

## Community Preservation Committee Minutes 05/15/17

### Attachments:

[Community Preservation Committee Input Session.docx / Microsoft Word Document](#)

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Town of Lenox  
Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

**May 15, 2017**

**7:00 p.m.**

### **MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Chair Tony Patella (TP), Community Center; Cathie May (CM), Housing Authority; Gene Chague (GC), At Large; Al Harper (AH), At Large; Olga Weiss (OW), Historical Commission; Channing Gibson (CG), Board of Selectmen; Frederick Keator (FK), At Large; Joe Strauch (Conservation Commission)

**Absent w/ Notification:** Tom Delasco, Planning Board

**Staff Present:** Gwen Miller, Land Use Director

**In Attendance:** Mackenzie Greer, Rachel Coll, Ruth Wheeler, Ed Lane, Kate McNulty Vaughan, Pam Keuber, Dick Burke, Deborah Burke, Father Michael Tuck, Becky Cushing, Amy LaFave

Chairman Patella read the notice as published in the Berkshire Eagle stated the Community Preservation Committee would hold a public hearing on May 15<sup>th</sup> to hear from community members about priorities and needs for which CPA funds may be utilized.

Gwen Miller provided a summary presentation of the Community Preservation Act, available funds, and the application process for prospective applicants at the hearing.

The presentation is attached to these minutes.

Attendees were invited to discuss their priorities and what they thought to be important opportunities to be furthered through CPA funding in the future.

### **Trinity Church**

Dick Burke presented the challenge of maintaining Trinity's Church iconic masonry. He described the project regarding the Trinity Church West Wall, stating the congregation needs \$50,000 for repointing and stabilization of the West Wall. He described some urgency to the project, and spoke to the long term capital campaign for the building as well.

### **Board of Selectmen**

Channing Gibson and Ed Lane provided a list of projects and initiatives the Board of Selectmen would like to see championed and implemented.

Ed Lane discussed the need for repair and maintenance of the water trough at Triangle Park.

Post Farm was also discussed in respect to abutting, privately owned land: if some of this private land could be acquired, the Town would have permanent, public access in and out of Post Farm.

Channing discussed a grand design of a town wide biking and walking path that could link to Post Farm, along the River, over Golden hill and throughout town, linking Great Estates to cultural destinations and the different neighborhood to promote goals of the Open Space and Recreation Plan, promote public health and economic activity.

He also mentioned Baker's Pond along West Dugway Road as a potential outdoor recreation project, citing bog bridges or a gazebo as one way to ameliorate the Baker's Pond project.

### **Housing Trust**

Deborah Burke represented the Housing Trust as its Chairwoman. She described two approaches to housing: strategic, and incremental. She described the positive impact the Trust's grant program has had by placing income qualified (low to moderate income households per HUD standards) first time homebuyers in houses in Lenox.

She described current threats to growing affordable housing in Lenox: the high end real estate market, short-term rentals such as AirBnB, and highlighted that w/ more funding, the Trust would be able to expand its efforts and grow its toolbox.

Deborah stated that @ least 10% of CPA revenues should go to the Trust—the standard Community Housing allocation. She noted other community trusts receive this annually.

She was advised to highlight need, highlight fiduciary responsibility, highlight trust successes and highlight urgency.

Pam Keuber, Planning Board member, stated she found affordable housing to be the most critical need in Lenox, and described a defining moment when she attended the E.P.A. Equitable Development workshop in April when a hospitality manager described that some communities are resort communities, and other communities are the “service communities” where employees of the resorts and hospitality businesses live. Pam described a fear of gentrification and of the town becoming an enclave of the rich.

Kate McNulty Vaughan, Planning Board and Housing Trust member, said that something needs to happen w/ housing. Sawmill is one initiative that needs to get going, she also described infill rehab as one possible tool, and rehab and purchases of older homes in the community.

Olga Weiss, speaking as a Housing Trust member, explained that rental is a need, along with affordable ownership opportunities. She described the challenge her own grandchildren face w/ student debt—and how the hefty amount of student loans across the country are causing many households to remain renters or choose rental opportunities over ownership.

She and Deborah expressed interest in a rent to own concept.

#### **Lenox Library**

Amy LaFave, Executive Director of the Lenox Library described necessary work at the library. She described the need to install new shutters, conduct masonry work on features such as the chimneys, and also the need for archival preservation.

In response to the housing conversation, she expressed interest in tiny houses as one way to expand housing choice and keep costs for construction down.

#### **Historical Commission**

Olga Weiss, speaking as Chairwoman of the Historical Commission, described a local need: context sensitive wayfinding.

#### **BNRC**

Mackenzie Greer thanked the Committee for their support of the Parson's Marsh project. She described the long term vision to continue physical connections to the village center, and also toward West Street through Undermountain Farm. She also discussed ongoing efforts along Yokun Ridge to enact the High Road concept.

She also highlighted a concept of linking open space and affordable housing—to further both aspirations of the town.

Channing Gibson stated he hoped the work down from the Ridge into town would be a priority. He also noted the positivity and great achievement of the Lenox Club land now being preserved and to be protected under a Conservation Restriction held by BNRC.

#### **Mass Audubon**

Becky Cushing, Director of Berkshire Sanctuaries for Mass Audubon, explained that Mass Audubon has worked on the ridge since 1929, and that Mass Audubon also works in the local schools. Each year, 10,000+ people visit the sanctuary at Pleasant Valley, she said, and that Audubon is always thinking about recreation and how to draw people to town from the sanctuary and vice versa.

#### **Lenox Land Trust**

Kate McNulty Vaughan, representing the Lenox Land Trust, stated they are eager to collaborate and support a number of ongoing efforts and ideas:

- Connecting Parson's Marsh to West Street;
- Formalizing access to and throughout Post Farm
- Ongoing efforts at the Mount to maintain public access and trails in perpetuity to all of Edith Wharton's historic lands

Bike Path Connection

High Road

Recreational Area in North Lenox

River Walk

Channing Gibson reiterated the unique opportunity in Lenox Dale to open the community up to the river and make the river an attractive feature and aspect of the community.

Gene Chague pointed out that hunting is also important in Lenox, and there available lands to hunt are somewhat limited.

