

APPROVED

Community Preservation Committee

Monday, January 11, 2021

5:00 PM

Remote Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present: Dr. Peter Kurzberg, Chair Diane Francis Darryl Mikami
Mark Preziosi, V-Chair Ron Frazier
Maria Bonfiglioli Marta Googins

Also Present: Melissa SantucciRozzi, Interim Director
Nicole Taub, Town Solicitor

Dr. Peter Kurzberg calls the meeting to order and welcomes Melissa SantucciRozzi to the meeting. The Interim Director explains that all votes taken this evening need to be Roll Call votes, due to having our meetings on Zoom. **Interim Director SantucciRozzi** proceeds to take attendance for the January 11, 2021 meeting roll call: Dr. Kurzberg – here, Maria Bonfiglioli – here, Diane Francis – here, Ron Frazier – here, Marta Googins – here, Darryl Mikami – here, Mark Preziosi - here. All Members are in attendance. The Chair provides a reminder that this meeting is being recorded.

New Business

Chairman Kurzberg explains that the first item is somewhat of a traditional item for the Committee and is related to Community Preservation Committee Priorities for 2021. Dr. Kurzberg wonders is the Committee wants to address this now or do they want to go through **“Old Business and Project Updates”** first and then come back to this. It might be helpful to get a refresher of where we are with everything.

Member Frazier states it sounds good. Member Preziosi agrees that we should see where we are at before we designate priorities. Member Bonfiglioli agrees. Chairman Kurzberg states we will jump down to **“Old Business and Project Updates”**. Chairman Kurzberg wants to thank Melissa for doing a quick update for the Committee and give her an opportunity to review the list and address any questions.

Old Business-Project Updates

East Braintree Little League – Watson Park:

The Interim Director explains that this project was recently put forward by the East Braintree Little League. Andrew Berman was the proponent along with the Recreation Department. Since that time, Mayor Kokoros has met with Mr. Berman, and there is a desire in conjunction with the Recreation Department to maybe take a little look at what we have for fields in the community, inventory that and see if there is a way to better spread out that funding to improve more than what is being currently proposed. This is actually on hold and will not be going forward to the Council for a vote on an appropriation at this time.

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Dr. Kurzberg asks if that means nothing will happen this year. The Interim Director is uncertain; she got this update from both the Mayor and Chris Griffin in the Recreation Department. She will continue to inquire as to the status and will also evaluate if there is a more holistic and encompassing plan that comes forward from the Recreation Department and/or any of the baseball leagues.

Member Preziosi has one question and asks, when the Mayor is talking about a broader sense, is he talking about just the Watson Park facility or town-wide. The Interim Director thinks it might be town-wide to better distribute the fields among various leagues.

Liberty Grove Unreserved Purchase:

The Interim Director advises that this particular proposal has been on and off the table since the beginning of the year with a variety of proposals. As you are aware the Committee funded a land purchase that included the dwelling at 1006 Liberty Street as well as .8 acres of land. The Town and Liberty Grove LLC have an executed Purchase and Sale Agreement. The Applicant, Liberty Grove LLC, has submitted an Approval Not Required Subdivision Plan that will be endorsed by the Planning Board tomorrow night. That Plan will create the two pieces of land. The front piece will be the development parcel retained by Liberty Grove LLC. The back piece will include the dwelling and the Open Space areas. In addition, prior to the purchase of any land with Community Preservation Funds, the Town must complete Environmental Review, and on Friday we authorized Weston & Sampson to start that review. So the parcels are being created, the Purchase & Sale has been signed and the Environmental Review is underway. This is moving along very nicely, although we did have some hiccups with an abutter having an appeal against the Town for the rezoning. There was also a refiling of the 40B application, but we are happy to report that has been withdrawn. The plan that was discussed in the spring is very much alive and moving forward as intended. It is very exciting and reassuring to know that we were able to steer that course.

Dr. Kurzberg asks, besides the CVS portion, are there two parcels next to that. Dr. Kurzberg thought there were three parcels in total. The Interim Director explains there are three pieces in total, and those three pieces are 1006 Liberty Street, 357 Grove Street and 365 Grove Street. Those three pieces will be combined into two pieces – the front portion of about 1.5 acres that Liberty Grove LLC will retain and the back piece which is about 1.8 acres, which the Town will be purchasing.

Armstrong Dam Public Access Project:

The Interim Director explains that Kelly Phelan, Conservation Planner, provided this update. This particular project is in permitting currently in front of the Conservation Commission. They will be going out to bid as soon as that permitting is completed and looking to start construction in the fall. This is on a very restricted timeline due to the restrictions with fisheries at certain times of the year. Hopefully this all works out for this year; otherwise, they may in fact have to wait until next fall to start construction.

Member Diane Francis reacted very positively to the removal of two dams, the improvement of the river, removal of a pond and also a public access way. They were asked to come back to the Conservation Commission because there was quibbling about how many trees, how many bushes, how much wildflower seed mix and that sort of thing. Generally, the project is very positive and will add a lot to the community.

Member Bonfiglioli asks if it is possible that the construction is going to start this June. The Interim Director clarifies that construction is expected to start this June 2021 and be completed by the fall. Member Bonfiglioli states that it would be her hope if it starts this year rather than waiting for another year for it to happen. The Interim Director explains that the Conservation Planner is on top of things, and this is such an unbelievable project, with benefits for the public and a showpiece for the community. Member Bonfiglioli agrees that it is a great project and will be great for the community. Member Francis explains that the Fisheries are getting involved because there are going to be smelt running in the river and they are building a fish ladder.

Middle Street Open Space:

The Interim Director advises that again our Conservation Planner, Kelly Phelan, is spearheading this. She has been doing some survey work. We have been going back and forth through various renditions making sure of permitting needed and making sure that it stays on schedule. The Conservation Planner has quite a few fairly large open-space, public, passive types of recreational projects going on. This project will really open up the area. It is actually very pretty down there. When staff was doing inspections and permitting at the old Cocheto Club, they got an opportunity to see the water back there, and it can be absolutely beautiful. This is another opportunity to make natural resources available to our residents.

Member Ron Frazier mentions that the report provided by the Interim Director stated they expect to have this completed by the fall. He is very interested to see that and states it is gorgeous down there. Dr. Kurzberg asks if the issue of parking is resolved yet. The Interim Director believes that the end result was going to be to provide parallel parking spots along Middle Street.

Daughraty Gym Restoration:

The Interim Director states that Chris Griffin provided an update that there are some interior renovations currently going on using some town money that was set aside. There was some money in the capital plan that they might be utilizing. They really haven't ignited anything on the exterior work at this time that was associated with the appropriation. The Interim Director will continue to reach out to the Recreation Department and seek updates on both funding and scope of project, with the understanding that if anything changes in funding or scope, they will appear back before CPC.

Chairman Kurzberg things there was some engineering or architectural work being done in the building. There has been a lot encumbered, and the financial report shows \$6,000 has been expended. Chairman Kurzberg states they had allocated \$57,400 for that project. The Interim Director will clarify what the \$6,000 was spent on.

Historic Inventory 2020:

Chairman Kurzberg explains that the Historic Inventory was discussed at the last meeting, and no bids had come in at all for this. The amount allocated may not have been enough for the project. The Interim Director explains that the only update she has was from the Historical Commission Meeting last week, and she explains that she is in the process of sorting through materials in the former Director's office area. It did look like there were some things that were in response to an RFP that was sent out. She hasn't gone through them in detail. Based on the meeting last week, the Historical Commission is very interested in completing this activity. Going through some of the materials she had found, it almost seemed like there was some type of \$15,000 match that was going to come from Mass Historical. It wasn't clear if it was \$30,000 from the CPC and \$15,000 from the State. The Interim Director needs to spend a little more time to understand the funding; in addition, if there were no responses to the RFP or if all the responses were above the amount allocated, then we should get a better idea of what this is going to cost so that we can actually get the right amount of money.

Member Frazier suspects that the \$15,000 was to match as part of the \$30,000. The former Director was going to check on this issue; she was also going to check with Mass. Historical to find out if, in fact, there were more bidders we could go to because apparently bids came in very slowly or they didn't come in at all. That was being done through the office, and that has to be the next step. We have to go to Mass. Historical and talk with them and get clarification on these things.

Morrison School Outdoor Classroom:

Chairman Kurzberg states there was quite a summary of that project. The Interim Director agrees that there was a very nice update provided by Dan Armstrong. The Interim Director explains that we have been making some minor payments to him, as the Project Manager. Staff has done some inspections, and it looks like it is moving along. It looks like, once December hit, things got put on hold and they will be finishing that up in the spring.

There are no comments or questions from Members on this item.

Elm Street Cemetery Fence Topper:

Chairman Kurzberg states this may be the oldest project we have. The Interim Director states this was discussed last week at the Historical Commission. The Interim Director believes there is \$6,000 left for this project. Getting that answer and getting this completed, whether we need to go back to the CPC or scope needs to be revised, she needs to determine the current status so that she can discuss the next steps to get this done.

Member Frazier's problem with this is that it was included. The topper fence is not very big. It is over a tomb with a seven-foot drop behind it. There was a fence included in the original contract. Why it was not done – he has no idea. They completely encircled the cemetery, and why it would be such an exorbitant amount of money to complete that very small section, he doesn't know.

As far as Member Frazier is concerned, it was part of the contract, and it should be done with the existing funds without having to go back and get more. The Interim Director's question is why it wasn't done, and she wants to get a better understanding of how projects are closed out. Member Frazier recalls that the Historical Commission said from the beginning that the project was not completed, and as far as he knows, the money that was held was never turned over to the contractor. There should be funds still held. If they were released, it never came before the Community Preservation Committee to release those funds. The Interim Director believes there are still funds remaining, and states, if it is a matter of getting in touch with the Contractor, she hasn't had a chance to look into the matter herself. Member Frazier states it appears that \$11,716 were encumbered on that. As far as the contract is concerned, Derrick Manning had said at one point that there were problems with putting the fence up there. Member Frazier went to the site, took photographs and sent them to the entire Committee. The Committee then looked at them, and it doesn't seem there is anything particular difficult about putting the fencing there.

Chairman Kurzberg states this is to be continued.

Conservation Restrictions:

Chairman Kurzberg asks if we are almost finished with the Restrictions. The Interim Director states that the Conservation Planner was meeting with the Commissioners over at Pond Meadow to iron out some details. They will be holding the Restrictions for Washington Street. The Restrictions for Plain Street are out for signature. The Restrictions for Middle Street will be held by the Wildlands Trust, and we are waiting for their vote to accept that Conservation Restriction. Getting those completed will be huge for the Committee, as that is part of the requirements for these purchases. Nonetheless, it looks like they are near completion, and hopefully we can get this wrapped up in the next month or so.

Skate Park:

Chairman Kurzberg states it is not listed, but it is a pending project. He asks about the status of the skate park. The Interim Director states that was voted on at the Council probably at their last meeting in December on December 15th. The Interim Director doesn't know if anything has happened since then, but she will get an update from Chris Griffin from the Recreation Department, who is the lead on this matter.

Administrative Business

CPC Manager Position:

The Interim Director explains that we haven't had any Applicants for that position, and she is going to be looking at the Department as a whole to try to see how to best configure the staff to meet the demands of these Boards. Making sure that the CPC is staffed properly is going to be something she will be considering as part of what she is looking at now. She thinks it is worth taking a broader look at it and having staff for the CPC that is a little bit more integrated into the department.

Getting all the Boards properly staffed is one of the Interim Director's priorities moving into 2021. She will report back to the Committee on that topic when she has anything to share.

Monthly Financial Report:

Dr. Kurzberg states on the breakdown from all of the funds that have been allocated, there is still a balance of \$1.788Million, of which \$1.4million is for the property. Is the \$1.788Million included in the balance or is it in addition to the \$5.68Million that is totally available. The Interim Director explains that the first page of the spreadsheet is the total of the committed funds, and she believes that the \$1.788Million is not part of the \$5.68Million. However, she would like to check back with the Accounting Manager, Mark Lin.

Approval of Meeting Minutes - February 10, 2020 and June 8, 2020:

Dr. Kurzberg thinks the February minutes were approved on June 8, 2020, according to the minutes of June 8, 2020. The Interim Director confirms that June 8, 2020 was the first meeting held after the COVID-19 Quarantine.

Chairman Kurzberg has a couple of comments. He mentions that he opened the general meeting first – so the meeting of June 8, 2020 was called to order, and then Member Frazier motioned to convene the June 8, 2020 Public Hearing; we had roll call votes; Ron voted to go into Executive Session; then Ron voted to come out of Executive Session. Dr. Kurzberg is not sure if Member Diane Francis left early, as she was included in the Public Hearing, but not listed as voting to adjourn to come out of Executive Session. Member Francis recalls she was asked to leave the meeting. Interim Director SantucciRozzi recalls that is when we had the two links. One link was for the Public Hearing Webinar, and the other was for the Executive Session. Member Francis had left the first link, but didn't go to the Executive Session link. Member Bonfiglioli thinks she may also have gone on the wrong link. The Interim Director asks if Dr. Kurzberg is trying to clarify the beginning of the meeting, and he advises that it looks like it doesn't say Member Francis left the meeting. Member Frazier said they were having trouble going in and out. The Interim Director will go back and double check. Basically, we want to reflect that you opened the general meeting, Ron Frazier made a motion to convene the June 8, 2020 Public Hearing; then, Ron Frazier made a motion to go into Executive Session, then Ron made the motion to come out. Dr. Kurzberg suggests maybe you put a comment in that states Member Francis had to leave the meeting. Interim Director SantucciRozzi will make that note.

Member Frazier **MOTION** to approve the minutes of June 8, 2020; seconded by Member Mikami; voted by roll call 7:0:0 (Dr. Kurzberg – yes, Maria Bonfiglioli – yes, Diane Francis – yes, Ron Frazier – yes, Marta Googins – yes, Darryl Mikami – yes, Mark Preziosi - yes.).

New Business:

Dr. Kurzberg asks if there are any new projects in the pipeline that the Interim Director is aware of. Interim Director SantucciRozzi states we are having some early, preliminary discussions with owners of multi-family developments to look into the potential of making improvements to Independence Manor to preserve affordability.

Mayor Kokoros has tasked Mrs. SantucciRozzi with really trying to get creative on the affordable housing front and looking at our housing inventory now and ways that we could work with private developers and private property owners to try to convert some market rate units to affordable units. These discussions are very early on, and as most of you know that, when you get into the housing components of Community Preservation and what needs to be fulfilled and what needs to be provided, it is pretty involved, but she thinks it is worth trying to ignite some of these discussions and try to work within our existing stock to try to provide some options.

Member Googins asks if the Braintree Housing Authority would be involved in any of these discussions. The Interim Director advises that we are not talking to the Housing Authority currently about any particular projects. They do have several units over at Independence Manor. The Interim Director is primarily working with Katie Barker now. You are probably aware of some of the different changes that have happened with the financing there and really trying to look at a way to be creative to help them preserve affordability. The Committee has helped the Housing Authority to do some similar improvements. However, the Interim Director has really found any guidance on privately owned affordable housing. We are trying to make some funds available so that they can work on some of their capital needs which will then allow for other funds to be used for other operating expenses so they don't have to increase the rent. The Interim Director explains they are trying to get creative around that because you cannot do maintenance. The next step is reaching out to the Community Preservation Coalition to get some early guidance on what will be acceptable. The reality is they need to make improvements to the building and money is not overly available. A lot of the units are Housing Authority units, and the rents are 30%, 40% or 50% of area median income. It is a huge asset to the community, and it is important to keep those units up to code and to keep them fresh and to keep them acceptable and beyond adequate. It sounds like an exciting project.

Member Googins states this is more about maintaining what we have as opposed to going out and looking for new properties. The Interim Director states that is correct. The project she is talking about with Independence Manor would be making improvements to allow for an influx of money because their budget is extremely tight. Raising the rent is just not an option for these seniors.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi states the second thing wouldn't be additional lands or the creation of any additional units, but it would be trying to add an influx of affordable units to our current inventory – so increasing our subsidized stock while maintaining our year-round units. Obviously, she is open to any suggestions and ideas from the committee members. One of the areas that the committee hasn't seen a lot of projects is on the housing front. We really need to think how we can preserve affordability in our community, add affordability and really diversify the stock and not just for seniors but for families as well. There are a lot of people in the community that are cost-burdened right now because they are spending upwards of 50% of their income on housing. The Interim Director would love to ignite the housing bucket of the Community Preservation funds and get creative with some really nice projects for the community. Member Googins states that would be wonderful.

Dr. Kurzberg states he doesn't have anything specific in mind, but historic preservation, community housing and open-space are the areas that Community Preservation can make a contribution to. Whatever we can do to support those avenues, in addition to trying to complete the projects that we have pending, we would welcome proposals that would address any of those areas. Dr. Kurzberg asks if Interim Director SantucciRozzi knows the status of the 40B project at Washington Street and Storrs Avenue. The Interim Director states she does know the status and explains that we have had both of the hearings. There were two separate hearings -- one was for the Townhouses and the other was for the Apartments. We had hearings in Mid-October for the Townhouses and Mid-November for the Apartments. The brief has been submitted. The brief is the final thing that happens as part of the hearing proceedings. That was completed for the Townhouses. The brief for the Apartments is going to be due somewhere around the middle of January. That concludes the hearing part, and then begins the waiting for a decision from the State. There is a lot of testimony and cross-examining. Then, the Committee and the Hearing Officer disappear for six months, eight months or a year, and then we get a decision. The wait is unknown; however, she can provide any updates at any time to any members. Dr. Kurzberg states, if it does go through, how many affordable units would be included in that project. Interim Director SantucciRozzi explains that on the Townhouse side it would be two units out of the eight, which would be deed restricted affordable and would be added to the subsidized inventory. On the Apartment side, it is 18 units out of the 70 units, but when you do a rental 40B all units count on the inventory -- so you would get a total of 72 additional units on the subsidized inventory. We are at a weird time in looking at the inventory, as we are waiting for the 2020 census. We will have a better idea once we get that number and we look at our current inventory. With the Community Preservation Funds, there is opportunity to build in even more affordability beyond what you would see in your typical Comprehensive Permit in the 40B units. We are also looking to diversify that house in the form of a single-family home or a duplex. Most of what we have seen in Braintree has been in the form of multi-family housing. The Interim Director states she is always available to listen to ideas, answer questions and brainstorm around this topic.

Dr. Kurzberg states the Community Preservation Committee is all in agreement in terms of the priorities for this coming year. In addition to what we have pending, we need to look at whatever we can find on community housing, historic preservation or open space. The Interim Director thinks there will be potential to return to the Committee for some additional funding for the recent purchase at 1006 Liberty Street; her recommendations around that are to engage the public, engage the people in that neighborhood in the Liberty Grove facility to get some opinion from the neighborhood that knows that area best. There is opportunity there to check off multiple boxes when it comes to Community Preservation. That particular corner could become a showpiece with the right attention and funding in conjunction with the house and the open space behind it. Hopefully there will be some discussions around that.

Dr. Kurzberg asks about All Souls Church. The spreadsheet shows that some money has been expended around that, and he asks if they have gotten a matching grant. The Interim Director cannot answer that.

Member Frazier doesn't think they were really looking for matching funds. Dr. Kurzberg thought they were going to the State for matching funds. Member Frazier states that All Souls Church did get money from the State. Member Bonfiglioli thinks that was the condition of CPC giving All Souls Church money. The Interim Director confirms that this is the All Souls 2019 Preservation of \$65,000. Dr. Kurzberg states they have expended \$21,666 of that amount. Member Frazier states that was for the chimney.

The Interim Director thinks it would make sense to do updates on everything we are spending money on currently. Dr. Kurzberg states we did clean up a lot of the projects because there were some that were completed, but there was still money. There may be some more that are closed out at this point that we are not aware of. Member Frazier asks wasn't it voted to return some of the funds at a previous meeting. Dr. Kurzberg thought we did. Member Frazier is not sure this reflects it. The Interim Director states she will go back and look, and she discusses ideas she has for capturing/recording accounting information in the files, as well as the need to clear up existing projects so that we can move on to new projects. Interim Director SantucciRozzi appreciates the Committee's patience.

Dr. Kurzberg states our next meeting is scheduled for February 8, 2021 and mentions that it is nice to see everybody.

Member Frazier **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Member Preziosi; voted by roll call 7:0:0 (Dr. Kurzberg – yes, Maria Bonfiglioli – yes, Diane Francis – yes, Ron Frazier – yes, Marta Googins – yes, Darryl Mikami – yes, Mark Preziosi - yes.).

Meeting adjourned at 6:05 PM

Respectfully submitted, Louise Quinlan, Planning and Community Development