

Groton Community Preservation Committee

Minutes of Public Meeting of 23 June 2005

Location: Groton Town Hall, 2nd Floor Meeting Room

Time: 7:30 PM

Members Present: Bruce H. Easom (Secretary), Dan Emerson, Rick Hughson, Carolyn Perkins (Vice Chair) and Mike Roberts (Chair)

Members Absent: Robert DeGroot and as of yet unnamed representative of the Parks Commission.

Attendees: Mike Aha (Boston Road), Patti Aha (Boston Road), Heather Bee (Prescott School), Frank Belitsky (Groton Senior Foundation), Pierre Conitres (Nashoba Publishing), Harlan P. Fitch (Longley Road), Valerie Jenkins (Town Accountant), John Llorda (Smith Street), Brooks T. Lyman (Townsend Road), Georgess McHargue (Hollis Street), Rick Muehlke (Common Street) and Sally Smith (Common Street)

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM.

The meeting began with an introduction by the Chairman. The members of the Community Preservation Committee were introduced. The Chairman noted that this meeting is being conducted to meet the requirements of Section 5b1 of Chapter 44B of the Massachusetts General Laws. The Chairman reminded the attendees that the main purpose of the meeting was for the Committee to receive comments and criticisms from the public on the draft Community Preservation Plan.

Harlan Fitch complimented the Committee on getting the draft plan completed in such a short time. Mr. Fitch noted that the plan did not contain any forms for applying for a CPA surcharge abatement. Bruce H. Easom replied that the plan does not address the CPA surcharge issues. He also pointed out that the tax bill that will be mailed on 28 July 2005 will include some information to taxpayers. Bruce also noted that the tax bill due 1 November 2005 will include further information about the process of applying for the abatement. The first tax bill with the CPA surcharge will be due on 1 February 2006.

Brooks Lyman asked the Committee for their opinions on two potential projects. The first project would be a study of the land on Cow Pond Brook to evaluate its suitability for an affordable housing site. The second potential project was to purchase nine units of affordable housing in a Molton subdivision. Mike Roberts responded that engineering studies can be funded by the CPA. Mike suggested that Mr. Lyman visit the Community

Preservation Coalition web site to see what kinds of proposals have been funded throughout the commonwealth. Dan Emerson noted that Community Preservation funds can be used for buy-downs. Mike Roberts noted that it is a big plus if projects have multiple funding sources.

Patti Aha said that the draft Community Preservation Plan states that the affordable housing goal is to buy affordable units outright. Patti asked if this meant the that the town would be become a landlord. Mike Roberts replied that the town could become an affordable housing landlord if it though it made economic sense. Bruce H. Easom and Dan Emerson noted that a number of towns have created not-for-profit corporations to run their affordable housing programs and Groton should think about using this approach.

Frank Belitsky noted that there was noting in the draft plan that benefited senior citizens. Mr. Belitsky said that the Senior Center is in need of expansion. Mr. Belitsky asked if other towns have used the CPA to help their senior citizens. Mr. Belitsky asked if the CPA funds could be used to acquire land for a new senior center or to design a new building. Mike Roberts responded that the people should use their imaginations to come up with projects that fit within the CPA goals. Mike suggested people read the draft Community Preservation Plan with this in mind.

Frank Belitsky noted that there is apparently no set-aside for senior citizens. Frank asked, "What do seniors get? They pay taxes too." Carolyn Perkins noted that the seniors might benefit from a project proposed under the CPA's Recreation category. Carolyn suggested finding out what other communities have done. Dan Emerson recommended that Frank contact Chris Saccardi of the Community Preservation Coalition directly. Dan suggested that the CPA can free up funds in the general budget for projects that do not fall within the CPA guidelines. Mike Roberts suggested finding places where trails could be created that seniors would like to use. Mike suggested that such trails could benefit a seniors walking club.

Brooks Lyman suggested to Frank Belitsky that he try the CPA's Recreation pillar as it is probably the best bet for projects to benefit seniors.

John Llorda asked if the CPA funds could be helpful to the Habitat for Humanity's efforts in the town. Bruce H. Easom noted that while CPA funds might be used, the CPA may require a deed restriction an any properties that are improved using CPA funds.

Heather Bee said that she is interested in the restoration of Prescott School. Heather asked if the Community Preservation Committee could act in an advisory role for parents groups on issues of historic preservation. Carolyn Perkins replied that it would be difficult for the committee to act in an advisory role and then be asked to review project proposals to recommend CPA funding. Carolyn recommended that Heather visit www.communitypresevation.org to obtain more information on available historic preservation resources.

Heather Bee asked if there are any guidelines on dollar value of awards. Heather also asked if the Committee would recommend partially funding projects. The Town Accountant volunteered to provide a “cheat-sheet” on bidding procedures.

Harlan Fitch reminded everyone that any monies spent on projects must be appropriated at Town Meeting. Harlan asked if it was possible to get help in putting proposals together. Mike Roberts replied that Harlan would have to write the proposal. Georgess McHargue volunteered to help Mr. Fitch fill out all of the CPA application forms.

Sally Smith said she was interested in the historic preservation aspect of the CPA. Sally asked the Committee to explain what an historic preservation restriction was. Mike Roberts said that an historic preservation restriction is a document, signed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, to protect a building from destruction. Mike said that these historic preservation restrictions are in effect in perpetuity.

Brooks Lyman reminded the audience that, when the town was looking for additional funding sources for the restoration of Town Hall, the town chose not to take funds from some of the potential sources because they seriously restricted the town’s options on the future use of the property.

Sally Smith asked if applicants should get estimates on the cost of a proposed project before the awards are made. Carolyn Perkins replied that, yes, cost estimates will be required. Mike Roberts added that the Community Preservation Committee will take on project management rolls.

Frank Belitsky agreed that the CPA’s Recreation pillar is the best for seniors. Frank asked if the design of a new senior center would be an allowable use of CPA funds. Mike Roberts indicated that it would probably not be. Mike Roberts suggested looking for multiple funding sources when proposing a recreation project for seniors. Rick Hughson noted that the CPA is not so much about building stadiums. Rick warned about the dangers of overselling the benefits of the CPA.

Sally Smith asked if several proposals are submitted and some do not get recommended, can they be resubmitted. Mike Roberts replied that proposals can be resubmitted.

John Llorda asked if projects could be funded at any time. Mike Robert replied that they could not be funded at any time and that proposals for 2005 must be in by 1 August 2005.

Pierre Conitres asked if the Committee had received any proposals yet. Dan Emerson replied that the Committee had not explaining that the Committee is still finalizing the Community Preservation Plan. Only after the final plan has been issued would proposers be able to complete their CPA applications.

Rick Muehlke asked about the authority of the Community Preservation Committee and Town Meeting with regard to CPA project funding. He asked if the CPC would recommend spending more than \$400,000 in the current fiscal year. Mike Roberts said

that the authority to spend CPA funds lies with town meeting and the CPC is only allowed to screen and recommend projects for town meeting approval. Mike Roberts said that the CPC will not be recommending projects with a combined expenditure above \$400,000.

Rick Muehlke asked if \$400,000 would be available for CPA projects next year too. Dan Emerson said that next year approximately \$800,000 would be available.

Harlan Fitch noted a discrepancy in the draft plan between the number of CPA pillars and the number of CPA funding areas. Mr. Fitch was uncertain about whether there were three pillars or four pillars. Mr. Fitch asked the Committee to clarify this issue.

Rick Hughson moved to adjourn the meeting. Bruce H. Easom seconded the motion. The motion carried by unanimous vote and the meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce H. Easom

16 August 2005

Date

Secretary
Groton Community Preservation Committee

These minutes were approved as amended by unanimous vote on 15 August 2005.
Robert DeGroot abstained.