

Groton Community Preservation Committee
Minutes from July 22, 2013 at 7:00pm
Town Hall, 2nd floor conference room

Members Present: Bob DeGroot, Russ Burke, Bruce Easom, Gineane Haberlin, Laurie Smigelski, Dan Emerson
Members Absent: Richard Hewitt
Others Present: Dawn Dunbar, CPC Administrative Assistant

Member Smigelski called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

1. Boutwell House Project Update – Present: Al Collins

Mr. Collins said that the project was nearing the end. He said they were waiting on the landscape plan for the ADA ramp. He said that so far \$131K had been spent to date on the project which left approximately \$46K left. He figured there would be about \$20K left to return to the CPC once the project was done.

Mr. Collins talked about a scullery, a sink like piece that was used to soak clothing, and how he had found one in an old house and was able to use it to replace one that had originally been in the Boutwell House.

2. Project Updates

- 2013-03 Cons Com Fund – FY13

Member Easom refereed the committee to a status update letter prepared by Barbara Ganem, Conservation Administrator. He said that the \$25K approved at Town Meeting covered a portion of the acquisition costs. He said that they hadn't received the LAND Grant funds yet adding that they had just received word that the State wanted to use FY13 funds and as soon as the books were closed and money was received he would provide a final report to the committee.

Member Smigelski asked if because Mass Audubon had been out to the site if trails with a conservation restriction were being planned. Member Easom said that Paul Funch of the Trails Committee had walked the land and looked at a couple of possible trails. They were planning on taking advantage of a possible trails network.

Member Easom further explained that a contentious matter had come before the Conservation Commission and that was whether or not the Cox/Walker property trails would be opened to snowmobilers. He said that after a 4-2 affirmative vote, the Commission had drafted language to be placed in the conservation restriction stating allowable use of the trails by snowmobilers, which had been given to the Trails Committee for their review and comment. He said that the Commission isn't unanimous but not against it completely. Member Burke asked where the snowmobilers would park and whether or not there were existing trails already. Member Easom said that those were good questions. He did know that a 6ft wide trail would be needed, which might dictate whether or not it was possible. Member Easom wasn't sure about parking adding you might be able to park at Williams Barn but you would need to cross the road.

Member Easom mentioned that the Commission was also looking at 80 acres in East Groton on the Westford town line. He said that would allow them the opportunity to someday have a trail network extending from the Westford town line to the Walker/Cox property.

Member Smigelski said that she could see both sides of the argument for and against allowing snowmobilers. Member Haberlin thought that the fact that it was sensitive land should be considered. Member DeGroot said that he was marginally sympathetic to the snowmobilers but was concerned about the neighborhoods that the parcels would connect and for the trails being used by walkers and bikers. Member Burke wondered whether allowing the trails to be used by snowmobilers would essentially open up the use to other motorized vehicles also. He also questioned whether there would be a parking area and what the house of operation might be for recreation use like that.

Member DeGroot asked whether or not the Conservation Commission was looking for a formal response from the CPC. He said that he was not ready to make a motion at that time but was looking to see if the committee had reached a consensus. Member Emerson said that he had heard that the area was environmentally sensitive and that the management plan could leave the door open to future changes should the use of the trails by snowmobilers not work. Member Burke said that he wasn't sure this fell under the purview of the CPC and was leaning towards leaving it up to the Conservation Committee and Trails Committee to decide. He also didn't feel comfortable putting anything in writing to the Conservation Committee.

Member DeGroot moved that the Groton CPC write a letter in the form of an acknowledgement to the Conservation Committee of the current proposed uses of the Cox/Walker property to include a general consensus of the Board but ultimately defer efforts of proposed uses moving forward to the Conservation Trust. Member Haberlin seconded the motion.

A summary of comments discussed included:

1. Rules dependent on the sensitivity of the land
2. Management plan to serve as tool – define use of land
3. Environmental degradation (ex: vernal pools, habitat)

There was a brief discussion about drafting and reviewing a letter and the timeframe for sending it. Member DeGroot asked if it would be more advantageous if a CPC liaison was to attend the next Conservation meeting.

Member DeGroot rescinded his motion.

Member Burke moved that the CPC authorize Member DeGroot to attend the Conservation Commission's meeting on Thursday, July 25th to relay talking points of that evening's discussion and issues pertaining to the use of snowmobiles on the Cox/Walker property. Member Haberlin seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- 2013-04 - Fitch's Bridge

Member Haberlin said that the bridge was up and looked amazing. She said that they were currently working on creating a punch list. She added that there was an issue with the box culvert to which she was waiting for a status on it. Member Easom asked if they were on budget or if they had to use money set aside in the 20% contingency line item. Member Haberlin said as far as she knew they had not used any money in the contingency fund. She added that they had also stepped up police patrol on the bridge due to people jumping off into the Nashua River. Member Easom asked Member Haberlin if she could attain a cost breakdown. Member Haberlin said she had hoped to have it that night. Member Smigelski asked if they were close to drafting a close out letter. Member Haberlin said "yes."

Member Easom asked the Committee how they would feel about using any leftover money towards the box culvert. Member Haberlin said that that wasn't originally part of the plan and therefore out of the original scope of the project. She thought the DPW might be repairing it out of their budget. A call to Tom Delaney, DPW Superintendent, affirmed that the DPW budget would pay for the work to the box culvert.

- 2014-03 – Lowell Road Generator Replacement

Member Emerson said that he had received an email from Lisa Larrabee that the project was 95% done. They were waiting on an inspection for the warranty to become valid. He added that it moved faster than what he had thought.

- 2014-05 – Ledge Rock Fields

Member Easom said that he had worked over the past 6 weeks with Mr. Phil Jordan and Bryce Brockelman of Groton who was a professional grant writer, to put together the PARC grant. He said that they had completed it and hand delivered it to Boston. They proposed fields on 11 of the 35 acres with 125 parking spaces. He said that Stan Dillis had put together the plan and reached out to Natural Heritage which turned out that there wasn't anything there that would be considered a "show stopper."

Member Easom talked about the section on the score sheet for Green Communities which the Town of Groton was pursuing. A green community would automatically receive 5 points. The Board of Selectmen voted to create an exploratory committee to work on the creation of Groton becoming a green community.

3. Minutes

Member Easom moved to approve the minutes of 5/13/13 as drafted. Member Emerson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Budget Update

Member Easom said that he had recently checked the Blue Book for the addition of June's numbers. No updates had been posted when he last checked. He added that there had also been no word from the Coalition on the \$25M promised to CPA communities if there was a surplus in the State budget of more than \$25M. If Groton was to receive this additional match, they could anticipate approximately \$200,000 in additional funds. Member DeGroot asked if this was only a one year deal. Member Easom answered "yes, it was a one year deal."

5. CPC Plan and Fall Meeting Dates

Member Burke said there had been discussion with regard to the Community Preservation Plan that the deadline dates be made clearer and possibly allow for additional deadlines when it came to receipt of feedback, etc. He suggested asking Ms. Dunbar to make proposed date changes for discussion at their next meeting on August 12th.

Member Easom asked Member Burke if the Planning Board had any interest in submitting an application. Member Burke said that they typically didn't get involved in projects like those presented to the CPC. He mentioned that he was working on ways in which to increase connectivity from the Country Club to Mill Run Plaza by means of adding additional sidewalks for example. He wasn't sure how it would relate to the CPA adding it may be considered open space/recreation. Member Haberlin said that the Trails Committee might be a good applicant for something like that. Member Easom said that he would be happy to talk to the Trails Committee about a possible application. Member Haberlin said that the Park Commission was looking at relocating the playground at the Prescott School to Cutler Field. She said that the Country Club could benefit from CPA funds to perform updates like handicap access. Member Haberlin said she would be happy to speak with the GM at the Country Club. Member DeGroot said that he would speak with the Greenway Committee to see if they had any projects worth applying for CPA funds for. Member DeGroot said he would also reach out to Mike Bouchard, the Town Clerk, to see if he was in need of additional document preservation. He added that the Historic Commission had a couple of projects in their sights.

Member Burke moved to adjourn at 9:20pm. Member Easom seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Dunbar
CPC Administrative Assistant