

## MINUTES

### COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

January 20, 2015

**PRESENT:** Philip McKnight (Chairman), Linda Conway, Peter Fohlin, Jane Patton, Mark Reinhardt, Michael Sussman, Jeffrey Thomas, Chris Winters

The Meeting called to order at 7 p.m.

The committee agreed to follow recent practice in by deliberating and voting upon the applications before us in two stages. In the first, we would take each application in turn, voting on whether it met CPA requirements. In the second, for those surviving the first vote, we would decide whether to fund the project and at what level.

#### **Initial, Qualifying Round**

1. Williamstown Historical Museum, \$11,219.40 for conservation of the Proprietors' Meeting Book. Ms. Currie provided information concerning last year's visitation numbers and then circulated images of returns, w/ project cost of X, and funding request of Y. Ms. Currie brings visitation n items that were conserved with funds granted by CPC last year.

Chairman McKnight called for the first (qualifying) vote, the motion was seconded, and after a brief discussion, it passed 8-0.

2. Trustees of Reservation, \$15,400 for restoration of items at the Guest House at Field Farm. Mr. Wilson provided new, clarifying information about which items at the Guest House at Field Farm would be refurbished at what cost, although the total amount of the request for funds was unchanged. Mr. Thomas asked for clarification from CPC member Ms. Conway on the Historical Commission's assessment of the historical value of the work. She replied that the Commission stressed the importance of the midcentury international style and the integrity of the house, which is furnished now as it was then. Mr. Bloedel's pieces are important in part because they fit within the house he had built. Chairmen McKnight asked if we should then be satisfied that the request met the requirements of statute? Ms. Conway answered, yes, as the committee's letter certifies. Mr. Thomas asked who would supervise the work, verify its adequacy, etc. Mr. Wilson replied that he would do it, verifying through the use of historical, current, and post-restoration photographs. Mr. Fohlin asked what assurance there is that the property won't move, as the CPC has never funded anything so mobile as furniture. Mr. Wilson explained that the gift to the Trustees says, in writing, that the pieces must stay with them. Mr. Fohlin suggested it might be useful to have the document in town files. With a motion and second, the application was brought to a vote and approved 8-0.

3. Sand Springs, Heating Pool and Increasing Accessibility. Ms. Kessler presented a revised application. The new total calculated for the project was \$21,025.78, with the amount requested from the CPC down to 18,923.20—a drop of about \$8,500. Kessler explained that the revision and savings were due to additional research on heating needs. With regard to four questions asked by the CPC last time, she submitted documentation showing that the Sand Springs qualifies under the recreational land/rehabilitation category and counts as non-commercial; she also explained the scholarship program in detail. In response to concerns from the previous meeting about whether the requested funds would be sufficient to cover heating for a season, Ms. Kessler noted that Sand Springs would carefully manage the heating budget, via meters, and limit BTUs that go into pool such that they meet their budget. The board had allocated \$5,000 to cover fuel for the first year. Invoking a letter from Stuart Saginor, Chairman McKnight supported Ms. Kessler's view that the project qualifies as "non-commercial."

Mr. Fohlin asked whether the scholarships are for youth? Ms. Kessler replied that the reduced prices are for youth center campers, plus those—children or adults—who meet certain criteria and want to learn to swim. Mr. Thomas asked if Ms. Kessler could estimate how close \$5,000 of fuel would get the pool to the targeted temperature of 84 degrees, every day for the season. Bill Greenwald of Greenwald Pragmatics, hired to consult on the project, answered for Sand Springs: he called it a "bet you lunch" estimate, which is to say middling probability that the target can be sustained for a season, but it is *certain* that the pool will be much closer to the Red Cross standards, and thus better for lessons, with the new project than without it. Mr. Fohlin asked, If the town is investing 90% to ensure RC standards, then why not run it at those standards until out of fuel/money, and then stop the season earlier? There was a sustained give and take with Ms. Kessler, at which point Mr. Fohlin asked, instead, "If your budget turns out to be exceeded, do you have reserves you could tap?" Indicating that \$5,000 was 4% of the annual budget, Ms. Kessler replied that they have sufficient reserves. A motion for vote was made, and seconded. By a vote of 7 in favor and 1 abstention, the committee voted that the project qualifies as eligible for funding.

Chairman McKnight discussed the figures in budget spreadsheet to establish what the committee would have in coming years we were to fund these requests. Mr. Winters, however, pointed out that the decisions we make are among not only these three proposals but also involve weighing them against the advantages of saving now to do something bigger in the future. A vote not to fund, he argued, is a vote for future flexibility and higher priority items, so a no vote does not mean that a project is a bad project. Ms. Patton agreed in principle, but countered that we don't know that a future committee will allocate money to "better" projects, since this year's members can't bind what they do. Mr. Fohlin observed that we can reserve funds for a specific category, taking proposal to Town Meeting. Mr. Sussman asked whether Mr. Winters was making a general observation or speaking to funding concerns about which, as a new member, Mr. Sussman was not aware. Mr. Winters answered that, while he did not know what future needs will be, he did know there will be big, expensive needs, adding "Not chimneys but, say, 100 acres of property." Mr. Thomas added that it's easier to fund things if we have the money than to not fund them, given the social relations well all have with each other in the town.

Chairman McKnight pointed out that our \$10,000 set asides for each category is already covered by our payment of the Cable Mills bond, and with that the committee turned to voting on whether to fund the projects, and at what level.

### **Final, Allocating Round**

1. Williamstown Historical Museum. At Mr. Fohlin's request, Ms. Currie agreed to reduce the Museum's request from \$11,219.40, to \$11,219. As the Committee weighed in on whether to fund the request, Mr. Reinhardt commented that it would be penny wise and pound foolish to let such an important document from town history decay. Mr. Sussman and Ms. Conway concurred, and Mr. Thomas noted that the Museum has proved a good custodian of last year's funding. From the audience, Ms. Leach spoke to earlier concerns of the CPC about the Museum's outreach efforts by noting that the Museum raised \$1,750 to produce a booklet, involving members of the community, including High School students. Motion called and seconded, then passed 8-0.

Ms. Currie indicated that the project should be completed by June of 2016, after a brief discussion of whether to extend the deadline to September of that year, the committee decided to let June stand.

#### 2. Trustees of the Reservation.

The motion to support the request of \$15,400 was moved and seconded. Mr. Fohlin worried that this is a case where an applicant approaches the CPC as the funding source of first resort when we should be the funder of last resort. He distinguished this case from the precarious financial situation and concern to preserve town resources that marked the Historical Museum's request. He asked what would be the Trustees' fallback if we were to vote no. Mr. Wilson said he did not know, pointing out that the Trustees had been seeking funding from various sources for the restoration at Field Farm since 2008. Asked for specifics, he said that multiple private donors had been approached but had declined. He explained that a total of 26 pieces in the Guest House need conservation and stressed that the CPC had been approached for *these* pieces because they were the ones in public areas. Ms. Conway reiterated the Historical Commission's sense of the importance of the pieces and the property. Mr. Reinhardt asked how the pieces were assessed: was this just a comment on the global importance of the property? Did it engage the quality of the pieces made by Mr. Bloedel? Ms. Conway replied that the Commission concluded that it's important that the house at Field Farm remains as it was—and that the pieces are in fact of notable quality. Mr. Wilson added that Mr. Bloedel's work had appeared in design magazines and had earned respect, at least in the domain hobbyist manufacture. Ms. Conway also noted that \$12,000 of the request was for woodwork, while Mr. Wilson noted that only some of the furniture covered is Bloedel's.

Mr. Thomas asked the size of the Trustees operating budget for the property. Mr. Wilson didn't know specifically, but could say that for properties of this type the budgets range between \$100,000 and \$300,000. Mr. Thomas noted that the property brings a lot, including outside funding to the community. When he asked if other CPCs in the area have funded Trustee properties, Mr. Wilson answered that both Stockbridge and Gt. Barrington

had done so. Mr. Winters asked if the Trustees were likely to be back before the Williamstown CPC with another request next year. Mr. Wilson imagined that was probable.

The allocation was moved and seconded, then passed by a vote of 6-1-1. Mr. Fohlin reiterated the importance of the Trustees' sharing the relevant documents. Chairman McKnight asked if the Selectmen should handle the documents. Mr. Fohlin affirmed this as long as the CPC thought it necessary. That was clearly the committee's opinion, so Chairman McKnight directed the secretary to ensure that the minutes reflected that wish.

3. Sand Springs. The Motion to allocate \$18,923 was moved and seconded. After praising the excellence of what has happened in the revival of Sand Springs. Mr. Reinhardt noted that the pool had been unheated for roughly a century and then asked whether, amidst growing concern about Fossil fuels, it was appropriate to allocate funds to start heating the pool. Mr. Fohlin wondered whether the CPC could begin tending to climate change immediately *after* approving this project. Ms. Kessler then noted that Sand Springs hopes to mitigate the environmental impact by conducting an energy audit to minimize consumption of propane and electricity at pool *and* by sponsoring a community solar project. Mr. Thomas expressed astonishment at the number of private pools in our area—noting that he had one of them—and argued that, "If you are going to heat a pool, you ought to heat the community pool." Mr. Fohlin reminded members that the town is demolishing the pool at the Spruces. He expressed his admiration scholarship program as well, and then noted that he had been looking for a project to vote no on, and failing. But we in town, including the CPC, had twice turned down the opportunity to buy the Sand Springs pool because we didn't think it was a business the town ought to be in, and so Mr. Fohlin said he was heartened that Sand Springs had taken the project on and we have now a community pool.

The Committee then voted to approve the pool, 5 voting yes, 2 no, and one abstention.

There followed a brief discussion of the desirability of having a meeting to bring back the last year's grantees. Mr. Fohlin proposed speaking with representatives of Fairfield farms, the Affordable Housing Trust, and Highland Woods. Mr. Winters added that we should make clear that we accept all of this year's recipients to return next year. There was general agreement on both points.

The next meeting was scheduled for 2/24/15. The previous meeting's minutes were approved.