

Community Preservation Committee
April 6, 2021
7:00 PM
MINUTES

Members Present: Christopher Feeley, David McNeill, Monique Doyle, Lisa Oxford, Michael Giardino, Joseph Halligan, Wayne Simarrian, Jeffrey Livingstone, Phyllis Malcom

Town staff also in attendance: Town Administrator Jamie Hellen, Assistant to the Town Administrator Chrissy Whelton, Director of Planning and Community Development Bryan Taberner, Conservation Agent Jennifer Delmore

Other Attendees: Thomas Mercer, Melanie Hamblen

Chairman Christopher Feeley called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

1. Approval of Minutes:

Mr. McNeill made a motion to approve the Minutes from the CPC meeting on March 30, 2021. Motion was Seconded by Ms. Doyle. Roll call vote was unanimous.

2. Approval of Committee Meeting Schedule:

Mr. McNeill made a motion to approve the Community Preservation Committee Meeting Schedule for 2021. Seconded by Ms. Doyle. Mr. Feeley suggested canceling the July and August Meetings. Mr. Hellen suggested moving the Housing Presentation that was originally scheduled for July to September if cancelling July and September meetings was approved. Mr. Feeley made a motion to cancel the July and August. Mr. Simarrian seconded the motion. Roll call vote was unanimous.

3. FY22 Budget Approval:

Mr. Feeley gave a quick overview of the proposed FY22 Community Preservation Committee Budget. He mentioned that the total requested is what the town believes the revenue will be including the 5% for Administrative expenses as well as the 3 required areas and the remaining for Budgeted Revenue Reserves. Mr. McNeill made a motion to approve the Budget. Motion was seconded by Ms. Doyle.

Mr. Halligan asked if the 10% for each of the required areas was a minimum or would they be allowed to allocate more than the 10%. Mr. Feeley responded that the 10% is a minimum and that more can be added however that would restrict the CPC's ability. He also mentioned that leaving the remaining balance in the budgeted reserve allows the allocation of funds to any of the 3 required areas as projects come before the committee. Mr. Hellen also followed up stating that the Committee needs to first develop a CPA Plan and that if something were to

come up the Committee would have to evaluate a very unique status to move forward. Ms. Doyle asked who would be putting the CPA Plan together and when it would be available. Mr. Hellen noted that Mrs. Whelton would be writing the plan. He also stated that the meeting schedule is designed to get the committee up to date of the goings around town, that the public hearing is an important piece to the plan and we anticipate to have that sometime in the late fall. Mr. Hellen noted that barring any unforeseen circumstances where there is a time limit or something we legally have to respond to by a certain date his recommendation would be to wait to collect funds for a whole year before spending. He also stated that making sure that we have enough feedback from the community for the plan is a critical part of the process. Mr. Feeley followed up by stating that we are about 12-18 months away from beginning to spend the funds. Ms. Doyle asked when the plan would be written as she would like to make sure people are able to read what the CPC is about and get to know the full application process. Mr. Helen responded that Mrs. Whelton would be writing the plan however it would not be available until after all the presentations. He also mentioned that this would be a working document and would be updated every year. Mr. Livingstone asked if the CPA Plan would be tied into the Master Plan. Mr. Hellen responded that yes the Master Plan will reflect the CPA Plan. Roll call to approve the Budget was unanimous.

4. Open Space Presentation & Discussion:

Mr. Hellen gave an overview of Open Space in Franklin noting that the current total in the Open Space Stabilization Account is \$2,372,367. He mentioned that the Town Council voted last year to appropriate 1.3 million into the fund. Mr. Hellen went over current obligations at \$275,000 for a project off of Elm Street. Mr. Hellen mentioned that the estimated annual collections would be between \$1.329 and \$1.7 million based on today's property values, state match and current assumptions. Mr. Hellen went over the Open Space Map noting the may 61 parcels of land that still remain. Ms. Doyle asked what the percentage of protected land is in the town. Mr. Hellen responded that he did not have that percentage on hand but would obtain it from our GIS department. Mr. Hellen briefly went over some of the current town projects to include the Property off of Elm Street, various parking lots to provide access to State Forest.

Mr Hellen informed the committee that the Recreation Director, Ryan Jette would be attending the May meeting and would give an in depth presentation on what's going on with Recreation. Mr. Hellen noted some of the recent projects with Recreation including the Fletch Field Rink, King Street Memorial Park Renovation, Dacey Disc Golf, Safety Netting for the Baseball fields at the High School, the new concession stand and Turf field replacement. Next on the agenda would be the Nason Street Tot Lot.

Mr. Hellen briefly went over the Franklin Greenway project which is similar to the “Emerald Necklace” in Boston and Brookline. He stated that this Franklin Greenway would connect major areas and parks through bike lanes, sidewalks, activities and tours to create a more integrated coordinated system of transportation and recreation.

Mr. Hellen described 61 land noting that 61A and 61B provide certain property tax reductions to registered land in return for an enhanced protected status but not permanently protected. He noted that Franklin currently has 59 parcels or roughly 22 Blocks of land under Chapter.

Mr. Livingstone mentioned that 4-5 years ago the town became a member of the Keystone program through UMASS which is made up of Conservation folks. Materials were given to the town regarding 61 properties and those materials reside in the Conservation Office in Town Hall.

Mr. Simarrian proposed to keep the 88 acres behind the Franklin Elks for potential passive recreation and a park on the north side of town. Mr. Feeley asked if the 88 acres is town owned land. Mr. Hellen noted that the staff would look into it.

Mr. McNeill mentioned the Open Space and Master plan goals specifically the one noting to prioritize Chapter 61 properties for potential acquisition. He asked if there has been a list compiled or prioritized of these properties. Mr. Hellen responded that it was a goal in the Open Space Plan however it is too sensitive to discuss publicly as you are ultimately talking about people's property. Mr. Simarrian asked if there is a large attractive piece of land that is privately owned, can the town purchase the land to prevent 100 houses being built on it. Mr. Hellen answered, if ner Chapter 61, then no. He stated that the land owner can approach the town if there is no contract or agreement with a third party investor. Once they are in an agreement the town must stay out. He mentioned that the next opportunity for the town to engage with the property owner is after a definitive Subdivision/Development/project has been fully permitted by the respective boards, that's when the right of first refusal comes in. Once a plan is approved that is when the land owner has the choice whether to exercise and send a right of first refusal to the community and then the Town has 120 days to act on it. Ms. Fisher of the Agricultural Commission noted that the Ag Com has done outreach to Chapter 61 land owners about their land. She also offered the Ag Com to collaborate with the CPC on Chapter land and how it works. She mentioned some property owners are skeptical to put their land in Chapter because they are afraid the Town will take their property. She clarified that the town can only buy it if you take it out of the chapter.

Mr. Simarrian asked if we have town properties that we want to keep as town properties and not sell or build on particularly Davis Thayer can we keep it under the town's control. Mr. Feeley

responded that that would not fall under the CPC as it would not be a purchase of land. Mr. Hellen mentioned that the School Committee voted to close Davis Thayer for school activities beginning september. The School Committee still owns the land and they need to go through a formal public vote to declare it surplus property. He mentioned that there are a lot of ideas floating around on what to do with the property however it would cost the town over \$20- \$30 million just to renovate the building. The taxpayers would be looking at a debt exclusion. Mr. Simarrian asked if there was access to any grants or funds for the renovation for a possible Police Station. Mr. Hellen noted that there are none available at this time for public safety buildings.

Mr. Feeley mentioned there are many things the town could do with the property but that the main point is to keep the property in the Towns Control. Mr. Livingstone noted that Franklin is similar to other towns whose downtown areas are dominated by a college. He explains that many people in town are worried that Dean College will try and purchase the Davis Thayer Building.

Ms. Doyle made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was seconded by Mr. McNeill. Roll call vote was unanimous.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:15 PM