

**PLANNING BOARD
FEBRUARY 4, 2016
MINUTES**

Chairman Perkins called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM at the Town Hall

Members present: Perkins, Barringer, Burke, Giger, Vega and Wilson

Member absent: Svarczkopf

MRPC TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Board met with David Manugian, the Town's representative to the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) to discuss the Amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) dated January 14, 2016. Mr. Manugian explained the review process by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) and the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) required for the utilization of Federal Highway Funds. The unified planning work program for transportation projects is reviewed annually. The proposed amendment of January 2016 does not impact Groton. Projects, such as the resurfacing of Route 119 (a state road), are typically on the TIP list. Smaller projects such as bike paths and sidewalks are often funded based upon criteria including safety, congestion, economic vitality, and environmental sustainability. Mr. Manugian said the Town should work with MassDOT on these smaller projects.

Member Giger asked if Route 111 and 225, former county roads that are now town roads, are eligible. Mr. Manugian said, "Yes." Projects require 10-25% engineering design to be put on the TIP list.

Member Giger asked about transit items including buses and vans. Mr. Manugian said regional transit projects are funded through the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority under different programs.

Member Barringer asked if the Towns pay for design of road construction projects. Mr. Manugian said, "Usually." The application process is open and usually takes about one year.

The Board thanked Mr. Manugian for providing an update on the process.

LETTER TO CPC - FRIENDS OF PRESCOTT SCHOOL

Bruce Easom, a member of the Friends of Prescott School, requested a letter of support from the Planning Board for the application for Community Preservation Committee (CPC) funds for improvements to Prescott School. The funds will be used to upgrade systems and bring the building up to code. A fire suppression system will be added only on the top floor, a 4" water line will be installed to support the fire suppression system, doors and stairways will be repaired or replaced to meet code, ADA parking signs will be added, and the basement will be renovated. The Friends of Prescott are asking for \$169,800 for the proposed improvements.

Mr. Easom said the plan includes keeping the Groton Dunstable Regional School District (GDRSD) Superintendent's offices on the third floor, a community center on the main floor, and commercial use (e.g. restaurant) in the basement.

Chairman Perkins asked what relationship the Friends of Prescott has with the town-appointed Municipal Building Committee for Prescott and whether the Friends have the authority to apply for CPC funds. Mr. Easom said the Friends of Prescott is a private, not-for-profit organization that can submit an application with the support of the landowner. The Town Manager will be the project manager and the work will be done by the Town DPW.

Member Barringer asked about the long-term vision for the Prescott School. Mr. Easom said it would be one-third for GDRSD, one-third for the community uses, and one-third for commercial use.

Member Barringer asked if the proposed use would be revenue neutral for the town. Mr. Easom said, "Yes," with CPC funds for upgrades.

Member Giger noted that there are deficiencies with the electrical system and an elevator to the third floor is required for ADA compliance. Mr. Easom said the requirement for an elevator depends upon the configuration of the floor plans.

Member Burke asked if the GDRSD signed a lease for the space. Mr. Easom said there is nothing formal in place yet.

Member Burke asked why the Friends of Prescott is the applicant rather than the Municipal Committee. Mr. Easom said it is not in the charge of the Committee.

Member Burke said the vision for the use of the building should be ratified by Town Meeting. Mr. Easom said the Municipal Building Committee must make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen first.

Member Burke asked about use of the building by Evans on the Common, a retail shoe and clothing store in Townsend. Mr. Easom said the Friends of Prescott are not in a position to offer space in the building.

Member Burke said the Economic Development Committee voted not to support the application to the CPC because it is pre-mature and more specific plans for utilization of the building are needed.

Member Burke asked who prepared the cost estimates. Mr. Easom said Halsey Platt.

Member Vega said this is a creative use of the building with the lease of the building used to cover expenses. Financing such a project is a major hurdle. Mr. Easom said the Friends plan to request CPC funding for the project until FY 2021 when the Surrenden Farms debt is paid off.

Member Giger asked if the Friends have a letter of support from GDRSD. Mr. Easom said, "Not yet." It is up to the Board of Selectmen to communicate with its tenants.

Member Wilson asked if the code compliance projects would be done in phases. Mr. Easom said, "Yes," because the trigger for code compliance is based upon assessed value.

Member Wilson asked the cost of the first phase and the cost over time. Mr. Easom said the first phase is \$170,000, and the cost over time is \$2 million.

The motion was made by Barringer, seconded by Wilson to send a letter of support of the Friends of Prescott application to the Community Preservation Committee. The motion passed with Barringer, Vega, Wilson, and Perkins in favor; Giger opposed, and Burke abstaining.

COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

Chairman Perkins said she and Land Use Director Michelle Collette attended a Complete Streets Training sponsored by Bay State Roads at Devens on January 27, 2016. The Baker Administration press release dated February 1, 2016 on the Complete Streets Program states:

“A Complete Street is one that provides safe and accessible options for all travel modes – walking, biking, transit and vehicles – for people of all ages and abilities. The Complete Streets Funding Program includes three primary requirements that deem a municipality eligible for up to \$50,000 for technical assistance, and up to \$400,000 for construction funding with additional consideration in the qualification process for Community Compact communities.”

Chairman Perkins said the Board of Selectmen must adopt a Complete Streets Policy for the Town to be eligible for funding. The 2012 Comprehensive Master Plan Transportation Element contains goals and objects based upon Complete Streets. Members Barringer, Giger, and Vega all said they would be interested in working on this project.

The motion was made by Wilson, seconded by Barringer, to send a letter to the Board of Selectmen requesting time on the Selectmen’s agenda to discuss the adoption of a Complete Street policy. The motion passed unanimously.

LETTER TO CPC - HOUSING COORDINATOR

Land Use Director Michelle Collette informed the Board that the application to the CPC to fund the Housing Coordinator position will increase by two hours per week because Devens has approached the Town about sharing services of the Housing Coordinator. Town Manager Mark Haddad is working with Peter Lowitt and Thatcher Kezer from the MassDevelopment and the Devens Enterprise Commission to draft an agreement for services.

The motion was made by Barringer, seconded by Wilson, to write a letter of support for the Housing Coordinator CPC application. The motion passed unanimously.

MINUTES

The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of January 14 and January 21, 2016.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette, AICP
Land Use Director/Town Planner