

Town of Lenox

Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

November 13, 2017

7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Members Present: Vice Chair Tom Delasco, Planning Board; Cathie May (CM), Housing Authority; Al Harper (AH), At Large; Olga Weiss (OW), Historical Commission; Channing Gibson (CG), Board of Selectmen; Joe Strauch (Conservation Commission); Gene Chague (At Large)

Absent with Notification: Chairman Tony Patella, Community Center Board

Absent w/o Notification: Frederick Keator, At Large

Staff Present: Gwen Miller, Land Use Director

In Attendance: Ken Kelly, Lenox Land Trust; Betsy Strauch, Lenox Resident; Sean McCusker, Frelinghuysen Morris House & Studio; Eileen Mahoney, Trinity; Michael Tuck, Trinity; Gail Street, Trinity; Jeff Kitross, Trinity; Susan Wissler, The Mount; Ross Jolly, The Mount; Jackie McNinch, Affordable Housing Trust.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of September 11, 2017 were approved, GC abstained.

Review of Phase 2 Applications

The Committee discussed the Phase 2 applications as follows:

1. Frelinghuysen Morris House and Studio (Historic Preservation)

The application was amended to \$19,185. Mr. McCusker provided a brief background of the house and studio, stating they seek CPA Historic Preservation funds for the reconstruction of terrace 3 in front of the dining room at the home. He noted that after structural review found the doorway also needed reinforcement, work will be added to restore and reinstall the door. Finished tiles will be installed, pitched away from the building to avoid the deterioration now exhibited on yet to be restored terraces.

JS asked Mr. McCusker to say more about the historic significance of the house. Mr. McCusker stated the house was very significant in its time because it was an early modernist building, and the residents were very involved with and supportive of abstract art in their day, bringing European artists to America. AH asked about the estate itself. Mr. McCusker stated the estate itself is 46 acres, used to involve the mansion Brookehurst, acreage was included in the elementary school (Morris) and that George Morris actually created the mosaic visible from West Street. The stable on the campus have been restored for

workshops and trainings, and the lectures given on site are relevant to the museum—they are about artists, era of interest, and that painting on the grounds happens in the summer. OW asked about the property's national register status. Mr. McCusker noted the certificate was in their application packet. CM asked for an explanation of the foundation and trustees. Mr. McCusker said that when George Morris died, Susie Frelinghuysen started to think about the future of the house and the art collection. They set up a foundation through her will, and an endowment through which daily operations and so forth are maintained. Kinney Frelinghuysen and Joanne Johnson, a friend of the family, are the trustees. AH asked where they plan on going the next five (5) years. Mr. McCusker stated the project was part of five terraces, and noted the roof and main entry also pose challenges. TD asked if they plan on returning to CPA. Mr. McCusker said he was not certain, they had not been previously aware of the opportunity, but were also learning of other new opportunities for the restoration work. GC asked about the public access and schedule. Mr. McCusker stated the museum is open Thursday through Sunday, June through October, and that the large area it spans is open to the public as well. CG asked if public events happen. Mr. McCusker said no, though once they showed a documentary about the family and property. He explained the home was not designed for a great number of people and it contains fragile pieces. The grounds are not conducive to events either.

CM said she found her tour to be eye opening, worthwhile, surprising and educational.

OW said the house is the only example in town of that era and symbolizes that art period of transition, and a very interesting place to be.

CG stated his sons had worked at the museum over time, and they had benefited from the time they spent there due to the characteristics CM and OW described.

Mr. McCusker said tours are beneficial to opening peoples' eyes and minds, and that they were grateful to be part of it and to have the asset in his community. TD said they would decide about funding the project after the holidays, and GC requested a site visit. TD and AH agreed. GM said she would coordinate w/ Mr. McCusker.

2. The Mount (Historic Preservation)

Susan Wissler and Ross Jolly represented the Mount. Susan said the Mount deeply appreciated the funding received from the Town to date (for the Stable), and they were back before CPA for an unexpected need: the restoration of the terrace at the Mount. She indicated 60% of the funds have been committed, and that CPA would be providing about 15% of the funds. She said the Mount will figure out the remainder. Ross explained the issue in greater detail. He said a previous restoration effort had contained the mistake, exacerbating an issue and resulting in all joists at the main house being completely rotted so the mansion is more or less held by its doors. He explained how they will fix this problem by taking the brick back by three (2) feet. Susan and Ross reiterated how important the terrace is to programming at The Mount. CG asked how they came with the number of \$75,000 and not something higher. Ross said he thought the figure was high, but they asked the consultant (BCA) of Boson to come up with the estimate per linear square feet. Susan said the request for 15% from CPA is consistent w/ past applications, continuing on to say they are starting a capital and endowment

campaign so they will not always need CPA funds going forward. CG asked how comfortable she felt in this happening. Susan indicated fund-raising efforts to date have been successful. She explained that once this was restoration effort was complete; the buildings will be in great shape. She further explained that the Mount is working in partnership with their neighbor regarding trail improvements, so they might come back to CPA for something along those lines but not for capital improvements, as the endowment they are setting up will fund those. AH said the application was very impressive and he was glad to see the Mount back.

3. Trinity Church (Historic Preservation)

Trinity Church is seeking \$41,000 for historic preservation efforts on the church building. Michael Tuck and Eileen Mahoney were representing the church. Michael Tuck said the church has been part of the community since 1793. He provided summary history of the church in the Lenox community, and noted the project for which funding is sought would preserve the church's western wall for the next 50-60 years. They are also seeking a match from the Mass. Historical Commission. Another project they are working on is improving access to the Church, essential as more of the population is seeking to age in place. AH stated this was an important project in terms of historic preservation. TD asked if Trinity planned to return for CPC funds in the future. Michael Tuck said they had no particular plans—they would like to make the currently needed improvements and then enjoy and use them, and they recognize there many great organizations in town that also need the help.

4. Town of Lenox

a. Land Acquisition

GM said conversations were taking place regarding the proposed acquisition of the Peters' Property, but there was still work to do and more details were developing. She indicated that getting into details or sharing too much information could be bad for negotiations between the Town and property owners. She noted the purchase of the property would be to ensure permanent, public access into Post Farm and allow expansion of Mountainview Cemetery in the long-term, though the cemetery expansion would not be an eligible use for CPA funds and would be funded through a different town resource.

c. Community Garden

GM explained that Shakespeare and Co would let the town set up a pilot community garden on their property. This would be open to up to 25 people and would entail raised beds. A group of volunteers would be responsible for management and implementing the community garden. The goal is to ensure that residents of all backgrounds have access to a garden plot.

d. Shared Use Path Feasibility Study

GM stated this project would provide a road map going forward so that the Selectmen could efficiently and effectively make decisions toward a town-wide shared-use path.

e. Housing Trust

GM explained this project would fund the purchase of buy-downs and other activities described in the Housing Production Plan to create, preserve and increase affordable housing for low to moderate income households in Lenox. She explained that with the funds the Trust, complying with its recorded Charter, could use the funds in draw-down commitments to preserve affordable housing opportunity in Lenox, or toward assisting community organizations in creating new housing opportunity Lenox.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

DRAFT