municipality, state agency, or a non-profit with that kind of specialty which ensures it is preserved the way it was intended when the restriction was granted.

Historical Society - Dave Cochrane

It is also a private non-profit; they own the Hosmer House; their purpose is to preserve and to perpetuate facts and artifacts concerned with local history and to be a resource to inform.

- They have 300 members; they rent an apartment in the Hosmer House which helps to maintain it and they have a small endowment. They host open houses - one is scheduled for June and it will have to do with wool and weaving; they are also launching a web site - they are concerned about attracting younger members. They see themselves as a resource - they have photos and information on Acton history - they are not keen on taking public stands.

- They want to see historic structures preserved. The Hosmer House was put on the National Historic Register last year. It has been around for a while and has unrealized potential. They preserve Civil War artifacts and give tours. They would like to help however they can.

5. New Business

a. Next Meeting: May 1, Library Meeting Room, 7:30 pm, Presentation by Recreation Commission.

b. Chris wants to encourage us to attend the following MAGIC event: May 8, 7:45-9:30 a.m. "Zoning Reform: Why, What, & How," Boxboro Holiday Inn

- A Major Public Breakfast Forum. Please encourage broad attendance, especially all Selectman, Planning Board & ZBA members, Conservation Commissions, Legislators, & active citizens interested in better planning. Registration strongly recommended (space limited). For more information contact

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Respectfully submitted by Susan Mitchell-Hardt