

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
Minutes, January 19, 2012
Acton Memorial Library

Members present: Walter Foster (chair), Janet Adachi, Peter Ashton, Tory Beyer, Roland Bourdon, Doré Hunter, Andy Magee, Betsy Mercier, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Corrina Roman-Kreuze, Ken Sghia-Hughes
Also present: Steve Noone (Finance Committee observer), Roland Bartl (staff)

The meeting was opened at 7:30pm.

1. Project Hearings

A. 7:30 PM – ACHC – Regional Housing Services Program

Nancy Tavernier, presenter

Corrina Roman-Kreuze, liaison

Nancy provided a copy of her PowerPoint presentation to the Committee, and went through the presentation, covering:

- a brief history of the ACHC
- the work that it does
- how other similar Towns cover the same tasks (all with paid staff, and funded by CPC where available)
- the things that the Regional Housing group would cover

The ACHC would like to request the \$40,000 go into the ACHC Housing Fund, so that if the ACHC is not accepted into the Regional Housing Services Organization, they could use the money to find other ways to fund their administrative costs.

Questions and discussion by the Committee:

- When will the determination be made about which community will be added to the group? Nancy speculated that it would be in the April timeframe. Acton may be at a disadvantage for being accepted, due to the fact that we appear “to have our act together”.
- Is this regionalization “big enough” to handle all the tasks that ACHC needs to cover? Isn’t there enough work just in Acton for a full-time position?
- Can CPC funds be allocated (granted) to a person’s salary? YES
- If the CPC funding is not approved in future years, would the Town be “on the hook” to cover the cost of being in the regional group? Presumably yes.
- What is the process for acceptance into the regional organization? The ACHC has sent a letter expressing interest in joining the organization. The RHSO would have to first accept Acton. Then an inter-municipal agreement would be drawn up, and the Board of Selectmen would have to sign it.

B. 7:45 PM – Town of Acton – 468 Main Street Access Project

Dean Charter, presenter

Janet Adachi, Liaison

Dean noted that CPC took a tour of the house, and did not have a formal presentation.

Questions and comments by the Committee:

- This feels like a project for Town funding, rather than CPC (Andy)
- Is the house set up in the best way for its use? Is this going to change in the near future? Not as far as we know now. In the future, maybe someone will want to raze the house and put something else up, but that is not being considered now
- Why isn't this on the Town's budget? It's strictly a matter of finding funds that are available for this project.
- Is this project eligible under CPA law? According to Town Counsel, yes.
- If the Town is going to use it as a Town office (i.e. Veterans Officer), then it should be made accessible (Dore')
- The Board of Selectmen are considering bonding a group of capital items, so this would not be competing for those dollars (Steve Noone)

C. 8:00 PM – Town of Acton – Memorial Library window restoration

Dean Charter, presenter

Roland Bourdon, liaison

Dean noted that CPC took a tour of the windows. There was no formal presentation, and the Committee had no questions or substantive comments.

D. 8:15 PM – Town of Acton – Town Hall Tower Clock

Dean Charter, presenter

Dore' Hunter, Liaison

Dean noted that CPC took a tour of the clock tower. There was no formal presentation.

Questions and comments by the Committee:

- A question was raised about whether this is really an historic restoration, since we are really talking about buying new electronics and motors to run the clock (Andy)
- Do we get a warranty on this? About 5-6 years, and we will get a service contract.
- How many faces of the clock currently work? Two faces out of the four, so far as we know right now. The project would replace all 4 of them.
- Is the cost firm? We have a quote. It shouldn't go up much, if at all. If it does, the Town would cover the additional cost out of its own budget

E. 8:30 PM – Town of Acton – Windsor Building Interior Restoration

Dean Charter, presenter

Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Liaison

Dean formally requested a lower project amount, and handed out a construction quote in support of the request. Dean explained that the previous work done on the building was funded by \$70,000 of CPC money (last year), supplemented by \$39,000 of Town money to rebuild the front of the building foundation. The proposal for this year of funding originally proposed to renovate the interior of the building to meeting-place standards for a cost of \$225,000. The new, scaled-down approach would make it acceptable for outdoor events, like the Farmer's Market, a street fair, etc. and would be more of a barn-

like atmosphere. Based on the quote handed out and \$3000 for some additional lighting, the cost for this scaled-down approach would be about \$30,000.

Questions/comments from the Committee:

- If we did the \$225,000 approach, what additional amenities would we get? Air conditioning, handicap access ramp, finished walls, etc. We would be able to rent out the space for outside groups. In contrast, the \$30,000 option would require barn doors to be open for handicap access, would not have A/C and would be more appropriate for outdoor activities.
- Is there a plan for the 2nd floor? The Town has moved in some racks for storage. To allow public access, you'd have to have an elevator, which is cost prohibitive.
- What is the feasibility of razing the building and erecting a cheap light cover structure to accomplish the same thing that we would be getting for this proposal? Dean said he hasn't priced that option out. It probably would quickly run up to \$150,000, and we would be losing the \$70,000 CPC funds that we already have sunk into it, and the asset to the community of the renovated exterior building.
- Comment: \$30,000 may be too low (Andy). We should put the bathroom and kitchenette sink back in the proposal for the additional \$30,000 cost. Dean: That would make the space more usable. It would be better, but if the Committee doesn't want to fund that extra part this year, we could do it another year, without tearing things up too much.
- Do we have sufficient meeting space now (we need a consistent and definitive answer)? No, there are several boards that want to meet each night, and some boards can only fit in a few of the existing meeting rooms that we have. We continue to struggle with the space issue.
- Is there a septic system there? Yes, that shouldn't be an issue for the bathroom/kitchenette

2. Piper Road – brief update

Dean Charter updated the Committee on the Piper Road property. The higher bid on the second round was about \$225,000. The Board of Selectmen has signed off on it, and the process is moving forward. Dean is hopeful that we can have this tied up by Town Meeting in April. Roland Bartl reminded the committee that a small portion of the proceeds of this sale would go to the Town to cover the costs to the Town, and the remainder would go into the Open Space set-aside of the CPC funds.

3. Minutes of 12/08/11

The minutes from the 12/8/2011 meeting were unanimously approved as written.

4. HDC – Preservation Loan Program, Update

Janet updated the Committee on this proposal. Walter and Roland Bartl offered additional information. There are a number of questions that have been raised about whether this program can be put into effect and how it would work. Some of the issues are:

- Is \$7500/loan enough to make the loan program viable?
- Is HDC the right entity to oversee this?

- Grant vs. loan program?
- Town administered vs. bank program?
- Can the Town legally administer a fund such as this?

Based on these issues (and maybe others), the Town Treasurer recommended that we hold off on this proposal until next year, so that we can work on these details. The proponent wants to move forward this year. Town Counsel is looking into what is involved with making something like this workable from a legal standpoint. At this point, we are waiting on an opinion of the Department of Revenue about whether the Town can set up such a fund legally. If we get a positive response to this question, then we can move forward with looking at the other issues.

5. Closing Prior Year Accounts/Recapture Funds

Roland Bartl reported on the older accounts whose projects have expired or are now complete. Walter noted that the Morrison Farm project is very old, and has not used its funds. Walter instructed the Committee to review the other projects too, for languishing funds, so that we can recapture funds that are not likely to be spent. This item will be placed on the agenda for review at the next meeting on January 23rd. Roland Bartl recommended that the Committee send a letter to projects that it wants to pull money back from, to give the organizations a year's notice before recapturing the funds.

On the Power's Gallery, there has been a sticking point on the Preservation Restriction, since they already have a more restrictive one in place. We have now agreed with them on a 20-yr Preservation Restriction, so funds can now be released. The Powers realize that they have to start the project this year in order not to lose the funds.

6. Administrative Update

Exchange Hall has now completed all the historic preservation work on the building. Glenn Burger has obtained the appropriate approvals from the Historical Society, but he cannot afford the elevator access, so there are still open questions about the release of the CPC funds for this project.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Sghia-Hughes, Clerk