
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 07, 2023

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Recognizing the presence of quorum Glenn King (Chair) called meeting to order at 6:30 PM, with Harry Berkowitz, Barbara McNamee, Jill Leonard, Michael Wilkes, and Christine Johnson in attendance. R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner/CPC Admin was also present. Carol Brouwer, Northbridge Historical Society; Michael Dempsey, Chair Playground & Recreation Committee; and Michael Proto, former CPC representative of Playground & Recreation were also in attendance.

Three (3) vacancies on the Committee remain: Playground & Recreation Committee, Northbridge Housing Authority & Member At-large.

II. REORGANIZATION

Chair, Vice Chair & Clerk

G King noted that every year, the Community Preservation Committee needs to reorganize the leadership of Committee and sought nomination for Chair, Vice Chair & Clerk. *After brief discussion and upon motion duly made (H Berkowitz) and seconded (B McNamee) the Committee voted (6-0) to reorganize as follows: Glenn King, Chair; Harry Berkowitz, Vice Chair; & Michael Wilkes, Clerk.*

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

June 12, 2023

Upon motion duly made (H Berkowitz) and seconded (B McNamee), the Community Preservation Committee voted (6-0) to approve meeting minutes of June 12, 2023.

IV. OLD/NEW BUSINESSCorrespondence & Communications

G Bechtholdt mentioned that G King asked for an update on the overall status of the borrowing for the Castle Hill Farm acquisition; this information will be provided from the Town Treasurer for the Committee's next meeting.

Vacancy (3) -Housing Authority, Playground & Recreation and Member at-Large

Committee members welcomed Michael Wilkes newly appointed representative of the Planning Board. Michael Proto (former member) indicated he was in attendance to help transition the Playground & Recreation Committee representative, as he is no longer on the Playground & Recreation Committee. Michael Dempsey, Chair of the Playground & Recreation Committee was also in attendance to gain a better understanding of the function of the Committee Preservation Committee and will look to his Committee to appoint a representative at its next meeting. Committee members thanked M Proto and M Dempsey, encouraging M Dempsey to consider appointment. G King noted Rainer Forst (former member representing the Planning Board) has expressed an interest in serving as the Member at-large position. B McNamee and C Johnson indicated support for R Forst, noting his previous time on the Committee; other members agreed. G King suggested he will put forth to the Board of Selectmen the appointment of Rainer Forst. G Bechtholdt noted that he spoke with Brett Lambert, Executive Director of the Northbridge Housing Authority, indicating B Lambert will look to have the Housing Authority appoint a representative. H Berkowitz reminded members

that boards and commissions may opt to appoint a citizen to serve on their behalf if none of the sitting members are willing/able to serve.

CPA Administration Services

G King acknowledged all the hard work and dedication of Gary Bechtholdt, Town Planner has put forth not just for this Committee, but for the countless others he assists on a daily basis. G King noted that the CPC currently provides G Bechtholdt with a stipend of \$3,5000 and suggested that the Committee increase the stipend to \$4,000. G King also noted the CPC is limited to a certain percentage of its revenue on administration costs. After brief discussion, the Committee thanked G Bechtholdt for all that he has been doing to assist the Committee. *Upon motion duly made (H Berkowitz) and seconded (C Johnson) the Committee voted (6-0) to re-appoint Gary Bechtholdt as CPC Administrator with a stipend of \$4,000 for FY2024.*

CP-3 Report (due September 15, 2023)

G King reminded the Committee that the CPC report to the State and Coalition is due no later than September 15, 2023, noting it's the first time the Committee will be submitting a report for active projects.

CPA Funded Projects -Linwood Basketball Courts & Castle Hill Farm Conservation Land

M Dempsey reported to the Committee that the Linwood Basketball Courts are ahead of schedule. As of right now the preliminary date for the project to be finished is towards the end of September into October. There appears to be a lot of positive anticipation from the community. G Bechtholdt noted with CPA funds, two (2) projects signs announcing the use of CPA Funds have been purchased; one to be installed during construction and another upon completion of the project. In regard to Castle Hill Farm property, G King noted that it is officially under the authority of the Conservation Commission at this point. David Pickart, Conservation Agent has been up at the property doing work. B McNamee noted on August 18th two local businesses will be working with D Pickart to help make footbridges on the property. G Bechtholdt mentioned D Pickart has prepared the Baseline Study and is awaiting feedback from Metacomet Land Trust before submitting the report to the State as part of the Conservation Restriction to be placed on the property.

Project Pre-Application Solicitation -Open through September 2023

Point of information, no discussion.

Project Applications due October 01, 2023

Point of information, no discussion.

Project Pre-Applications -United Presbyterian Church & 1770 Flether Homestead

Committee members acknowledged receipt of the Project Pre-Application for the United Presbyterian Church for a Bell Tower Restoration Project. G King explained CPA funding for religious institutions remains somewhat of a question & unknown, where in Acton the use of funds was questioned in court, however the lawsuit was later dismissed as the church withdrew its application. G King noted the Coalition has suggested to communities considering the use CPA funds for religious institutions to have their local Town Counsel review before recommending such a project. G Bechtholdt indicated he was not sure if a building analysis or architectural/structural study is a prerequisite for historic resource proposals, where such a study would help identify greatest need of certain restoration projects (i.e., repairing foundation before changing out windows). As is to be regular course for potential projects, the Committee shall seek input from the Community Preservation Coalition to assist in determining property and project eligibility for the Historic Resource CPA Funding Category.

Committee members acknowledged receipt of the two (2) Project Pre-Applications for the 1770 Fletcher Homestead submitted by the Northbridge Historical Society for (a) Boiler Tank Replacement & (b) Architectural/Structural Assessment. G Bechtholdt advised the Committee he will contact the Community Preservation Coalition to seek input on the three (3) Project Pre-Applications received and will update G King, Chair and the Committee accordingly.

The Committee reviewed the application process for seeking CPA funds, where a Project Pre-Application is to be submitted first, at which time the Committee will consider the property and project for eligibility and provide the Applicant with guidance for the submission of a Project Application. Once a Project Application is received the Committee is to review and decide on sponsorship (or not sponsor) a warrant article, where voters at Town Meeting (Spring Annual) will ultimately decide how the CPA Funds are spent. G King suggested the decision to sponsor (or not sponsor) a project or projects shall be based upon a number of factors including level of historical significance, project benefit, project cost, overall CPA budget, etc.

Members cautioned recommending projects for religious institutions, citing Acton where it remains an unknown if CPA funds can be used. G Bechtholdt indicated in addition to seeking input from the Coalition he will also contact the Applicant(s) informing them of the overall status of review (Project Pre-Application), next steps and the potential concerns in funding religious institutions.

Scheduling of Next Meeting(s)

Next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Monday, September 11, 2023 (6:30PM) -via ZOOM.

Future Agenda Item(s) -CPC Public Outreach & Community Preservation Plan Update

G Bechtholdt noted the project sign for the Linwood Playground Improvements will be installed soon, acknowledging the use of CPA Funds for the new basketball courts currently under construction. Similarly, a kiosk for the Castle Hill Farm Conservation Land will be installed announcing the CPA funding source, along with historical and environmental narratives of the property. G King noted as some point the Committee will review and look to update the current Community Preservation Plan adopted in April 2019.

V. ADJOURN MEETING

Having no additional business, the Community Preservation Committee adjourned its meeting of Monday, August 07, 2023 at or about 7:20PM.

Prepared by: Micheal Wilkes, Clerk

Submitted by:

Date Approved: _____

R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner/CPC Admin

Cc: Town Clerk