

Minutes
Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee
December 17, 2015
Acton Memorial Library

Members Present: Peter Ashton (Chair), Peter Berry, Tory Beyer, Jeff Clymer, Walter Foster, Paula Goodwin, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Joe Will (Clerk)

Others Present:

Roland Bartl (Acton Planning Director), Robert Hummel (Acton Assistant Planner), Roland Bourdon (Finance Committee observer), and about 15 other citizens.

Peter A opened the meeting at 7:36 P.M.

I. Citizen Concerns

- None.

II. Minutes of December 03, 2015

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

III. Project Hearings

- South Acton Congregational Church (SACC) Roof Repair

Peter Babcock, Bill Klauer, and Steve Hadden reviewed the SACC proposal that can be found at <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-6634>. It was noted in the legal memo (found at same site) that the reference to “a roughly four foot square area” of the SACC’s roof should be to a 400 sq ft area. Points from the subsequent discussion:

- Will there be other SACC projects down the line? There is nothing, other than some self-help projects.
- The reason that the problem caused by ice damming didn’t happen in earlier years is that in earlier years the SACC could not be made warm enough to cause roof melting.
- The SACC asked for roof-work estimates from three contractors. Only one responded with a written estimate, which can be found at the website reference above.
- The SACC contribution to the project would repair some interior damage and the front roof. A contractor would work on the back roof where ice damming was much worse.
- Whereas SACC can’t get a contractor until the spring, it will have to continue to rake the problem area in the front this winter. There is not much it can do in the back.
- Is there going to be some sort of insulation or ventilation aspect to the repair? The original building dates to 1891-92. The addition on the back has insulation. The way that insulation was installed leaves no room for ventilation; no room to allow a cold flow above the baffles. For now, they will try to cool the attic ceiling area with two fans.
- The CPC likes to hear that a project’s cost estimate has contingency built in.
- Legal Counsel tells the CPC that the CPC has to make a judgment call that this project is rehabilitation or preservation and not maintenance so that this fits within legal guidelines to prolong the life of the structure and make it eligible for CPA funds. SACC says that this should be an “extraordinary repair.” One contractor says that past damage could be repaired for \$3K, but that doesn’t solve the problem. In fact, SACC has done interior repairs three or four times already, but has never done the kind of work called for in this project, although it now knows it should have. In any case, SACC must upgrade the building in order to preserve it. This fix is mandatory.

– If CPA \$ are awarded for historical preservation, there is a legal requirement that a historical preservation restriction be put into place. The SACC is “already tied into that.” The CPC urges SACC to move ahead with its communications with the Acton Historic District Commission (HDC) so that it doesn’t run afoul of the HDC. The SACC should look at the generic historic preservation restriction information on the Town website.

- Acton Congregational Church (ACC) Master Plan
- ACC Stained Glass Preservation

David Clough did a PowerPoint review of both ACC proposals (which also can be found at <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-6634>). Points from the subsequent discussion:

- The ACC Master Plan for its three buildings, the church, the Fletcher house and the Hosmer house, would encompass what needs to be done in a preservation process and the order in which to do it. The Master Plan proposal is intended to get the Plan going. The Plan could eventually help with state and other funding opportunities. In any case, the ACC does expect to be back (to the CPC) next year, once issues are identified. To this end, the CPC suggests that the ACC have its consultants phase the projects.
- The ACC knows of the historical preservation restriction that has to go with the project, including the fact that the one restriction would apply to the two houses as well as the church even though they are three separate structures with three separate histories. It is possible that the restriction could say that the properties cannot be separated, and the restriction would stay with the properties if any or all were to be sold.
- At present, there is no intent to sell off any of the properties. The properties are all on the same septic system. The ACC could make the two houses into low-income housing. Renting them below market value fits within the ACC charter. To this end, the CPC encourages the ACC to talk with the Acton Housing Authority about affordable housing, noting that to be “affordable,” housing has to be to code. Also, it would seem good strategy to combine historical preservation with affordable housing.
- Legal Counsel says that it’s a CPC judgment call whether the ACC Master Plan project qualifies as rehabilitation or preservation and not maintenance. The CPC has to decide whether planning to preserve a historic structure is really preservation, or would preservation be a “next step.” In any case, there should be nothing about year-to-year maintenance as part of this proposal.
- If the ACC will be planning requests for next year and beyond, it might be good for the ACC to arrange a tour of the properties for the CPC.
- The HDC will support an insulation project.
- On stained glass windows, how long is the contractor’s bid good for? It’s good through the CPC funding cycle (through Town Meeting). Note that the ACC has built in a contingency amount that’s 20% of the contractor’s fee. Other windows not covered by the contractor’s quote would cost another \$5K or so and, hopefully, would be covered by the contingency.

IV. Discussion – Board of Selectmen (BoS) Rankings

- The CPC would like this, but not until after the Recreation Department has made its CPA presentation January 7. Peter B will bring this up at the first 2016 meeting of the BoS for it to possibly be on the second meeting’s agenda.

V. Update – Recapture of Prior Year Funds

- Roland Bartl checked only with projects that he thought might have \$ coming back and found the recapture would be about \$102. Roland will take back the \$ as an administrative step and there will be no CPC vote on the recapture.

VI. Report – CPA Study Committee (SC)

- Peter B reported on the SC 12/14 meeting with Stuart Saginor, Executive Director of the Community Preservation Coalition. CPC points made:
 - Stuart is down on a “blended” CPA. It is not clear how/whether CPC rules would apply to blended funds. Littleton is the only town to have adopted a blended CPA. In Littleton, the town tells the CPC how to spend the blended funds.
 - The average surcharge in Acton is \$123. Doubling the surcharge rate would raise the average to \$247. This would be the highest CPA tax in the state and it may be difficult to get voters to approve that level of assessment.
 - If the surcharge would be 3%, that would make Acton eligible for the second and third rounds of the state match. However, those rounds are weighted to help the smaller and less affluent towns, so being eligible for those rounds really is not advantageous for Acton.
 - Raising the surcharge to 2% would bring in about \$300K additional.
 - If a surcharge increase would make it to an election, having it on the 2016 presidential election ballot would seem advantageous to its passing as towns are more successful with such votes in presidential election years.
 - Walter: Statewide experiences don’t necessarily apply to Acton. Acton voters know Acton best and should keep an open mind on increasing the surcharge.
 - Increasing the percentage set-aside for open space decreases our bonding capability.
 - Peter A is skeptical of the state maintaining its funding match as more towns adopt the CPA. If Boston would approve the CPA, there would be a 20% decrease in the state appropriation for all other participating towns.
 - Peter B could do some acquisition scenarios in his presentations regarding CPA funding, e.g., What happens if we increased the surcharge to, say, 2%, and bond two or three projects in the next 2-3 years. Show how that would affect future open space projects.
 - Peter B will send around Stuart’s PowerPoint presentation.
 - Peter A: Word should get back to the Town that the CPA does not necessarily fund Recreation Dept. projects, and the Town should not assume that it does.

VII. Project Reports and Updates

- none

VIII. Administrative updates

- none

9:11 P.M. It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn.

Next Scheduled Meeting:

01/07 with Recreation Dept. presenting (Jones Playground, Skatepark Expansion Phase 2, NARA Parking Control, Rail Trail Station, Miracle Field Comfort Station — order TBD)) at 7:40 P.M.