

Lenox Community Preservation Committee
September 12, 2016
Minutes

Members in Attendance

Gene Chague (GC) (At Large); Tom Delasco (TD) (PB, Vice Chair); Channing Gibson (CG) (BoS); Al Harper (AH) (At Large); Frederick Keator (FK) (At Large); Cathie May (CM) (Lenox Housing Authority); Tony Patella (TP) (Community Center, Chair); Joe Strauch (Con Comm).

Members Absent without Notification

Olga Weiss (Historical Commission)

Staff in Attendance

Gwen Miller (Land Use Director/Town Planner)

Others in Attendance

Bill Ballen, Stockbridge Bowl Association; Rachel Coll, Ventfort Hall; Mackenzie Greer, Berkshire Natural Resources Council; Ross Jolly, The Mount; Ken Kelly, Lenox Land Trust; Michael Nathan, Stockbridge Bowl Association; Kate McNulty-Vaughan, Lenox Land Trust; Don Temples, The Mount

Documents Available at this Meeting

- CPA Balance, dated August 25, 2016
- Phase 1 Applications from Applicants
- Minutes from meeting of June 20, 2016

Action Items from this Meeting

- Make a site visit to Ventfort Hall.
- Consult the town auditor about whether an approved project can begin after the town meeting vote (May) but before funding is actually available (July).
- Develop specific questions to be addressed by applicants when they make their Phase 2 presentations this winter.

Tony Patella called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Approval of Minutes

FK moved to approve minutes of the meeting of June 20, 2016; CG seconded. The motion was approved 5-0, with three abstentions (TP, CM, AH)

FY2017 Phase 1 Applications

FK noted that the goal of these discussions is to decide whether an application meets the criteria for CPC consideration and whether the application should move along to Phase 2.

Stockbridge Bowl Association: \$250,000 for lake management efforts

CPC members' questions included:

Whether the CPC is allowed to fund this at all.

GM said she contacted Stuart Saginor from the Massachusetts Community Preservation Coalition, who said it is allowable as long as there is a public benefit.

Amount of money set aside in CPC funds for open space purchases versus other purposes.

FK said there have been several years where the CPC simply reserved funds for the open space line item. He added that any land purchase will require significant capital, though there has never been a hard number on this. AH said he believes the CPC has allocated around \$500,000 specifically earmarked for open space purchase.

Average depth of the bowl, acceptable level of draw-down, and target of proposed funding.

MN said the depth goes from 2-50 feet. FK said the state limits draw-downs to 5.5 feet. MN said the point of the project is to open up the vein of the bowl to allow free flow of both water and silt and the proposed funding is targeted to dredging the outlet to get enough silt out so that free flow will be achieved.

The science behind the proposed methodology.

MN mentioned Ken Wagner, a well-known lake management expert, and GZA Corporation, the company that will do the dredging. He added as background that in the 1950s, Tennessee Pipeline placed a pipe under the water and while water still flowed over the pipe, silt did not. There are now 60 years of backed-up silt, which is 7-8 feet high in some spots. If the silt isn't removed, the bowl will become a bog. While it would be prohibitively expensive to remove all the silt, the plan is to build a channel 60 feet across, sloping down 7 feet, to allow silt to escape.

Financing of the project.

MN said the state has given \$900,000 so far – some for the channel and \$675,000 for dredging. It is a state lake and technically it is their responsibility but they are expecting others to help out financially with the project. Without the requested \$250,000 from the Lenox CPC, the project cannot go out to bid (all \$2.9 million needed must be in hand). Tennessee Pipeline is not a source of funding because, years ago, the company offered the town of Stockbridge \$68,000 for remediation, which was accepted. The town of Stockbridge has contributed toward the project but no other surrounding towns have been approached. MN said he does not know whether the town of Stockbridge is willing or able to float a bond to complete funding for the project. If the Lenox CPC does not grant funding, the Stockbridge Bowl Association will continue its fundraising efforts.

FK moved that the project be approved for Phase 2; CG seconded. The motion carried 6-2 (JS and AH voted no.)

Ventfort Hall: \$30,000 for masonry work.

CPC members' questions included:

Scope of project beyond masonry work.

RC said structural engineers have identified urgent issues with the building's envelope. The main problems are the roof and some masonry instability. Before winter, a couple sections of masonry in the parapet structures will be taken down for safety reasons; the stone will be stored and replaced when funding is available. In addition, the rectangular window bays need reroofing and two pairs of gables are starting to pull away from the building. For one pair, the plan is to cable them together; the other pair must be taken down. Ventfort Hall is seeking CPC money for stabilization work on the masonry. Other funding is being sought from the Mass Historical Commission's emergency fund.

Findings of structural engineers.

RC said their work is not yet complete and while some findings have been unexpected, it is better to identify and document the problems now. The major survey work is 90 percent done; another part of the study, a research and documentation component (dealing with the original construction of building and history of previous restorations), is 60 percent done.

FK moved that the project be approved for Phase 2; JS seconded. The motion was approved unanimously (8-0).

AH suggested the CPC do a site visit. RC invited CPC members for Wednesday when a structural engineer will be on site.

Berkshire Natural Resources Council: approximately \$200,000 for trail creation at Parson's Marsh.

CPC members' questions included:

Details in the application.

MG said she included the purchase and sale documents to show that the BNRC intends to purchase the property – 63 acres – from the Spragues, all on the southern portion of a much larger area. The \$200,000 requested from the CPC is not for acquisition but for trail creation.

Description of the project.

MG said this is a high-end, professionally built, 1,600 foot long trail. Half would be boardwalk made with Trex-like material and half would be more standard trail. Installing the boardwalk portion is very expensive – \$250 per linear foot. A trail designer will do

the trail plan and provide visuals of materials, etc. The plan is for this to be a true public access experience and because much of the terrain is wet woodland, boardwalks are essential to ensure access for all. The trail will begin in the parking lot, go out into the marsh, and return. This trail is a stand-alone project and while it eventually could connect to other trails, that is not in the scope of this project. This trail could be a positive first step to galvanize others with similar trail projects in the works.

FK moved that the project be approved for Phase 2; CG seconded. The motion was approved unanimously (8-0).

The Mount: \$75,000 for continued stable restoration work.

CPC members' questions included:

Progress to date on the Stable.

RJ said while much work has been done on the Stable, some projects have been juggled to match funding sources to work needed. The good news is that The Mount has paid off its debt. But it is not yet at the point where year-round programming can be scheduled in the Stable site. Recently, a single donor has come forward to jump-start the next phase: completing the envelope/exterior (replacing all sills, re-stuccoing, sash work, etc.) Part of this is bringing in all utilities so exterior regrading work can be completed and the exterior work will be finished.

DT added that The Mount has funding from three organizations totaling \$550,000 of the \$675,000 needed. The Mount is asking the CPC for \$75,000 of the final \$125,000 needed to help get the entire envelope stabilized. CPC funds, when available, will be used for whatever part of the project remains incomplete (windows, sashes, utilities, doors, etc.)

Next phase.

RJ said they are beginning a long-range plan for usage of the interior space (programming, administration, etc.). This will require a major capital campaign.

FK moved that the project be approved for Phase 2; CM seconded. The motion was approved unanimously (8-0).

Toole Properties 2001 Inc.: \$35,000 to help install boardwalk/bridges at LFX Toole Wildlife Preserve

CPC members' questions included:

Description of the property.

KK from the Lenox Land Trust (representing the Toole family) said the property is 111 acres encompassing five ponds, lowlands, and marshes and a wooded road that is submerged in three locations by beaver activity. Four boardwalks are needed for those areas but CPC funding, if approved, would be used for only three of them (one is not

located within the conservation restriction). The Toole family will pay for this and the other trail work. The property is located behind the Hampton and Yankee Inns and has two conservation restrictions with the Lenox Land Trust. The vision is to restore trails to create a mile-plus circuit that would be accessible (though probably not ADA compliant. KMV added that there is a parking lot and signage now. The Lenox Land Trust website has a drone overview available on its website.

KK said the Lenox Land Trust is supportive of project, although, because the Toole project is a for-profit venture, the trust may not be able to contribute financially. He added that Conservation Commission approval is required before the project can move forward; its members are planning a site visit this week.

Timing and funding approval.

KK asked whether CPC funds could be used to reimburse for work already underway (the project will be starting this fall). Citing a Community Preservation Coalition memo, GM said she believes CPC funds can be used reimbursement if it is a non-municipal project. But FY 2018 funds cannot be used for work completed in FY 2017.

FK: said he would suggest that the project use Toole family money for the project until next spring/summer when CPC funds might be approved and, later, available.

AH asked whether the last bit of the project could begin after CPC allocations have been approved at town meeting but before funding is actually available. He would like an opinion from the town auditor on this question.

FK moved that the project be approved for Phase 2; AH seconded. The motion was approved unanimously (8-0).

Old/New Business

TP said the next scheduled CPC meeting is November 7. Presentations from the five applicants will be scheduled after that (November-January).

MG asked whether the CPC would be forwarding a specific list of questions the group would like to see addressed at the applicants' presentations. It was agreed that this would be a good idea.

CG spoke briefly about several aspects of affordable housing, noting that the BoS is looking at some options for Sawmill Brook and future projects.

FK made a motion to adjourn; CM seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Submitted by
Alison Sneider