

Groton Community Preservation Committee

Minutes of Public Meeting February 7, 2012

Location: Town Hall

Time: 7:00 PM

Members Present: Bob DeGroot (Chairman), Bruce Easom (Vice-Chair), Carolyn Perkins, Mike Roberts, Laurie Smigelski, Richard Hewitt (Clerk)

Members Absent: Dan Emerson

Guests: Nadia Madden, Fran Stanley, Al Collins, Marion Stoddard, David Manugian, David Pitken, Robin Kane, Barbara Ganem, Craig Aumen, Adam Burnett

Meeting called to order at 7:02 PM.

Mr. DeGroot announced there would be some amendments to the agenda. Al Collins is going to be added to the end of the agenda with invoices for the Boutwell project.

1. Public Hearing for FY2013 Project Applications

2013-01 Conservation Fund – Nadia Madden (Conservation Committee)

Nadia Madden gave a brief overview of the Conservation application. The Commission is applying for \$150,000 that will go into the conservation fund. The fund will be used to purchase open space for watershed protection, wildlife protection, wildlife habitat protection and recreational uses.

Ms. Madden presented a brief video presentation which showcased some of the land previously purchased by the Conservation Commission. Properties such as Surrenden Farms, Williams Barn, Fuccillo property and most recently 52 acres near Baddacook pond.

It was stated that the goal is to have between \$750,000 - \$1,000,000 in the Conservation Fund. This amount allows the Town to move quickly when a priority parcel becomes available. This amount is beneficial due to the leverage it allows when applying for grant money.

CPC Response:

Mr. Roberts is well acquainted with the application and supportive as well. A suggestion was made to review the agricultural survey that has been posted on the Groton website, and see if any of the information can be taken into consideration when choosing sites.

Ms. Smigelski was interested in knowing how necessary the amount requested would be in purchasing any of the priority parcels. David Pitkin, Conservation Commission responded that it depends on which property and there are parcels that this amount would be imperative.

Ms. Perkins began by stating that the Planning Board is also in favor of this application and a formal letter of support is forthcoming. The one concern Ms. Perkins had was the lack of a management plan. Ms. Perkins also asked what goals and priorities that are used to judge a property. Mr. Pitkin responded that the open space/recreation plan and the Master Plan are used as guidelines.

Mr. Hewitt asked the question of why the Conservation Committee believes the last two Town Meetings did not go so well. Barbara Ganem, Conservations Commission believes there needs to be more education and efforts in presenting what the Conservation Commission is about and their mission. Mr. Hewitt was in agreement and suggested a visual presentation at Town Meeting. He believes there may be a false perception in Town, that there is already too much land protected. A presentation on what still needs to be protected and why, may be very beneficial.

Public Response:

There was agreement in Mr. Hewitt's observation that more education may be needed. It was discussed that maybe it would be more helpful to present to as many Boards and Committees as possible beforehand to spread the word. Most importantly the difference between land being protected by the Conservation versus New England Forestry Foundation, Audubon Society and Groton Conservation Trust.

Marion Stoddard spoke offering the support of the Greenway Committee. There will be a formal letter of support that will be included in the final application. Ms. Stoddard also stressed the need for wildlife to be preserved as well as the need for rivers and subsidiaries from being re-polluted, especially in water shed areas.

2. Fitch's Bridge – Greenway Committee

David Manugian began the presentation on behalf of the Greenway Committee. Some backdrop was given such as the 2006 CPA application for design plans and a brief history of efforts to date concerning Fitch's Bridge. After years of unsuccessfully resolving the issue of this bridge it is the Greenways objective to come to some conclusion and have the bridge either repaired or replaced. After numerous efforts and investigation into federal funding, the conclusion is that federal funding is not an option and any resolution would have to be locally funded. There were a few options the Greenway has been considering and they wanted to run them by the CPC and hopefully get some additional feedback.

The first option was to seek federal funding and restore the bridge to the original plans for use by pedestrians and horses which would be approximately 2 million. The second option would be to restore the bridge through local funding, which would be slightly less due to the state regulations being less and would cost approximately \$1.5 million. The third option would be to remove the existing bridge and replace it with a new bridge. The new bridge would be in the \$600,000-\$800,000 dollar range.

Mr. Manugian feels it may be beneficial to present this to Town Meeting and see how people feel, as this is important and is in the Master Plan. Mr. Manugian also stated that any support the CPC had to offer would be welcomed.

Discussion continued with many good points being brought up. Fran Stanley pointed out that the time to act is now. The bridge is only getting older and pricing increases the longer we wait. Issues such as how expensive it would be if it fell into the river and had to be removed as well as liability issues if a person were injured due to the disrepair, as many teenagers use this bridge.

The CPC responded that they are unsure the CPA has the kind of funds needed for a project this size. Recommendations were given for more facts to be pulled together and possibly attend the CPC's next meeting scheduled for February 21, 2012. One possibility was to include a questionnaire to be mailed with the electric bills. Have an actual number available for the cost of removing the bridge from the water if the bridge ever did fall in and how much it would be to remove the lead from the water. Also, an approximate number if there were to be an action brought against the town in the event of an injury or death. The more facts available the better.

3. Tarbell School/Country Kids – Robin Kane

Robin Kane owner of Country Kids in West Groton was introduced. Ms. Kane explained to the Committee that she is interested in moving her daycare which is now in the Rivercourt complex into the Tarbell School. Her situation is the renovations are running upwards of \$400,000 - \$500,000 to remove lead and bring the building up to code. She is currently facing three options. The first is purchase the building. The downside to this is she would be taking on the entire cost of the renovation in addition to property taxes of approximately \$10,000. The second option is to rent or lease from the Town. The pro to this would be as a Town owned building it would be more eligible for other sources of funding. The third option would be to apply for a non-profit status. The downside being the Town would not be receiving any revenue in property taxes. She has been looking into different alternatives and it was suggested that since the Tarbell School is a historic building, Community preservation funds may be a possibility. Ms. Kane is in attendance to seek information into the possibility of a future CPA application.

Mr. DeGroot let the Committee know that he had spoken with Kathy from the Community Preservation Coalition. There seems to be key points that will come into play depending on who the owner of the building is. If Ms. Kane were to purchase the building there is always the issue of public funds being used on a private building. The building codes would be less critical. If the Town retained possession of the building, the renovations would have to adhere to historical criteria as well as building codes.

The consensus of the Committee was they would love to see the Tarbell returned to a school. Mr. Easom believes strongly that “preserving” is what the CPA was designed for. Mr. Roberts requested a preservation plan be established. Ms. Perkins mentioned that if CPA funds were to be used, a deed restriction would have to be put in place. It was suggested to meet with people affiliated with the Boutwell project and Grange project for advice as well as the Town Building Inspector. Mr. Hewitt suggested a more detailed and defined description on how this project would benefit the community.

It was agreed that the first step would be a meeting with the Town Manager to determine whether Ms. Kane is going to purchase the building or lease. Ms. Kane agreed to gather some additional facts and report back to the CPC with her findings.

4. Boutwell House – Al Collins

Mr. Collins reported that interior work has been started. They are beginning to work on the plumbing system. There may be a slight decrease in invoices presented to the CPA as work done with the cultural counsel grant money is done. A summer completion date is still the goal.

Mr. Collins asked for permission to purchase a soapstone kitchen sink which is keeping with the original historic design. Ms. Jenkins suggested seeking the CPC’s approval before purchasing, as this was not specifically outlined in the original proposal. The Committee gave their approval, and two Boutwell invoices were signed.

5. Project Updates

2006-11 Lost Lake Basketball Court – N/A

2007-13 GHA-Nashua Rd. – N/A

2010-01 Field of Dreams- Roof for dugouts in, waiting to install the rest of the fence now that the posts are in.

2010-04 Groton Grange – N/A

2011-04 Communitywide Survey – Agriculture – The project is complete. Waiting for final invoice to close out.

2012-01 Housing Trust Fund – FY2012 – Everything has been approved, waiting on the purchase & sale.

2012-04 Historic Records Restoration, Phase 4 – N/A

2012-05 Prescott Reuse Feasibility Assessment – 1st phase complete. Mr. Hewitt briefed on the top 4 options.

The Selectmen are planning a meeting to review phase I with the public.

2012-08 Rehabilitation for Governor Boutwell House – See #4 above

6. Minutes

Mr. Roberts moved to accept the minutes of January 3, 2012 as drafted. Mr. Easom seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

7. Invoices/Documents

Invoice # N/A	Oakfield Research	\$2,245	Agriculture Survey
Invoice # N/A	Oakfield Research	\$765.58	Agriculture Survey
Invoice #17687	Bargmann Hendrie & Archetype	\$3,600	Prescott Reuse
Invoice #62608	Copyland Inc.	\$806.40	Agriculture Survey
Invoice #0323320	Displays2Go	\$563.05	Agriculture Survey
Invoice# Misc.	Habitat Advisory Group	\$2,832.90	Boutwell House
Invoice # N/A	Coalition Dues	\$2,500	

8. New Business

Mr. Roberts announced his resignation to the Committee and asked to have his letter of resignation read into the minutes. The Committee offered their many thanks for all the years Mr. Roberts served to the Community Preservation Committee.

Mr. DeGroot asked the Committee to have their response sheets filled out and sent to Ms. Miller by Friday, so she can forward the information to the Conservation Commission.

9. Closing

Mr. Easom moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Perkins seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 9:38 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Kathy Miller