

Groton Community Preservation Committee

Minutes of Public Meeting of January 21, 2009

Location: Groton Town Hall, Second Floor Meeting Room

Time: 7:30 PM

Members Present: Bruce Easom (Chairman), Dan Emerson, Mike Roberts, Rick Hughson (Treasurer), Bob DeGroot (Vice-Chair), Jon Strauss

Members Absent: Carolyn Perkins (Secretary)

Guests: Owen Shuman, Michelle Collette, Barbara Ganem, Whit Beals, Ray Lyons

1. Action Items

Mr. Strauss:

- Contact Mr. Haddad for Town Counsel response until received.

Ms. Miller:

- Send letter to Mr. Manugian

Mr. Easom:

- Invite to early submittal applicants

Mr. DeGroot:

- Town Report

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM.

Mr. Easom reviews agenda.

1. Invitees and Guests

Owen Shuman: Groton Town Library

Owen Shuman Director of the Groton Library is welcomed by the CPC. Ms. Shuman is seeking information on a potential proposal. The Library is in possession of Town Diaries from 1918-1971. It has come to her attention that these are valuable historic documents. Through an endowment and volunteer labor, these diaries have been partially preserved and indexed. The next step that Ms. Shuman would like to pursue is having these items digitalized and made available online.

Mr. Hughson is uncertain that this qualifies, as the documents have already been preserved. In Mr. DeGroots opinion, they have only been preserved partially and may qualify to see project through. No other other suggestions are given although it is recommended to come and listen to the reviews given to early submitters. Mr. Roberts also suggests meeting with the Historic Commission to confirm these are a historic document and see if they are willing to support this project.

Whit Beals and Ray Lyons: Wharton Plantation

Introductions are given and Mr. Lyons gives background of potential proposal. The New England Forestry Foundation owns 45 acres on the eastern shore of Baddacook Pond. They are interested in selling this land along with the water rights in the hopes of purchasing other land in the Town of Groton.

Mr. Lyons states that he is in the process of seeking a co-applicant. Both the Water Department and Conservation Commission have declined as they both have submitted their own applications. Mr. Lyons and Mr. Beals are will be meeting next week with the Selectmen's Office seeking their support.

Mr. Lyons states the value of this property at \$750,000. The amount of his proposal would be for \$350,000 of which the state would match. Mr. Lyons also mentions that NEF would be willing to phase this amount into three installments and would incorporate this schedule into the application. This would allow the CPC the opportunity to help other projects.

Mr. Hughson gives an approximate value of funds available for open space and informs Mr. Lyons that there are more applications this year than available funds. Mr. Strauss asks if this proposal could wait until next year. Mr. Lyons is concerned that the septic for the house is only approved for two years and the land that NEF wishes to purchase might not be available in the future, so time is of the essence. Mr. Roberts then suggests to review the CPP and do some research into invasive species and contact the Coalition.

Michelle Collette: Squannacook Hall

Ms. Collette distributes the final report to Mr. Easom and states that the Committee has voted to accept the report and invoice. The decision was to have a lump sum contract.

As of now there is no intention of putting forth an application as there is no compelling need, and this would be an inappropriate time to ask the Town to spend almost two million dollars. The study is valid and will not lose it's validity over time; however the cost of said repairs will fluctuate. Ms. Collette states 2 compelling reasons that might be worth the wait. The septic system needs to be re-done and with the potential west Groton sewer tie in, this could save valuable money. Also there is a parcel owner across the street that is considering a sale of approximately 10 acres for a parking lot that would be shared with the West Groton Fire Dept. and the Christian Union Church and would be available for Squannacook Hall use.

Michelle Collette & Barbara Ganem: Nashua Rd.

Mr. Emerson gives brief overview of the 14 acre parcel and the work performed by Meisner/Brem, along with the situation concerning wetland studies.

Ms. Collette stated that this parcel has been plagued with wetland issues for sometime. In her opinion Meisner/Brem has not performed their due diligence on the wetland assessment. They have not contacted or pursued the advice of anyone in the Planning Board, Conservation Commission or any other boards. There are too many assumptions and information taken from the GIS which has disclaimers as to the accuracy.

Ms. Ganem states there are many constraints. There is still information that needs to be obtained. The eastern side of this property has not been walked by the Conservation Commission. It is not known where the slopes, wetlands and poor soils are.

Mr. Emerson asks if Ms. Ganem and Ms. Collette would be willing to meet with the housing department to share ideas and information that would be beneficial in getting this project in motion.

Ms. Collette suggests contacting Mass. Housing as they were very helpful with the Sandy Pond project; the state has technical funds available.

Mr. Hughson is disappointed in the amount paid for a report that is not accurate. Mr. Easom believes we need to think carefully about hand-offs. The Housing Authority was the applicant, and they hired Meisner/Brem to perform the report in which they didn't possess the expertise to make sure that Meisner/Brem was performing their due diligence. Mr. Roberts stresses the importance of Co-Applicants who have experience.

Other options are discussed such as transferring the parcel to Conservation, using the parcel as "open space" and the possibility of developing the four usable acres.

Housing Coordinator

Ms. Collette states that the Housing Partnership has met and were discussing the merits of having a Housing Coordinator. There are a variety of housing programs available and there are administrative funds that can be used for staffing this position. Some of the functions that could be serviced are: research, managing grant applications, liaison to all housing groups, coordinate housing, assist in RFP for housing projects, conduct lotteries for housing, tracking units, working with trusts and facilitate housing projects through the system.

The Selectmen think this is an excellent idea but cannot afford this position. It is suggested to contact the CPA. Mr. DeGroot thinks this is an excellent idea but there may be strict human resource restrictions. Mr. Hughson also thinks this an excellent idea but questions who is

responsible for this person as he believes it may be part of the responsibilities of the Housing Trust.

Ms. Collette feels that if the Board of Selectmen go forward with Prescott or Tarbell, these projects need to be managed by someone with expertise. Discussion ensues as to who the appropriate person for this position might be and what qualifications this person should possess.

2. Minutes

Mr. DeGroot motions to accept minutes as written. This is seconded by Mr. Strauss and all were in favor.

3. Other Business

Budget Overview

The budget overview is postponed to the next meeting.

Early Submittals

Mr. Easom relates that there have been four early submission applications, and the applicants have been invited to the February 2, 2009 meeting. The scoring system is reviewed and it's agreed that we should continue status quo as this has worked in the past.

Mr. DeGroot motions to continue with the existing scoring process in evaluating applications for CPC funding. Mr. Roberts seconds and the vote is unanimous.

The projects are labeled as follows:

- Baseball – 2009-01
- Conservation – 2009-02
- Town Wide Survey -2009-03
- Groton Grange - 2009-04

Office Assistant Hours

Ms. Miller asks the Board to consider changing her hours from Tuesdays and Thursday 8:00-10:00 to Mondays 1:00 – 5:00 and states various ways this would be more productive.

Mr. Easom motions to move the CPC Office Assistant hours to Mondays from 1:00 – 5:00PM. Mr. DeGroot seconds and the vote is unanimous.

4. Project Updates

2005-09 Fitch's Bridge

Mr. Hughson has still not gotten a response to Mr. Manugian. *It is suggested to have Ms. Miller write a letter to Mr. Manugian.

2006-11 Basketball Court

An E-mail has been sent but a decision has not yet been received. It is decided that this is a project that the Town really wants and a deadline must be given. Mr. Roberts believes that we need to get Mr. Black into our next meeting and discuss this cut-off date. * Jon Strauss will invite Mr. Black to next meeting.

2007-8 Conservation Commission Fund

An agreement has been made to purchase MATTBOB property.

2007-11 Rail Trail

We need to continue and find out how we can fit into the next round of stimulus money. Montachusett Regional Planning Agency will not allocate money until we are all on board.

5. Closing

*Invitations will be given to all early submittal applicants

Mr. Easom moves to adjourn at 9:45 Mr. Emerson seconds and the motion is unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Kathy Miller