

Minutes
Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee
June 11, 2015
Acton Memorial Library

Members Present: Peter Ashton (Chair), Tory Beyer, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Ken Sghia-Hughes, Joe Will (Clerk)

Others Present:

Roland Bartl (Acton Planning Director), Roland Bourdon (Finance Committee observer),

Peter opened the meeting at 7:37 PM.

I. Minutes of April 23, 2015

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

II. Discussion about Increasing CPA Surcharge

Peter reported that the Selectmen at their Monday meeting voted to set up a CPA Study Committee (SC) by September with essentially two “thrusts,” 1) whether to recommend increasing the CPA property tax surcharge, and 2) do a “look back” over the last 12-13 years and evaluate the CPA as it has related to Acton—and possibly decide whether there could be other “tweaks.” Points made in ensuing discussion:

- A “blended CPA” (requiring a Town Meeting vote and a Town ballot, as happened recently in Littleton) is possible. This would allow for other revenues (e.g., housing gift funds, mitigation funds) to be deposited in the CPA account, which then would increase the state match. It was pointed out that a blended CPA would cause accounting challenges for the Town.
- Increasing the set-aside amounts is possible (e.g., instead of the minima 10%, 10%, and 10% for Open Space, Housing, and Historical, it could be 30%, 40%, and 10%).
- The SC would report to the Board of Selectmen (BoS) on the “look back.” It was noted that the BoS could read the CPC’s Annual Reports for this information.
- The SC structure defined by the BoS is like the current CPC structure. The BoS is leaving it up to the individual groups as to whether to appoint their CPC rep to be their SC rep. It was noted that for the SC to give a truly objective view, its membership should not include CPC members. In particular, it would be important to have the “ordinary taxpayer” on the SC.
- To justify a CPA tax increase, the SC should develop a “compelling” list of what could be accomplished with the increase—in effect, a plan separate from the Annual Plan. Perhaps this could be achieved by soliciting long-range plans from groups that would use CPA funds.
- For the past year, if the CPA tax would have been 3% instead of 1.5%, Acton’s CPA \$ would have been more than \$1600K instead of \$840K. The state match would have been \$527K instead of \$264K, and there would have been additional state \$ from the 2d and 3d rounds of state funding. The total CPA funding would have increased to about \$2.4M from \$1.1M.
- CPC members who represent various Acton groups are to ask their respective groups to appoint a SC member.

III. 2016 Draft Community Preservation Plan - status update

- Roland Bartl needs comments, suggestions, changes, etc., from CPC members by July 15.
- Peter will see if there is something in the Open Space and Recreation Plan that can be worked into the 2016 Plan; also for the Plan a process timeline, similar to what he presented at the 2015 Town Meeting. Re the latter, Roland pointed out that the CPA process is still on the Town website, and it could possibly be folded into the 2016 Plan.

IV. Administrative updates

- Roland Bartl pointed out that Town Planning is currently short on staff and will be moving back into Town Hall on June 22.
- Roland has received requests from Acton schools for first payments on their award for nature play spaces. Roland reminded the schools that three installment payments would be made to the award recipient (Acton-Boxborough Regional School District) as described in the award letter.
- On the Assabet River Rail Trail, we've had site visits of the affected property owners and have received appraisals for several of the easements, but not yet for 20 Main Street (the most significant one). Attitudes have been generally cooperative, and the existing schedule generally looks good.
- Not sure yet when work on Phase 2 of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail will actually start. Massachusetts Department of Transportation says it could be in 2–3 weeks.
- Peter (consulting with spouse) would like to host a Committee picnic at the end of summer or early in September. He would like to have it in Maine, but it probably will happen in Acton. He will send out possible dates by the first of August.
- Next CPC meeting is August 13.

8:19 PM — It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn.