

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY
DECEMBER 14, 2023
(Conducted via Google Meet)**

Members Present: Betty Slade, Chair
John Bell, Vice-Chair
Tim Gillespie
Hugh Morton
Dale Weber
Mark Schmid
Garrett Stuck
Veronica Beaulieu

Absent Member: Philip Weinberg

Vice-Chair John Bell called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and conducted the meeting.

Announcements by Vice-Chair Bell were as follows:

Under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A, Section 20(f), the meeting is being recorded.

Pursuant to Governor Healey's March 29, 2023 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, this meeting of the Westport Community Preservation Committee is being conducted via remote participation. No in person attendance of members of the public is required, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A reminder that persons who would like to listen to or view this meeting while in progress may do so by following the remote links listed on the posting online. An audio recording of this meeting will be posted on the town's website as soon as we are able.

1. Members welcomed the Committee's newest member, Veronica Beaulieu, who will serve as the Housing Authority Representative to the CPC.

2. Projects to Consider:

1. Westport Historical Society - Bell School House - \$110,000. Vice-Chair Bell said that the price of construction has increased significantly and the funds being requested are to compensate for

the difference in costs. Mr. Schmid said the funds will supplement the prior grant of funds.

Yvonne Barr said that the WHS applied for and received \$350,000 from CPA funds and received a grant of \$150,000 from the Manton Foundation. However, the estimates provided at that time were pre-COVID estimates.

Various construction items included:

1. Structural deficiencies, installation of steel beams and support systems to secure the building.
2. Even with private fundraising, there still remains a shortage of funds to complete the project.
3. There remains a balance of \$110,000 to finish the building, including the basement and handicap access ramp.

Vice-Chair Bell said that it was good to see the progress of construction.

Ms. Barr noted that the framing for the addition, both first and second floors, is in place; the roofing is not complete; the old chimney was removed; and the stairwell from the basement to the second floor has been constructed.

Chair Slade made a motion to move the project as presented to the public hearing in January for consideration in the amount of \$110,000. Ms. Weber seconded the motion with Garrett Stuck, Tim Gillespie, Dale Weber, Betty Slade, Veronica Beaulieu, John Bell and Mark Schmid voting aye in a roll call vote. Hugh Morton abstained from voting. Ms. Barr thanked the Committee for its consideration of the project.

2. Recreation Commission - Bicentennial Playground - \$350,000. Dana Stewart addressed the Committee, stating that the CPC had previously approved funds ~~for~~ to begin rehabilitation and purchase of playground equipment for the Annex Playground, which will commence in Spring 2024. She said that:

1. Generators were donated by a private party.

2. There was an evaluation conducted of the Bicentennial Playground that noted various issues i.e., rotted-out sides of the stairs, exposing rusted metal, missing swings, broken and missing rubber mats, rusted-out or missing bolts, no handicap parking or accessibility.

3. Received various quotes for construction of the structures and fencing.

4. There is a typographical error in the application, whereby the amount of \$200,000 from an anonymous donor should be \$20,000.

5. This request is for funds to complete the Bicentennial Playground, which will support many Westport families and other Town visitors who will also support local businesses.

Mr. Gillespie said there has been good success with getting funding from other sources.

Ms. Stewart said she has received a letter of support from Baycoast Bank and is hopeful that the Bank will be helpful providing a grant for other funding.

Chair Slade said that she has learned from talking with others that these playgrounds are expensive and there are various regulations governing playgrounds.

Ms. Stewart said that one regulation is ADA accessibility to accommodate children with walkers, wheelchairs, and other medical challenges, including rubberized ground, and sensory slide and panels.

Mr. Gillespie said he was early on surprised to learn of the extent of the cost to construct playgrounds that will be functional for children.

Ms. Stewart noted that some of the equipment pieces have a lifetime warranty.

Vice-Chair Bell asked about the expected lifespan of the equipment.

Ms. Stewart said that some pieces are constructed to last 20 years or more. She stated that some of the playgrounds that are 20 years old show erosion. Playgrounds are inspected annually.

Mr. Gillespie said that, if the playgrounds are properly maintained, their lifespan should extend to 30 years.

Chair Slade made a motion to move the project as presented to the public hearing in January for the amount of \$350,000. Ms. Weber seconded the motion with Mark Schmid, Tim Gillespie, Betty Slade, Dale Weber, Garrett Stuck and John Bell voted aye in a roll call vote. Hugh Morton abstained from voting and Veronica Beaulieu did not vote. Ms. Stewart thanked the Committee.

3. Town Administrator - Cemetery Website - \$30,000. Jim Hartnett, Town Administrator, was not present. Chair Slade gave some history of the cemetery website and the importance of continuing with the website. She said that:

1. The website was privately developed in 2004.

2. By 2022, the technology became outdated and photographs and other information was unable to be inputted as a result.

3. The website is used by many organizations, including the Cemetery Department and the Veterans' Agent.

4. Private funding will be applied for, as well as, recommendation by the Westport Historical Commission.

Mr. Gillespie made a motion to move the project as presented to the public hearing in January for the amount of \$30,000. Ms. Weber seconded the motion with Mark Schmid, Tim Gillespie, Betty Slade, Dale Weber, Veronica Beaulieu, John Bell, Hugh Morton and Garrett Stuck voting aye in a roll call vote. Hugh Morton abstained from voting.

4. Affordable Housing Trust Rehab - Housing Office/Land Acquisition Fund - \$300,000. Jim Sabra and Leonardi Aray were present. Mr. Sabra said that the AHT needs funding to create additional units, including three (3) programs: PRE-HAB - \$60,000; Land Acquisition and Development - \$200,000; and operation of the Housing Office - \$40,000. He also noted that Habitat for Humanity

is looking to the AHT to provide land for construction of their housing projects.

Mr. Aray stated that Robert Barboza works in the Housing Office and processes all applications and answers telephone calls about the programs that are available.

Chair Slade inquired about extending the life of the affordable housing restriction in cases where they expire early.

Mr. Aray said that the Affordable Housing Restriction exists in perpetuity.

Chair Slade asked if, with the \$200,000 request for land acquisition and development, the total amount available would be \$1,000,000.

Mr. Aray said that the Trust has \$410,000 in available funds and the request of \$200,000 will total \$610,000.

Chair Slade noted that, perhaps, the AHT will require more than the \$200,000 that is being requested to be ready for Governor Maura Healey's prospective housing support projects. She also asked about the chances of another project similar to that of Noquochoke Village if future CPA funds are granted for land acquisition.

Mr. Sabra said that Governor Healey's program allows large-scale developers to receive tax credits. He also said that a minimum of 10 acres is required to develop 50 units.

Mr. Morton stated that, although funds may be sitting without being used for a time until a prospective project presents itself, he had no objection to moving this request to the January meeting, however, he was unsure whether it would be a good thing for the funds to be sitting in a fund with no future purpose.

Mr. Aray said that between \$600,000 and \$800,000 is typically necessary to bring the Trust to the negotiation table to purchase land.

Chair Slade asked whether the Planning Board has been approached about its plans for the land around Route 6.

Mr. Aray said that he has no further information, but that the Trust should be ready to go forward with \$610,000, which will put the Trust in a competitive position to acquire land.

Mr. Sabra said that the funds may be used as a deposit at the time of signing a Purchase and Sale Agreement and to allow time for the Trust to obtain the funds to purchase the land.

Mr. Aray stated that the State will always look to local support. Mr. Aray noted that the conditions for development are most likely similar to other areas in the State. He also noted that, the closer the land is to the beach, the more expensive it will be.

Mr. Sabra said that access to medical care, public transportation and grocery stores is important.

Mr. Schmid said that the Planning Board has been studying the Route 6 corridor with the intent that, if the infrastructure is improved with water and sewer, it will unlock the potential for housing development that the Town needs. The Planning Board is currently preparing to present at least two (2) zoning amendments in the upcoming Town Meeting.

Chair Slade made a motion to move the project as presented to the public hearing in January for the amount of \$300,000. Ms. Weber seconded the motion with Mark Schmid, Tim Gillespie, Betty Slade, Dale Weber, Veronica Beaulieu, Hugh Morton, Garrett Stuck and John Bell voting aye in a roll call vote.

Mr. Sabra, Mr. Aray and Mr. Barboza thanked the Committee.

5. St. John the Baptist - Religious Education Center Restoration - \$253,730. Father Peter Scheffer addressed the Committee, stating that:

1. The funds would be used for restoration of the religious education center, which is utilized by boy scouts, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other organizations).

2. Hebert Construction would perform the work.

3. This would be considered historical preservation as the structure is a former Town Hall.

Mr. Morton stated that he did not believe that CPA funds could be used for religious purposes. He said that, in the past, another religious organization had requested funds and were denied.

Chair Slade said that:

1. Prior to 2018, CPA funds were allowed to be used for buildings which were used for religious purposes. However, the Supreme Judicial Court ruled that the funds could not be used by religious organizations such as churches.

2. So long as the buildings are not for religious-related purposes, CPA funding seems to be allowed.

3. The structure is a former Town Hall, which would deem it to be historic; but unclear if the funds are allowed for buildings with religious educational purposes.

Father Scheffer said that the building has been used exclusively for religious education since he has been there in the past 18 months.

Chair Slade said that she did not believe it would be feasible to grant CPA funds and that the Westport Historical Commission would need to be notified as well because we request its recommendation.

Mr. Gillespie suggested that, since it is a historical building, it may be eligible.

Chair Slade said that it is not the building, but the use of the building, that is at issue. She agreed that the matter may be moved to the January public meeting with the stipulation that Town Counsel be contacted for a legal opinion.

Chair Slade made a motion to move the project as presented to the public hearing in January for the amount of \$253,730 if Town Counsel determines that the CPC may recommend the project to Town Meeting and there is Westport Historical Commissions recommendation in place. Mr. Morton seconded the motion with Mark Schmid, Tim Gillespie, Betty Slade, Dale Weber, Veronica Beaulieu, Hugh Morton, Garrett Stuck and John Bell voting aye in a roll call vote. Hugh Morton abstained from voting.

Father Scheffer thanked the Committee.

3. Approval of Minutes of October 12, 2023 CPC Meeting.

Chair Slade made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 12, 2023. Mr. Schmid seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Garrett Stuck, Hugh Morton, Mark Schmid, Betty Slade, John Bell and Tim Gillespie voting aye in a roll call vote. Dale Weber and Veronica Beaulieu abstained from voting.

4. Approval of Bid for Town Farm Work.

Mr. Stuck said that he believed that the Committee had authorized the Chair, Vice-Chair and WHC representative to approve this contract.

Chair Slade said, yes, to approve the RFP. The Committee is now approving the contract.

Michael Walden said that the Westport Historical Commission had approved the bid and contract. He stated that Jim Hartnett was able to renegotiate the bid to a lower cost.

Chair Slade made a motion to approve the \$31,800 contract. Mr. Morton seconded the motion with Mark Schmid, Tim Gillespie, Betty Slade, Dale Weber, Veronica Beaulieu, Hugh Morton, Garrett Stuck and John Bell voting aye in a roll call vote.

5. CPC Expense Account Numbers.

Chair Slade said that some changes appeared in the expense accounts prepared by the town accountant that affected this table.

Chair Slade made a motion to pass over this matter to the next meeting for further discussion. Mr. Morton seconded the motion with Mark Schmid, Tim Gillespie, Betty Slade, Dale Weber, Veronica Beaulieu, Hugh Morton, Garrett Stuck and John Bell voting aye in a roll call vote.

6. Estimate of Community Preservation Act Available Funds for FY25.

This discussion was passed over to the next meeting.

7. Approval of Draft Annual Report.

Mr. Gillespie made a motion to accept the Annual Report as written. Ms. Beaulieu seconded the motion with Mark Schmid, Tim Gillespie, Betty Slade, Dale Weber, Veronica Beaulieu, Hugh Morton, Garrett Stuck and John Bell voting aye in a roll call vote.

8. Any Comments on Projects by Liaisons.

Chair Slade said there is no liaison assigned to the Town Hall Project. Mr. Schmid said he believed that if Mr. Gillespie could not do it, he would be happy to do so.

9. Any Volunteers as Liaison for Affordable Housing Trust and Town Hall Restoration.

Chair Slade suggested that Ms. Beaulieu be liaison to the Housing Authority. Ms. Beaulieu said that she would agree to assist Chair Slade but did not feel she was experienced enough to take that on herself. It was so agreed. Ms. Beaulieu said that the Housing Authority is a policy-making Board with the State being the governing authority. She stated that residents from other cities and towns must be eligible to reside in the housing in Westport. The Authority has nothing to do with raising funds from the CPC. It was agreed that it is unusual that the Housing Authority is required to have a representative to the CPC.

10. List of Bills Paid.

Chair Slade made a motion to pass over the approval of the bills to the next meeting because they were not in the packet. Ms. Weber seconded the motion with Mark Schmid, Tim Gillespie, Betty Slade, Dale Weber, Veronica Beaulieu, Hugh Morton, Garrett Stuck and John Bell voting aye in a roll call vote.

11. Any Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated.

None.

12. Correspondence.

None.

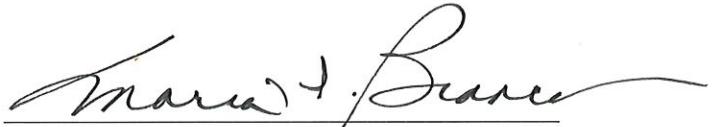
Mr. Gillespie made a motion to request legal opinion from Town Counsel regarding the St. John the Baptist Church request for CPA funds. Mr. Morton seconded the motion with Mark Schmid, Tim Gillespie, Betty Slade, Dale Weber, Veronica Beaulieu, Hugh Morton, Garrett Stuck and John Bell voting aye in a roll call vote.

Mr. Gillespie commended Vice-Chair Bell in chairing his first meeting.

The next meeting is currently scheduled for January 11, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. to be held via Google Meet, unless otherwise decided.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Gillespie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Chair Slade seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with all members voting aye.

Respectfully submitted,



Maria I. Branco, Clerk
Community Preservation Committee

APPROVED:



Betty Slade, Chair

Attachments:

Minutes of October 12, 2023
Project Submissions
Contract of Town Farm
Expense accounts
Liaisons