



**TOWN OF
GROTON**
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

Community Preservation Committee
Russell Burke, Chair – Planning Board
Anna Eliot, Vice Chair – Parks Comm.
Bruce Easom, Treasurer – Conservation Comm.
Robert DeGroot, Clerk – Historical Comm.
Daniel Emerson – Housing Auth.
Carolyn Perkins – at large
Richard Hewitt – at large

MEETING MINUTES

Date: Monday, November 13th, 2023
Time: 7:00 PM
Location: 2nd Floor Meeting Room, Groton Town Hall
Members Present: Bruce Easom, Daniel Emerson, Russell Burke, Anna Eliot, Carolyn Perkins,
Richard Hewitt, Robert DeGroot
Members Absent:
Others Present: Takashi Tada, Peter Cunningham, Becky Pine, Fran Stanley, Olin Lathrop,
Connie Sartini, Paul Funch, Judy Anderson, Michael LaTerz, Phil Francisco,
Aubrey Theall, Joshua Vollmar, Richard Chilcoat, Groton Residents

The meeting was called to order by chair, Russell Burke at 7:00 PM.

FY25 CPA APPLICATIONS- PRELIMINARY FEEDBACK

- 2025-01 Conservation Fund FY25- Olin Lathrop addressed the committee to describe the Conservation Commission's application for \$400,000 in order for the commission to purchase conservation land with good ecological value. Anna Eliot asked if the commission uses any of the funds to purchase conservation restrictions instead of land acquisitions, to which Olin Lathrop responded yes, they have some transactions like this in process. Dan Emerson asked for clarification on the conservation restriction process. Carolyn Perkins asked how much money the Conservation Commission currently has, to which Olin Lathrop shared approximately \$1.8 million, though much of that is a private donation in order to purchase a specific parcel of land, with other acquisitions in the works. Mr. Lathrop also discussed the amounts spent from the FY24 Conservation Fund project. Richard Hewitt makes note of the outstanding efforts made by the commission to utilize state grants in conjunction with CPC funds to leverage land. Olin Lathrop also shared the ability of the commission to work with the Department of Fish and Wildlife as well the Conservation Trust to gain conservation restrictions on land.
- 2025-02 Cow Pond Play Fields- Anna Eliot stated that she submitted this CPA application in anticipation of the completion of the FY22 Feasibility Study for the Cow Pond Field area, to create a master plan and design concept for this recreational area. She shared that there has been a survey shared to the public to see what residents would want done with the area. Dan Emerson noted that the application form that was submitted was the full application form, that it was unsigned, and that the amount request was missing on line 14B. Anna Eliot stated that the amount is \$30,000 and she will sign right away. Carolyn Perkins asked if the project that was approved for FY22 was to determine with MEPA what is possible with the area and if this FY25 application is to incorporate the findings from the

prior project, to create a design. Anna Eliot shared that is part of it, though the FY22 Feasibility Study also included assessment of other Park Commission parcels. Carolyn Perkins asked for more detail on the project in the next application, and for information on responsible party for this application. Anna Eliot clarified that the application is intended to hire a consultant to create the design, and that the Park Commission would manage the application. Bob DeGroot mentioned that he is a proponent of doing this work at Cow Pond Field, asking Ms. Eliot if she thinks an overhaul of the area is possible. Anna Eliot shared that the Park Commission has been working since 2014 to make this area safer and more accessible, and that this project will create a design to present to the town. Richard Hewitt asked for a map with the application, clear wishes for the area, as well as a traffic study. Bruce Easom stated that the application needed to be on the preliminary proposal form and encouraged that all applicants follow instructions carefully, though she stated that she was given the incorrect form from the CPC administrator.

- 2025-03 Milestone Markers Restoration- Michael LaTerz, on behalf of the Historical Commission, presented the project, requesting \$10,000 to restore the milestone markers throughout town. Bruce Easom asked questions regarding a former project that involved colonial markers, that was not completed. Russell Burke asked if all 27 markers were formerly restored or verified. Mr. LaTerz shared that they have all been documented and this project will address damages to the milestone markers in the past 10 or so years, and how he plans to protect these milestone markers from snow removal etc. moving forward. Dan Emerson noted that this project also used the full project form not the preliminary form. Anna Eliot mentioned that the new CPC administrator has been hoping to make the form more user friendly. Carolyn Perkins shared that Mr. LaTerz has done a great job and that the use of the form has given him a head start, as the full project application has already been worked. Bob DeGroot commended Michael LaTerz on an excellent application and noted that the Groton Historical Commission has a great track record.
- 2025-04 Sustainable Groton Funding- Phil Francisco addressed the committee to initiate two new projects, as part of the sustainable Groton initiative. The first being a pollinator corridor, in conjunction with other town organizations. The corridor would also include an educational element for the community. The second being an addition to the greenhouse gas emission survey for the town of Groton. This work would survey how much carbon is sequestered in open lands in town. This would tie into the states zero emissions initiative and would provide an educational element as well. Anna Eliot stated that they might consider the solar field as part of the pollinator area, and to consider invasive species as part of the maintenance for these areas. Carolyn Perkins asked if, as a multiyear project, there would be additional CPA applications in the future, to which Mr. Francisco stated they would also be seeking grant funding. Carolyn Perkins also hopes to confirm that the carbon sequestration assessment is part of the community preservation act, to which Russell Burke stated that he would reach out to counsel. Mrs. Perkins also stated that there should be a management plan with the final application. Bob DeGroot clarified that the carbon sequestration would be assessed on all town lands or land with permanent restrictions. Richard Hewitt asked exactly what the money will be spent on, and to include that in the final proposal, he also shares Carolyn Perkins concern about when the second part of the proposal is admissible, lastly suggesting letters of support. Bruce Easom shared the Town Counsel opinion on the pollinator corridor garden, which the response was that it did meet the requirement for CPA eligibility.
- 2025-05 Prescott School Building Assessment- Bruce Easom shared firstly that he is no longer a member of the board for Friends of Prescott, and stated that the strategy is to put in place a long-term plan in place for the building. Mark Haddad put together this application together in order to form an assessment. Bob DeGroot asked if this application builds on other assessment work for this building, in order to move forward in planning future use. Bruce Easom stated that the Bargman report gave potential uses for the building and ways in which to prepare for those uses. Richard Hewitt shared his concern about the wording, "replacement" of the building in application. Anna Eliot shared that

the Bargman report also included zoning changes etc., and her proposed new narrative would be to seek new investors, who would create revenue for the town, in considering the use of the Prescott School building. Connie Sartini asked how much the assessment would cost, to which Russell Burke stated \$100,000. Russell Burke also shared opinion of Town Counsel, that the building condition assessment would be permissible for CPA funding.

- 2025-06 COA Outdoor Fitness Court- Becky Pine and Peter Cunningham offered information on this application. Becky Pine shared that the national organization who builds these fitness courts reached out to the Select Board, the organization provides the court itself, though the town would need to find funding to cover the cost of the site, foundation, and building of the court. Peter Cunningham shared that Blue Cross Blue Shield provided a \$50,000.00 grant for the court, and the site in consideration is the former Squannacook Sportsman's Club. Carolyn Perkins stated that the application asks for 237,500 of CPA funds and would like a breakdown of this number, and Peter Cunningham described the look for the court, with fitness stations. The committee members stated that they are looking for greater clarity in the final proposal. Olin Lathrop spoke regarding the conservation restriction at the Squannacook Sportsman's Club, sharing that this would not be a quick process. Peter Cunningham stated that the working group could work toward making a clear proposal regarding that site. Connie Sartini asked if there was any liability with the fitness court, to which Russ Burke stated that it would be similar to playgrounds, pickleball courts etc. Dan Emerson stated that this proposal might be premature and needs more work, though Mark Haddad would be the best resource of information on the application. Anna Eliot asked who would maintain the site in the future. Richard Hewitt shared that he agrees with Dan Emerson regarding the applications prematurity, though he wonders if there is a better site for this fitness court.
- 2025-07 Squannacook River Rail Trail Phase II Permitting- The committee shared that the applicant has done great work on prior sections. Carolyn Perkins asked that a member from Groton be on the application. Members provided positive feedback, Richard Hewitt mentioned that connecting to Ayer for commuters would be beneficial.
- 2025-08 Bancroft Castle Preservation Study- Aubrey Theall and Joshua Vollmar from the Historical Commission spoke on this project, in order to preserve the remains of the Bancroft Castle, recently a tree has fallen and the site is deteriorating over time. Mr. Vollmar stated that in order preserve this valuable asset, this would be the assessment of the site as phase one and the second phase would be the actual stabilization of the site, as a future application. Anna Eliot confirms that the town should not carry all of the burden for preservation as the site is privately owned. Joshua Vollmar shared that the Webber family has had a conversation with the Historical Commission and they would be asked to contribute to the project. Members of the committee shared positive feedback as the site is an asset to the town, Carolyn Perkins mentioned that other sources are available for grant funding. Bob DeGroot suggested getting a letter of support from the Webber family as well as other letters of support. Richard Hewitt mentioned the difficulty of parking at the site, which isn't part of the application. Bruce Easom stated that in the full application he would like to see a paragraph on the interest of the Conservation Commission and MassDEP as they hold conservation restrictions on this parcel, as well as sharing the importance of stabilizing the leaning wall. Joshua Vollmar shared that they have already reached out to the conservation commission and received their support. Becky Pine confirmed that the site needs proper stabilization that is not hazardous. Olin Lathrop shared that, as a citizen, he wishes to ensure that if the town spends money on the site, that a future owner could not damage the site. The suggestion would be to add a historic preservation restriction in exchange for the funds, as is required.
- 2025-09 Property Security, Safety, and Preservation- Richard Chilcoat addressed the committee as President of the Groton Historical Society, discussing the application, which has multiple small requests under the application, including security lighting at the Boutwell House, Russell Burke states that light pollution is a concern so to consider downward facing

lighting. Bob DeGroot asked if two historic letters of support are needed for the application, though Russell Burke stated that it is not obligated. Bob DeGroot also confirmed that the window component is restoration and not maintenance. Richard Hewitt suggested motion detected lighting, which Mr. Chilcoat agreed, with on demand lighting for evening events.

- 2025-10 Housing Fund Request- Fran Stanley and Becky Pine of the Affordable Housing Trust, addressed the committee to provide information on Groton's current available affordable housing as well as projections, she shared that they are looking at town owned land, of which there is a limited supply, working potentially in conjunction with the Conservation Commission, to build homes. Dan Emerson made mention of the 500 Main Street project as affordable housing is a challenge for the town. Bob DeGroot asked if this would be a project that is recurring. Fran Stanley and Becky Pine shared that the preliminary proposal is for \$300,000.00 and that due to the flux of need, that they may increase their request to \$400,000.00 as the funds are available. Fran Stanley shared that a larger sum could potentially yield a project that would attract state funding as well. Russell Burke shared that there are other ways to leverage funding, mentioning workforce housing. Fran Stanley discussed varying need as well as funding potential. Richard Hewitt wishes to ensure that the Affordable Housing Trust keeps the accounting is straight on these funds. Bruce Easom suggested, when observing other towns housing solutions within the commonwealth, that a better model for this work is to utilize CHAPA, Citizens Housing and Planning Association, with CPA funds to create affordable housing. Anna Eliot shared that using 40R in conjunction with the town of Ayer, at the end of Shirley Street.
- 2025-11 Housing Coordinator- Takashi Tada presented the application to fund the 25 hour per week Housing Coordinator role for FY25, there were no questions regarding this recurring application.
- 2025-12 Tools and Equipment for Building and Enhancing Trails- Paul Funch presented this project to the committee, in the amount of \$15,000.00, in order to build and repair trails, as volunteers often use their own tools and would be able to do more work, more easily with proper equipment. Mr. Funch shared that the Trails Committee has not received state monies for equipment, and that most is done with donations or funds received from trail race events. Russell Burke shared that the response from Town Counsel, which indicated that the proposal would be permissible due to the nature of the work, building, rehabilitation and restoration of trails, though it is on the margins. The committee gave positive feedback and commended the good work done by the trails committee to benefit the town. The equipment will need to be marked clearly as town equipment and catalogued.

Other Discussion- Bruce Easom shared that he placed a CPA sign at the Middle School Track.

NEW PROJECT UPDATES

- 2024-01 Housing Trust Funds Request (CAROLYN PERKINS) No updates discussed.
- 2024-02 Preservation of Lake Massapoag (ROBERT DEGROOT) No updates discussed.
- 2024-03 Conservation Fund FY2024 (BRUCE EASOM) No updates discussed.
- 2024-04 Rebuild Major League Baseball Diamond (ANNA ELIOT) No updates discussed.
- 2024-05 Construct 2 Softball Diamonds at Cutler (ANNA ELIOT) No updates discussed.
- 2024-07 Housing Coordinator FY2024 (CAROLYN PERKINS) No updates discussed.
- 2024-09 Squannacook River Rail Trail (SRRT) (BRUCE EASOM) No updates discussed.

REVIEW CONTINUED PROJECT UPDATES

- 2019-08 Duck Pond Restoration (RICHARD HEWITT) No updates discussed.
- 2022-01 Maintenance Shed Restoration (ROBERT DEGROOT) No updates discussed.
- 2022-02 Feasibility Study for Cow Pond Fields; Woitowicz Field; Cutler Field (ANNA ELIOT) No updates discussed.
- 2022-04 Affordable Housing Site Assessment Study (DANIEL EMERSON) No updates discussed.

- 2022-09 Groton Dunstable Natural Field Restoration Plan (BRUCE EASOM) No updates discussed.
- 2023-04 Nashua Riverwalk (CAROLYN PERKINS) No updates discussed.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

- Sign Invoices/ Project letters- The committee signed any project letters and invoices.

MEETING MINUTES

Committee members reviewed minutes from October 30th 2023. Bob DeGroot moved to approve the meeting minutes from Monday, October 30th, 2023. Carolyn Perkins seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Bruce Easom moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:31PM. Carolyn Perkins seconded, and the motion carried by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted by Katie Berry, Inter-Departmental Assistant

Approved: ____11/27/23_____