

Town of Lenox

Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

November 26, 2018

7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Members Present: Chairman Tony Patella, Cathie May (CM), Housing Authority; Olga Weiss (OW), Historical Commission; Neal Maxymillian (NM), At-Large/Board of Selectmen; Joe Strauch, Conservation Commission; Gene Chague (At Large); Al Harper (AH), At Large

Absent: Frederick Keator (At Large); Vice Chair Tom Delasco, Planning Board

Staff Present: Gwen Miller (GM), Land Use Director

In Attendance: Becky Cushing (BC), Stu Weintraub, Jim Harwood, Stephen Hutchinson, Mass Audubon ; Sean McCusker (SM), Frelinghuysen Morris House and Studio; Mackenzie Greer (MG), Berkshire Natural Resources Council; Ken Kelly, Patty Spector, Betsy Strauch, others

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of September 24th were approved.

CPA Category Balances

GM provided a recap of the account balances:

\$541,005.55 Undesignated

\$545,648.81 Open Space/Recreation (\$500,000 reserved for land acquisition)

\$29,019.96 in the Historic Preservation category.

\$37,499.49 in Community Housing

She noted that the state trust fund distribution totaled to \$125,004 this year and it was an amount higher than expected.

She also noted there are enough funds to fully fund every CPA project before the Committee should they decide to do so.

Review of Phase 2 Applications

The Committee heard presentations from applicant, asking questions after each presentation.

1. Frelinghuysen Morris House and Studio (Historic Preservation), \$25,000 for the restoration of Patio

SM provided a background of the house and studio and its art collection. He described the condition of Patio #4, and the extent of the work necessary to restore the patio properly, including structural improvements underneath the patio to ensure that the restoration is successful and enduring. He showed a diagram of Phase 1. SM noted that Patio 4 is more complicated and will include work underneath the dining room.

AH asked if the funding requested would be for Phase 1. SM said yes.

GC clarified that the funding awarded last year was for Patio 2.

2. Berkshire Natural Resources Council (Open Space/Rec), \$50,000 for North Yokun Ridge trail improvements

MG stated the request from BNRC is for \$50,000, about 45% of the total project. She explained the High Road, and how this project will be part of that longer trail on North Yokun Ridge. She highlighted the specific work area, and noted the partnership between the Town of Lenox, Mass Audubon and BNRC in terms of land and trail management on Yokun Ridge. She pointed out that the trail needs re-routing, and the re-routing section will be 4,085 ft. with one short wetland bridge (possibly a bog bridge) and will require a professional trail builder using sustainable trail building principals. She explained the cost estimates, which included parking area creation and signage. BNRC is contributing \$64,000 to the project.

AH noted he understood the complexity and expense of the project. He wondered how would trail access by motorized vehicles be limited in the future?

MG said that there has been a decrease in motorized vehicle use in that area and that BNRC and Audubon monitor closely. BNRC typically sends letters to property owners as they find disturbances, but they are also confident that opening up the trail and getting more people on it will get more eyes on it as well.

OW said it sounded like there was hope in regulating it. MG added that signage is limited and could be increased.

GC asked where dogs and bikes will be allowed. There was brief discussion from MG and BC about determining the sections where dogs and bikes can go and where there will need to be a turn-around point to reflect individual property owners' use policy.

3. Mass Audubon (Open Space/Rec and Historic Preservation), \$300,000 to implement a package of improvements at the Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary including: 1) creating new ADA-compliant, family-friendly public restrooms; 2) improve the existing summer parking area, and

3) upgrade the board walk entrance from the parking lot to the visitor information center and trailhead with focus on 1).

BC introduced the project team and provided a background of the Pleasant Valley Sanctuary and the breadth of programming provided and how visitation, the # of school programs, public programs, nature camp attendance and community events are growing.

She highlighted the benefits of the project to the Town:

Providing high quality, year round, accessible meeting space

Accessible bathrooms

Upgrading facilities to increase visitation to the Sanctuary and Lenox

She noted the plans are congruent with existing community plans such as the OSRP and Historic Preservation Plan.

SW went on to say that the total project budget is \$1.1 million, and the \$300,000 being requested is a quarter of the project. They see CPA funds as a catalyst, w/ construction starting in Spring 2020.

JS asked if the \$1.1 million would cover other improvements, like trail improvements.

BC said the \$1.1 million was for the barn renovation.

SW said the construction cost alone is about \$700,000 but capital campaign costs add to it.

AH noted a difference in the budget and asked about the increase to \$753,000; would like to see budget broken up. He then asked what they would do if only partially funded?

BC and SW said a \$300,000 gap would be hard to surmount.

AH asked about the square footage of the renovation. JH provided a figure, and said he would bring the mechanical breakdown to a future meeting.

NM stated he didn't think the request was exorbitant and viewed the project as more than improving restrooms.

BC noted the deck space would be programmable, and this would retain the interpretive space in the lobby. The Sanctuary serves as a hub for people accessing the Sanctuary, Town of Lenox lands and BNRC lands.

GC said he would like to see the match in hand. He asked what would happen if they don't get funding. GM explained that they would be required to demonstrate their match and that Lenox treats CPC projects as reimbursable—so a project isn't able to get the local funds until they submit invoices for the work completed. GC also asked about the maintenance endowment. SW explained the purpose is to make sure buildings are maintained over the long term, he also noted the contingency requirement. NM and GM pointed out that most Town projects include a contingency cost in case things happen during the project, and noted sometimes projects come in under the budget.

CM asked if there are similar projects funded w/ CPA money. SW said yes, describing a similar historic barn renovation in Dartmouth, Mass that was completely funded w/ CPA funds.

Patty Spector commented that the barn is not a 12 month facility at the moment and the benefit of it being year round with enhanced capacity will be great for the Town.

BC noted the need to provide facilities to a certain standard for their camp accreditation.

CM asked if there will be an ongoing development person. BC said they have one part time person.

Betsy Strauch questioned the application of the CPC restoration definition to this project. JH said it was a rehabilitation project, meeting the Department of Interior standards. The project includes services around the barn as well as wiring and mechanicals within it. SW pointed out the other goal is to get rid of fossil fuel use on the site. JH said the best thing to do is to keep the barn in good position and the rehabilitation of it will do so.

NM called for a point of order, since the questions had veered from the criteria of Phase 2 applications. TP said it was clear the committee wasn't ready to make a decision, and to send GM any additional questions. He asked Audubon to share a summary of their project, and AH asked for a budget more clearly broken down. GM will send out a Doodle poll to schedule a next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.