

Minutes
Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee
January 15, 2015
Acton Memorial Library

Members Present: Peter Ashton (Chair), Peter Berry, Tory Beyer, Jeff Clymer, Amy Green (Vice Chair), Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Ken Sghia-Hughes, Joe Will (Clerk)

Others Present: Kristen Guichard (Acton Assistant Planner), Roland Bourdon (Finance Committee observer), Tom Tidman (Acton Director of Natural Resources), Cathy Fochtman (Acton Recreation Director), Chris Brown (Hayward Road resident) and friend.

Peter A opened the meeting at 7:33 PM.

I. Minutes of January 8, 2015

- It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve the minutes as submitted.

II. Project Hearings

- NARA Safety Improvement (Acton Recreation Department (RD))

Cathy reviewed the status of each RD project that has been awarded CPA funds and had not yet been completed by this time last year. She then presented what the RD detailed in this year's "NARA Safety Improvement" application. Her presentation (See: <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-49116>) included a slide and handout of a labeled aerial view of NARA, including the locations of two security barrier gates and the roadway they would "secure." Other points made:

- The additional memory card will allow for multiple codes to be processed by the keypad entry system. A keyed code will allow entry; exiting likely will be automatic.
 - Is a 5-year limited warranty (on the proposed gates) typical? The gate proposal accompanying the project application is from a local company that has done a lot of local projects, but Cathy has no information about other systems. Cathy will do more research about the warranty.
 - What's the life cycle of such gates? 5–10 years.
 - Does the Town have insurance if a gate should come down on someone's car? Yes.
 - Is there enough "authorized" traffic? In addition to pavilion and amphitheater users, there is garbage pickup, Highway Department traffic, and NARA staff, among others. NARA gets very busy on weekends.
 - If power from the Town's solar power facility may ultimately be used for lighting at NARA, can the same be applied to these barrier gates? That new idea for lighting some of the parking lots at NARA has not been considered for these gates.
- NARA Picnic Pavilion Restroom (Acton RD)

Continuing, Cathy then presented what the RD detailed in its “NARA Picnic Pavilion Restroom” application. The aerial view of NARA showed the proposed location of the modular restroom. Other points made:

- The restrooms would be open for use only during scheduled pavilion functions or NARA public events scheduled by the RD.
- Have you looked at leveraging CPA funds with any others? Some help is possible with installation cost, excavation, and a couple other things, but nothing firm yet.
- Is there a stabilization fund? In general, the RD sets fees to cover its costs.
- Has the project considered composting units? There are two prohibitive factors: The depth of the groundwater and the bedrock. Composting would require a full room below the unit, so we don’t have that option. The proposed plan is probably the easiest way to go. We may have to supplement the septic line to reach the existing field.
- How much additional maintenance? The on-site staff is in charge of restroom facilities. We could also use RD staff. We are looking to hire seasonal workers who would help basically with functions. They would police the facility.
- What is the life expectancy? 30 years
- Would this facility be available in winter? In winter the Town blows out the lines and turns off the water. This facility would not be available for winter events.
- Since this restroom is for a paying customer and not for the public, does Town Counsel have opinion on its appropriateness for such a narrow audience? Kristen: Town Counsel did not raise this as issue. We can double check this with Town Counsel.
- How many private events were there at NARA last year? Between 30 and 40. Is the RD estimating an increase this coming year? Yes. It is on a marketing push right now.
- The RD is studying possible incorporation of a restroom-use fee into the pavilion-use fee to help cover restroom operating costs. It hopes to cover the cost of a “manager” who sees that an event runs smoothly.
- Something to think about: Have an additional fee that would pay over time the cost of this facility. The CPC could agree to put the \$ up front, then perhaps the RD could reimburse the CPC over time. Tom: It would put us in a weird spot. The RD can have at most \$10K in specific accounts, so it can’t “make money.” Peter A: There is no reason the RD couldn’t have an incremental fee to pay back the CPC.
- Current portable toilets at NARA will stay for NARA’s casual users, the walkers, and so on. We rent the portables by the month. There would be no huge offset by taking away the portable toilets. Susan: There are super-fancy portable toilets you can rent. Maybe something like this would allow us to defer this for a year or two. Tory: It would be interesting to know what portable toilets would cost to help the RD determine how much to charge.
- The current rental fee for the pavilion depends on several things. For an Acton resident it’s \$250 for the whole day. In addition to varying for length of time, the fee varies for non-residents, and for profit-making groups (e.g., corporations).

- Skate Park Expansion – Phase 2, Skate Plaza (Acton RD)

Continuing, Cathy then presented what the RD detailed in its “Skatepark Expansion — Phase 2, Skate Plaza” application. She provided a Skatepark diagram larger than the one accompanying the application and with some additional detail. She also explained the currently-funded Phase 1 project (the amoeba bowl — about a 6 week construction project). Other points made:

- Boxborough agreed in 2005 or so to share in funding the Skatepark, but Boxborough TM did not approve. Now the Boxborough Recreation Commission and Town Administration are discussing an article for the May Town Meeting that would appropriate \$40K from general funds for the project. Boxborough has recently approved its participation in the CPA, but it can’t use the CPA this year. Also, one town using CPA \$ for a project in another town could be problematical. Any Boxborough contribution would offset Acton’s CPA appropriation.

- Making the Skatepark aesthetically pleasing as this plan suggests will add a lot. Would Phase 2 be the end of Skatepark development? Cathy: We would be set for some time (Ed note: inflection meaning “yes”).

- The town owns the Skatepark land, having acquired it from the state. The extended parking to the east is on state land (with state’s approval).

- The proposal speaks of “handicap accessible (HA) park amenities,” but HA is not apparent in the schematic. Tom: We talked about handicapped accessibility with designer and they designed it to be HA.

- How many people use the Skatepark? How many are Boxborough kids? Cathy: This serves the Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools so school kids could be from either Acton or Boxborough. There are no numbers available, but users include people of all ages, including people from out of town. People network about skateparks. The social media influence is unbelievable.

- Acton resident and skateboarder Chris Brown expanded on this, speaking in favor of the project. He views skateboarding as “something more than a swing set” for kids who don’t want to play football or baseball. It’s a lifelong activity. At age 49, he is a good example of this. In addition to points Cathy has made, he suggests that the Skatepark could be a source of revenue that could pay for maintenance and general upkeep. For example, AB kids under 18 could have free “memberships.” 18s-and-over could be charged a few dollars, and skateboarders from outside Acton and Boxborough a few dollars more. There could be competitions. There could be instruction, possibly a proctor available in the summer. The RD could have pros (Massachusetts has at least one nationally-sponsored skateboarder) come in to demonstrate, inspire kids, provide instruction, and speak to kids at the schools. There could be sponsored events. Knowledgeable skateboarders know of the various facilities in the area (an amoeba bowl exists in Hudson; the Acton developer is also developing of the Charles River Skatepark in Cambridge). There is lots of networking possible from town to town and social media could link up the different facilities.

- Annual CPA Administrative Support Funding (Acton Town Manager)

The CPC had no questions.

III. Administrative Updates

Re the new ranking by the Board of Selectmen (BOS) of the 9 Town-sponsored projects: Each member of the BOS was asked to rank her/his top 5 of the 9 projects. Two of the 9 projects received 0 votes. Peter B will talk to the selectmen to clarify that 0 votes does not mean that the CPC should not consider these 2 projects; that the CPC can consider them as being “still recommended” by the BOS.

CPC deliberations begin next meeting. There was a short discussion about process. Peter A will propose a process at the start of deliberations.

8:54 PM — It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn.

Dates:

01/22/15 CPC Meeting (Library), deliberations
02/12/15 CPC Meeting (Town Hall – Faulkner Room), deliberations
02/26/15 CPC Meeting (Library), deliberations
03/12/15 CPC Meeting (Library), Town Meeting prep
03/26/15 CPC Meeting (Library), Town Meeting prep
04/06/15 Town Meeting (ABRHS)