

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee

January 21, 2010
Acton Memorial Library

Attending: Mike Gowing, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Doré Hunter, Walter Foster, Corrina Roman-Kreuze, Jon Benson, Tory Beyer, Ron Schlegel, Ken Sghia-Hughes, Roland Bourdon, Janet Adachi, Roland Bartl, Town Planner. Also present from the Finance Committee (Fin Comm) were Steve Noone (Fin Comm Observer), and Doug Tindal.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jon Benson at 7:30 p.m.

- I. Approval of 1/14/2010 Minutes. The minutes of 1/14/2010 were approved.
- II. Trail Through Time – Request to Use Fund from 2008 CPA Allocation for Next-Phase Design Work. The committee reconsidered Linda McElroy's request to use about \$750 of unexpended 2008 funds for a draft design of a large information pavilion in lieu of the originally proposed information kiosk. At its May 8, 2008 meeting, the Committee approved a similar request from Ms. McElroy to use unexpended 2006 funds to perform additional work on the project; the Committee's approval in 2008 rested on its conclusion that the proposed additional work was consistent with and related to the original project. For those reasons, the Committee voted, 7-2, to approve Ms. McElroy's request to use the unexpended 2008 funds for the pavilion design work.
- III. Preliminary Discussion of 2010 Proposals. Roland Bartl reminded Committee members that at the end of FY 2009, the CPA account was at \$966,000, with \$715,000 from the Town surcharge and \$250,000 in state matching funds; the 2010 recommendations must allocate a minimum of ten percent (10%), or \$97,000 each for open space, historic preservation and affordable housing.

Committee members have divergent opinions and concerns about certain projects.

- A. Windsor Building – Historic Preservation and Adaptive Re-Use. Committee members agree on the need for painting and other minimal work to preserve the building; some members also support the other proposed work.
- B. Open Space Acquisition and Preservation Fund. Committee support for this proposal will hinge on the substance of the pending written policy, which is supposed to limit the permissible uses for the fund, and specify the process by which the Board of Selectman will authorize fund withdrawals. Susan reported that Peter Ashton has drafted a policy for review and approval by the Open Space Committee, after which the policy will go to the Committee.
- C. 468 Main Street – Window Restoration and Replacement. Committee members have varying opinions, with some saying that in a difficult economy, the installation of historically authentic windows is not a compelling need, and other members saying that

the location of the building in the Historic District is a compelling reason to support the proposal.

- D. Acton Town Hall – Historic Window Restoration. Committee members seem to support the replacement of the windows at some point, but differ as whether the work should be postponed, done in part or done in full as the Town proposes.
- E. Test House Historical Project. Members acknowledge that the building is interesting and some would like to see it as a gateway to the Old High Street neighborhood. But Committee support for this proposal is weak, due to the cost of moving and restoring a building that will be of limited use to the Town and also require Town maintenance.

Mr. Tindal shared his thoughts on some Town-owned buildings. He said that the Town needs a space-utilization study rather than a space-use study. During his tenure on Fin Comm, he has come to appreciate the practical reasons for preserving Town-owned buildings.

- Vaillancourt house. An example of demolition by neglect.
- 468 Main Street. Essentially a land purchase. The house is in good condition and can be maintained at little cost. Town employees who have no need for contact with the public can work in the house. He does not support the proposed window-replacement, or improvements such as air conditioning.
- Morrison Farm. In terrible condition. The question is whether the cost of preserving the house would far exceed the value of the house. A replacement building might better address the Town's needs.
- Windsor. A solid building but an eyesore. It could be a great building but has no good constituency to provide leadership with regard to its proposed re-use: Citizens Library may be a vocal supporter of the proposed Windsor restoration, but is dependent upon Town funding for its own operations; local merchants are supportive in the abstract but have offered no concrete ideas for the use of the building. Management of building access remains an issue. Mr. Tindal supports an allocation of \$50,000-\$60,000 for painting, caulking and other work to protect the building and improve its appearance. The Town needs storage space and could use Windsor for that purpose until the Town decides what to do with the building.

The next meeting will be on February 4th, 2010, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall, Room 126. The Committee will work on the recommended dollar amounts for the projects.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

- Janet Adachi, Clerk