

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee

January 22, 2009
Acton Memorial Library

Attending: Nancy Tavernier, Corrina Roman-Kreuze, Walter Foster, Roland Bourdon, Jon Benson, Ken Sghia-Hughes, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Ron Schlegel, Tory Beyer, Janet Adachi, Roland Bartl, Town Planner. Also present were Pat Clifford (Fin Com Observer), Anne Forbes and Ellie Halsey (former and current HDC Observers), certain 2009 CPA project applicants, and members of the public.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ken Sghia-Hughes at 7:35 p.m.

- I. Approval of 1/8/2009 Minutes. The minutes of 1/8/2009 were approved as amended.
- II. Appointment with State Senator Jamie Eldridge and Katie Green, Legislative Assistant to State Representative Jen Benson. The discussion focused on the pending CPA amendment that, in response to the Seideman decision and future reduced CPA state funds, would allow the use of CPA funds for the rehabilitation of recreational sites, although the use of CPA funds for artificial turf for athletic fields would be prohibited; the proposed amendment also would modify CPA financing provisions. Senator Eldridge is a co-sponsor of the bill; Ms. Green will check as to whether Representative Benson also is a co-sponsor. A coalition of groups supports the current version of the bill. Some 6,000 bills were filed in the legislature last week. Each bill will be assigned to a committee, which will hold a hearing about two or three months thereafter. If the proposed CPA amendment were reported out of committee, it could conceivably be approved sometime after summer.

Of the 14 communities in Senator Eldridge's district, 11 have adopted the CPA; in Representative Benson's district, only Acton and Harvard have adopted the CPA, with Shirley having tried but failed. State-matching in 2008 was only 67%, and predictions for state-matching in 2009 are even lower.

Committee members expressed support for the proposed amendment, particularly the expanded recreational uses, and thanked Senator Eldridge and Ms. Green for taking the time to meet with the Committee.

- III. West Acton Boardwalk and Nature Center Update. Pat Easterly reported that the Friends of West Acton Boardwalk had decided to withdraw their application. The Acton Public Schools and the Conservation Commission have concerns about the suggested transfer of the boardwalk area. The Friends will explore other options and might re-apply to the Committee at a later time.

IV. Discussion of 2009 Proposals.

- A. Civil War Exhibit Enhancement. This proposal includes a request for back-funding of services that the consultant allegedly donated/wrote off after the project proponents realized that they were over-budget. The need for back-funding probably could have been avoided. The project proponents did try to leverage the CPA funding with donations from other sources. It is better to pay the consultant and create goodwill with him. The Committee could consider a compromise-funding amount. The back-funding request—but not the rest of the project, according to Town Counsel--will have to be a separate article and will require a 4/5 vote of approval at Town Meeting (as provided in state law addressing monies expended but not appropriated),
- B. Historic Preservation and Adaptive Re-Use of the Windsor Building. This proposal requests a large sum, would restore only one-half of the building, and is prior to the completion of the Town space-needs study, which would provide a better understanding of how the Town should use the building. The current proposal also raises concerns about access to the building and parking. The building is not in bad shape, so the project could be delayed. The applicants may re-apply for funding after the space-needs plan is done.
- C. Restoration of Historic Streetscapes through Planting of Public Shade Trees in Acton's Historic Districts. This project fits in with the Master Plan. There should be a condition that no trees are to be planted at the locations of future sidewalks.
- D. 17 Woodbury Lane – Schematic Design of a Building Reuse. In contrast to the Windsor project, this project is contingent upon completion of the Town space-needs study, which will determine the best use for the building. The building also is in very bad shape
- E. 50 Mass. Ave. – Wright Holden Farmlands Area Survey Form. This project may help in securing restoration funding. The property ties in to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the surrounding farmland now protected under state law.
- F. Town Cemeteries – National Register of Historic Places Listing. The requested sum seems high. The consultant, who also is working on the Wright Holden Survey, apparently provided Peter Grover, HC, with a quick estimate. The consultant's charges are for her time. Anne Forbes, HDC, agreed that the estimate seems high, particularly given the shared background and the small size of one of the cemeteries. The current proposal of \$28,000 will be subject to the public bidding requirements, which a proposal under \$25,000 would avoid. Roland Bourdon will ask Peter for a more detailed estimate that includes number of hours; and for a second quotation.
- G. John Robbins House. The applicants still need to provide an updated roofer quotation, as well as the proposed preservation restriction language for Town Counsel to review. The applicants also should provide a detailed breakdown of costs. Although some residents may be concerned about the proposed use of CPA funds for the benefit of

private property owners, the owners have good relations with the public, and have invested a significant amount of their own funds to purchase and rehabilitate the property. The restoration thus far has been meticulous. The need for the roof repair is compelling, the benefit to the community significant. The BFRT easement agreement could be a condition of funding, although completing it earlier would be preferable.

- H. Open Space Set-Aside Funds and Open Space Acquisition and Preservation Fund. This proposal has two parts: set-aside funds of \$350,000 and \$25,000 for a new acquisition fund. The set-aside account will be down to \$1,020,000 as a result of the Piper Lane transaction (see Other Business-Project Updates, below) and will need more funds. The Committee should defer discussion of the acquisition-fund proposal until Andy Magee submits a detailed description of the proposed administration of the fund, as requested by the Committee at the December 18, 2008 meeting.
- I. AHA Pre-Development Funds. The requested \$152,000 seems to be a large sum, although Nancy says that it is not unreasonable in her experience. AHA already owns the land and has reduced the density of the proposed units in the conceptual drawings. It is not clear when the project might be built. Securing construction funding could take years. AHA has tried to address the concerns of the neighbors and has been communicating with them regularly. It probably would help at Town Meeting if the presentation on this proposal could include more concrete information about the proposed buildings, their appearance, the accommodation of the neighbors, etc. But the purpose of the requested funding is to secure design and other services that will provide AHA with more concrete information, for example, about the best configurations. Nancy says that an alternative use of the \$152,000 for “community housing” would be two condo-buydown units (which would be affordable housing and not the low-income rentals that AHA provides).
- J. AHA Capital Fund. State funding will cover the cost of replacing the decks. CPA funding could be for roofs and siding, assuming the proposed work qualifies as “preservation” as opposed to “maintenance.”
- K. ACHC Community Housing Program Fund. This has been a successful program and should continue.
- L. Parker Damon Playground Shade Structures. Application withdrawn.
- M. CPC Administrative Expenses. There was a brief discussion of the annual appropriation out of CPA funds to cover the Town’s expenses in providing administrative support to the Committee. Town Manager Steven Ledoux, in his 1/15/2009 memorandum, has recommended a 5% appropriation for 2009.

V. Other Business.

- A. Project Updates

1. Piper Lane. The purchase-and-sale has been executed, and the inspection is underway. After the withdrawal of up to \$730,000 from the set-aside funds, the account balance will be \$1,020,000.
 2. Twin Ballfields. Roland Bartl reported that the Twin Ballfields are the only previously approved project at the three-year mark this year. The project has not yet started drawing funds, so Town Counsel advises that Town Meeting re-authorization is unnecessary.
 3. Fitzgerald Piano. Walter reported that the piano is undergoing restoration, which will take about three months and cost \$18,000. (The one other bid was for \$30,000.) The restored piano will be in the Memorial Library, but the specific location has yet to be determined.
 4. Exchange Hall. Walter is working with a group exploring the purchase, as a non-profit organization, of the property.
- B. Next Meeting. At the next meeting, on February 12th, 2009, 7:30 p.m., the Committee will work on the recommended dollar amounts for the projects. Roland Bartl hopes by that time to have received all reports from prior fund recipients regarding funds not needed and available for new projects.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

- Janet Adachi, Clerk