

Community Preservation Act Committee

Date: February 7, 2024

Time: 7:04pm – 8:30pm

Location: Conducted remotely due to Covid-19.

Draft Minutes

Remote Participation: Clarissa Rowe
Jo Anne Preston
Susan Doctrow
David Swanson
Leslie Mayer
JoAnn Robinson
Brian McBride
Alexander Franzosa

Also Attending Remotely: Christine
Bongiorno –
Deputy Town
Manager of
Operations

Deanna
Stacchi
-Minutes

Introductions

CPAC Chair, Clarissa Rowe, welcomed members and guests at 7:00pm. She noted that the budget was \$1.389M less than this years' requests. She also advised the Committee that state revenues were going down. There is \$2,468,035 funding to be awarded. Ms. Biongiorno advised attendees that the meeting was being recorded.

Review and Approval of Minutes – Ms. Mayer motioned to approve the minutes from October 12, 2023, January 24, 2024, and January 31, 2024, as amended, seconded by Ms. Doctrow and approved 8-0.

Discussion of FY25 CPA Preliminary Applications Received

Community Housing

Shea House, Special Needs Housing, Sunnyside, Leasing Differential and Homelessness Prevention

Ms. Preston – Jack Nagle informed her that a \$100K grant was awarded for the Special Needs Housing project.

Ms. Rowe – The Shea House Roof project has been designated as a Housing Project. Ms. Mayer questioned whether the project falls under social services, which would not meet CPA criteria. Ms. Preston stated that the project falls under affordable housing but noted that the majority of individuals in need of housing are also in need of social services. Ms. Rowe shared an experience with a homeless man in Boston who stated that he was moving back to Arlington because “the people are nice there”.

The Committee had discussed reducing the funding for Sunnyside to \$400K but will now consider using the \$100K grant acquired by Jack Nagle toward Special Needs housing which would allow the full \$500K to be awarded for Sunnyside.

Historic Preservation

Digitizing and Preserving Marriage Records

Ms. Mayer – If the marriage records project is for record retention only and will not allow public access to the documents then the project should be funded by town government, not CPA. She and Ms. Robinson noted that Ms. Brazile offered to provide a cost breakdown and suggested awarding half the funding request to get the project started and review the progress and results. Ms. Rowe reminded the Committee that voting must take place tonight to meet the Select Board and Town Meeting schedules. She also noted that Town Planning documents have already been digitized and that digitization is crucial to maintaining and safeguarding all again documents.

Ms. Doctrow – Stated that digitizing would prevent additional damage to original documents which are currently used to create certified copies by hand.

Mr. McBride – Inquired why digitization of town documents is not part of regular town expenses.

Ms. Robinson – Stated that many boxes of documents are stored unprotected in the Town Hall basement because the vault is not big enough to hold them all.

Ms. Mayer estimated that 96-97 volumes could be digitized with half the funding requested. The Committee decided to award half the request in the amount of \$77,597.

Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden

The ask was increased from \$42,600 to \$115,506. Ms. Rowe agreed with the increase, noting that the first estimate underestimated the increasing costs and did not include irrigation.

Mr. McBride – The garden attracts many visitors and the project will preserve open space. He also appreciates the number of volunteer hours going into the project and upkeep. Ms. Doctrow also showed support for the volunteer activity the project attracts.

Foot of the Rocks

Mr. McBride – Requested clarification of the two different amounts requested - \$450K or \$1.2M. He also pointed out the potential cost of the project may not be in proportion to the value it will have to the community.

Ms. Doctrow – Asked what would happen if the group was approved for \$450K and was unable to secure the remaining funds through fundraising. The answer to this question was that they could not use the funds if the remaining funds were not raised.

Ms. Preston – Noted that the memorial is not being installed in the exact location of where the battle occurred. She also expressed concern that the anticipated completion date of April 19, 2025, was likely to be unachievable.

Ms. Rowe – The drawings are not done and cannot go out to bid until July. It is not realistic to expect that the project will be completed by the projected opening. She also pointed out that most people go to the Lexington Green on Patriot's Day, but the project will be good for Arlington long-term. The Committee discussed the differences in funding to Lexington and Concord compared to Arlington. Ms. Mayer noted that reduced funding may be due to changing from Menotomy to Arlington.

Ms. Rowe - Hopes that traffic improvements in the area, including Appleton Street, will help the area create an accessible and safe plaza. State and federal funding is not earmarked as far as she knows. However, she stated that the group has not begun the process of acquiring private funding/fundraising.

Ms. Robinson – Suggested installing signage in the interim to educate the public about the historical significance of the Foot of the Rocks.

Mr. Franzosa – While it's hard to predict the foot traffic and visits the memorial will generate, he supports the project and feels that it is important to grant some CPA funding to get the project started.

Open Space / Recreation

Public Land Management

Mr. McBride – Stated the project was good for the town from a holistic standpoint.

Ms. Doctrow – Asked if the current plan was expiring. Ms. Rowe stated that while it's not expiring, it extends and expands the existing plan.

Minuteman Bikeway

Ms. Rowe – Stated that the MBTA has already shut down prior projects and recommended that the group communicate with the agency first. Ms. Doctrow concurred stating that while the plan is great, working with the MBTA can be difficult.

Ms. Mayer – Said that portions of the project effects PRC property and David Morgan has come to meetings to discuss and request support. She stated that Ryder Street, being a public way, extends on both sides of the bike path. Ms. Mayer questioned how to decommission a public way noting that the design places the plaza on the road. Recommended funding \$50K to explore challenges. She also noted that the results of the parking lot study being conducted by Recreation Director Joe Connelly could impact the project.

Ms. Doctrow – Requested jurisdiction information and more information on the feasibility study.

Menotomy Rocks Playground and Picnic Area and Crosby Courts

Ms. Preston – Noted the big division between what the conceptual design presented and what the neighborhood expressed they needed. She recommended more consultation with the abutters. Ms. Rowe reminded the Committee that during his presentation Mr. Connelly had stated that the presented design sketch was conceptual for budgeting purposes only and was not the actual design plan. The Committee agreed to fund the design phase.

Ms. Mayer – Stated that the courts feasibility study looked at the entire town. Crosby was prioritized because existing conditions were determined to be the most hazardous and in need of repairs. She also noted that with the surge of pickleball popularity, court use was creating conflict between tennis and pickleball players vying for play time. She added that the loss of the AHS basketball courts had a huge impact on available court use, gathering and social space. Ms. Mayer mentioned that while the attendees of the meeting expressed their opposition, the PRC had received many letters of support as well. She recommended that the abutters attend the public meetings to share their input.

Mr. Swanson – Felt that Mr. Connelly was very supportive of public engagement and agrees that while there are concerns, more conversation is important.

The Committee's allocation of funding came in under budget by awarding the following amounts:

Special Needs Home Construction	\$200,000
Sunnyside	\$500,000
Homelessness Prevention	\$50,000
Leasing Differential	\$16,800
Shea House Roof	\$30,000

Marriage Records Digitization	\$77,597
Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden	\$115,506
Foot of the Rocks	\$450,000
McClennen Drainage Basin	\$40,000
Public Land Management Plan	\$25,000
Minuteman Bikeway	\$50,000
Crosby Courts	\$150,000
Menotomy Rocks Play and Picnic Area	\$400,000

The Committee held additional discussion:

Ms. Robinson suggested moving the Foot of the Rocks memorial to Schwamb Mill.

Mr. McBride – Recommended adding a condition of requesting that a determined amount be raised prior to requesting CPA funding. Ms. Rowe stated that this idea would require a conversation with Town Counsel.

Ms. Doctrow – Asked if Sunnyside construction could be on hold until funding is secured. Ms. Bongiorno noted that a CDBG application for \$250K has been submitted. Ms. Mayer added that construction can begin with existing funding if certain elements are reclassified as add/alts.

Bonding Discussion

Ms. Rowe – The idea of bonding began with the Mugar wetlands discussion and the Town Hall cupola reconstruction.

Ms. Doctrow – Bonding allows options for project groups to act on opportunities. She questioned whether the Finance Committees previous rejection of bonding would allow for CPA to bond projects. Ms. Rowe stated that CPA is allowed to bring bonding projects to Town Meeting.

Ms. Mayer - Noted that the idea of bonding was turned down “in general”. She stated that she is not against bonding but is against bonding of certain projects, like studies. Ms. Preston added that she is also against bonding because it ties up funding based on unknowns for future years. She also stated that CPA already conducts “informal bonding” by recommending and awarding partial funding with additional funding to be awarded later contingent on the project group providing updates, expenses to date, etc.

Mr. Swanson – Agreed with Ms. Preston noting that bonding would need to be looked at on a project-to-project basis. He stated that he personally would support bonding for Mugar Wetlands and Town Hall, but not Foot of the Rocks.

Ms. Doctrow – Asked that the committee discuss the risk vs the benefits of the project and its long-term impacts. As an example, she stated that the Lexington Farm project would not have happened without bonding. Ms. Doctrow also noted that it would be beneficial to establish

criteria for bonding projects. Ms. Mayer and Mr. McBride expressed their agreement with Ms. Doctrow's statements.

Mr. Franzosa – Stated that while he supports the Foot of the Rocks project, he would not recommend bonding as it is not urgent as the needs at Town Hall.

Regarding a motion to recommend bonding for Foot of the Rocks, Ms. Rowe took a roll call vote:

Ms. Preston – No
Mr. Swanson – No
Ms. Doctrow – No
Ms. Mayer – No
Mr. Franzosa – No
Mr. McBride – No
Ms. Robinson – abstain
Ms. Rowe – abstain

Motion not approved, 6-0 with Ms. Robinson and Ms. Rowe abstaining from the vote.

Ms. Mayer made a motion to approve the funding for the projects as described for Community Housing, Historical Preservation and Recreation/Open Space. The motion was seconded by Mr. Swanson and approved 8-0.

Other Business - N/A

Ms. Rowe concluded the meeting at 8:30pm.