

Town of Lenox
Community Preservation Committee
Meeting Minutes

September 13th, 2023

Documents Available: 9/13/23 agenda, April 2023 meeting minutes

Members Present: Tom Delasco, Shannon O'Brien, Kim Graham, Olga Weiss, Frederick Keator, Mark Smith

Members Absent: Neal Maxymillian, Chuck Koscher

1. Public Hearing

TD read the notice for the public hearing, and explained its purpose. He explained the purpose was to hear input from the community as to what they would like to see CPA funds go toward. He understood there were people there who intended on applying for grants. He hoped they would stick to a 50,000 foot overview of projects.

He opened the floor to input.

Ventfort Hall shared first—Wendy Heckler, the new executive director introduced herself.

Sticking to their preservation plan, next step is to preserve chimneys.

Gary Knisely at 399 Undermountain Road next introduced himself.

Interested to hear what is important to the Town—he said they have space for housing, trails, they have historic buildings on the farm property next door.

TD summarized a list of historic properties in Lenox—OW also summarized what makes properties historic and significant to the community, explaining the significance of the Guilded Age. TD explained that many natives have ancestors who worked on the estates, as well. OW pointed out that scenic vistas are as equally important as the buildings themselves.

KMV was in attendance and explained the vista from Undermountain Farm is so integral to the experience of being in Lenox, it is one of several properties and views like that in Town. TD pointed out that open space dovetails with this, and that CPC has funded open space projects in the past. TD said the third category is community housing. Mr. Knisely asked how they define affordable housing—KMV said the state defines it. Mr. Knisely said they have six apartments on the property—KMV asked if they would be staff housing or open to the public. FK said there are stipulations for Community Housing units receiving CPA funds.

FK reminded the group that the CPA act passed in Lenox by 9 votes. He says the optimal CPC application ticks all the boxes—to satisfy all constituent groups who helped pass the CPA in LEnox—community housing, open space/recreation and historic preservation.

FK said they like to be angel investors—early dollars, or smaller dollars that help unlock more dollars.

Peter Metz—Church on Hill—will be requesting additional funds to follow up on work they've conducted with previous CPC funds. The clock and bells work again. But there is structural work needed. They also hope to provide more event space for the community. Pastor Liz Goodman was also present to provide additional information about the church interior and parking availability. She also said the church itself is a rare style—a Federal style church is not common in New England. Likened vision to what happens at St. James in Great Barrington.

KMV was there with her Affordable Housing hat on, and indicated the Trust would support a CDBG application, would be meeting to decide where they go next. Would like to have more acquisition funds available.

The Kniseleys commented after hearing these other ideas—they tick all the boxes. Jeanie Kniseley said they would definitely apply for historic preservation funding—possibly feasibility studies for trails and open space.

Pastor Liz Goodman said it sounds like the Town likes to see success to have confidence in funding requestors/projects.

FK said The Mount is a poster child—they have been a poster child for successful requests.

FK pointed out they can't fund maintenance. Mr. Knisely asked what the difference between maintenance versus restoration.

TD encouraged applicants to use the Town Planner as a resource.

The public hearing was closed at 6:55 p.m.

2. Approve Minutes of April 27th, 2023

FK moved to approve; TD, FK, MS approved.

3. Application Timeline and Process for FY25

Group reviewed timeline—October 23rd will be the deadline for applications, November 6th will be the committee meeting. They will schedule subsequent meetings at the November meeting upon seeing applications.

4. Correspondence

They discussed an e-mail received from a resident on Old Stockbridge Road about wanting sidewalk down its length. They agreed it was not recreation. They suggested that Gwen could reply to the sender and clarify.

KG had a question about the Undermountain Farm conversation. She wondered how the community housing requirements work. FK explained the deed restriction process and implications to owners.