

Groton Community Preservation Committee Minutes of Public Meeting of March 1, 2011

Location: Legion Hall
Time: 7:00 PM
Members Present: Mike Roberts, Carolyn Perkins (Chair), Dane Emerson, Richard Hewitt, Robert DeGroot (Secretary)
Members Absent: Bruce Easom (Treasurer), Jon Strauss (Vice-Chair)
Guests: Colleen Neff, Bonnie Carter, Earl Carter, Carolyn Fischer, Stuart Schulman, Bob France, Ellen Hargraves, Anna Eliot, Allen King, John Ott, Lili Ott, Jim Ryan, Bill Neacy, Berta Erickson, Mike Bouchard, Maggie Monroe-Cassel, Elizabeth Strachan, Bobbie Spiegelman, Rena Swezey, Mark Haddad, Stanley Jackson, Josh Degen, Michael Neff, Robert Smith, Liz Strachan

Public Hearing

Ms. Perkins called the meeting to order at 7:00.

For more project details, please see minutes of February 7, 2011

1. Public Hearing for FY2012 Project Applications

2012-01 Housing Trust Fund- Mark Haddad & Carolyn Fischer

Mark Haddad, Town Manager delivered a project summary stating that \$400,000 is being requested to invest in a mixed-use project on 104 Main Street. A meeting has taken place with abutters, and conceptual plans are already in the works. He cited the City of Newton as being very successful with a similar project. Bob France of Mount Laurel Development spoke on his collaboration with the Town on this project. He had already started the process on a mixed use development at this site and was confronted by the Town to work together and ensure that some 40B units would be available.

CPC Response:

Questions were asked regarding why there would be only 3 affordable units, parking issues, what are the accessibility plans for the units, time frame details, who would take on the liability for any unseen funding issues as well as if historic regulations had been considered.

The Station Ave. guidelines state 15% of the total units should be affordable. As 15 units are being considered, 3 would have to be affordable. A preliminary site review has been performed and the drive-way may have to be moved to the other side of the building. Parking issues will be reviewed by the Planning Board. As for time frame, the Town has 6 months to obtain permits and the entire project should take between 1-2 yrs. Mr. France assured that his company would take on any financial liability issues and the front building will be restored under historic regulations.

Public Response:

There were concerns regarding parking, possible wetlands and the fact that no plans have been provided. It was also questioned how this would benefit the Town, and what were the advantages of getting funding from the Town instead of a bank.

2012-03 Conservation Fund – Bill Neacy (Conservation Committee)

Mr. Neacy explained that the key role of the Conservation Committee is to acquire land and consistently they have been supported by the Town in this endeavor. The goal is to have the conservation fund reach as close to the million dollar mark as possible to be able to act quickly when opportunity arises.

CPC Response:

It was asked if any other sources of funding are available and if it would be considered to reduce the amount of money being requested.

Mr. Neacy responded to additional funding by stating that grants are always pursued, and there have been joint ventures with the Groton Conservation Trust and other organizations when available.

Public Response:

Anna Elliot stated her support of the application. It was asked if there had ever been a situation where less money than was stated in the application was granted. Ms. Perkins responded that there had been a situation in the past, and she would rather not do that again.

2012-04 Historical Records Restoration-Mike Bouchard (Town Clerk)

Mr. Bouchard gave a brief history of this project. This is the third and final phase of this project consisting of 26 volumes set to be restored. \$50,000 is being requested to finish this project.

CPC Response:

Mr. Hewitt asked if there was anything left to be restored

Mr. Bouchard replied that there are some photos and maps; however this would complete the original list of items that had been identified as being top priority.

Public Response:

John Ott stated his support of this project.

2012-05 Prescott Assessment - Anna Eliot. (Prescott School Reuse Committee)

Anna Eliot gave a brief background of the project. A Committee was formed by suggestion from the Board of Selectmen to investigate the best possible use of the Prescott School.

CPC Response:

Mr. DeGroot wanted to know how the amount of \$25,350 was derived. He also asked if enough due diligence had been done to ensure there was enough funding to finish the project, and what would be done with the results from the survey. Mr. Hewitt commented that this project is critical to Station Ave and redeveloping the Town center.

The amount requested was based on the approximate number of hours it would take to complete the survey. The results of this survey will help make a more educated decision on what is the best use for the Prescott School.

Public Response: None

2012-07 Drumlin Hill Affordable Housing – Allen King & Maggie Monroe (Habitat for Humanity)

Habitat for Humanity is seeking \$62,500 to build an affordable home on Drumlin Hill Road. The amount requested is half the amount needed and they will be providing the other half. Habitat will hold the mortgage, and a deed restriction will be placed on the property in perpetuity.

CPC Response:

Concerns that were raised included septic concerns, whether this would count towards 40B, where the money goes if the unit sells, would money come back into the town, who would ensure and manage the deed restriction to maintain in perpetuity, and why there were no letters of support.

Mr. Allen responded that a new survey has been performed and the well has been relocated. The house would absolutely count towards 40B. If the unit sold the money would go back to Habitat for Humanity. The deed restriction would be enforced through a collaboration of the Town and HDC, and it was not known that letters of support were needed.

Public Response:

Rena Swezey, Town Assessor informed the Committee that this site has been plagued with numerous issues and questions whether the site is buildable.

Mr. Allen assured the Committee that the septic issue has been rectified and the well relocated. A Title search has already been completed, a meeting has already taken place with the Planning Board, and the perk test has come back fine.

2012-08 Bout well House Repairs – Bonnie Carter (Groton Historic Society)

The Groton Historic Society is seeking \$176,525 to restore the Boutwell house. This building is being used as a museum and houses antiques and artifacts and memorabilia pertaining to Groton's History. The Boutwell House is also listed with the National Register of Historic Buildings. Ms. Carter had pictures showing the poor condition of the building. The building has been plagued with water damage as well plumbing, electrical and insulation problems. Ms. Carter also mentioned that the deed restriction as previously discussed is being processed, but not complete to bring to tonight's meeting.

CPC Response:

Feedback was issued regarding other sources of funds and grants, if the building was going to be handi-cap accessible, if there was a time line available and if the \$176,525 being requested is for maintenance or rehabilitation.

Ms. Carter responded that major fundraisers have been done in the past, and another fundraiser is being looked into. There are also two other sources they will be applying to. One is the Cultural Facilities account and the other is the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The building will definitely be handi-cap accessible, and is considered a rehabilitation project.

Public Response:

There were concerns that this application may be just a band-aid, and they would like to see some proof of cash flow, that after this building is repaired the Historic Society would be able to maintain this building and not seek CPA funds over and over for funding. Rena Swezey, Town Assessor informed the Committee of her surprise at the condition of this building during her last inspection. The building is an integral part of the Town and many times the Assessor's Office and other Town offices direct people there for information or research.

2. New Business

Mr. Roberts has met with the Consultant on the Agricultural Survey. They are now moving into Phase II of the study. After discussions on Phase I, the decision was made to make some corrections. They are dropping a few things in Phase II to concentrate on interviewing farms.

Kathy Miller will e-mail score sheet forms to the Committee as well as a mid-course correction sheet for review at the next meeting.

3. Closing

Mr. DeGroot moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Roberts seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 9:16 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Kathy Miller