

**Town of Southborough, MA
Meeting of the Community Preservation Committee
Cordaville Hall, Room B
Monday, September 11, 2023
7:00 PM**

Committee Members in Attendance: Benjamin Smith (Chair), Kristin LaVault, Grant Farrington, Lisa Braccio, Brett Peters

Non-Committee in Attendance: Freddie Gillespie (CPC Consultant), Elizabeth Carroll (Admin), Kathy Cook (Select Board Member), Sam Stivers (Select Board Member)

Benjamin Smith (Chair) opened the meeting at 7:03 PM
Quorum present

Preliminary Application Review set project presentation dates

The CPC will have a preliminary application review of three applications this evening. Once the CP3 has been filed, Frederica Gillespie will send out a draft budget of what money will be available for funding. It was noted that we are at bonding capacity. In year's past there has always been enough money for all recommended projects by the CPC. This year may be a challenge.

- **Southborough Trails Committee: Peninsula Trail Next Step: Bridging the Gap**
CPA Funding Requested: **\$180,345.00**

This project falls within the funding eligibility guidelines for a recreation project.

Benjamin Smith asked for questions and comments from the Committee.

Lisa Braccio would like an accounting of what money has been spent so far and if there is other grant money they can pursue?

The CPC has a long-time process to ask applicants to request a recommendation letter from their commission. Would like to have a recommendation letter from the Recreation Commission. The CPC does not have to abide by a commission's recommendation in deciding whether to recommend a project for Town Meeting.

- **Historic Sawing Grist Mill/Grain Store Building Restoration**
CPC Funding Requested:

Claire Reynolds emailed Benjamin Smith answers to the application questions. The other documents (Budget numbers and photos) were hand delivered to him. These documents will need to be sent electronically to the Committee.

Benjamin Smith asked the Committee for any questions and comments.

The project is asking the Town to support rehabilitation of the building and then the owner would sublet it.

The CPC requires a preservation restriction (PR) on at least the façade. The PR is recorded on the deed and guarantees the PR remains on the property if the property is sold.

Concern about the septic system. It presently has a very low capacity of 160 gallons a day. Can they expand the septic?

Funding will be used for structural parts of the building. Is there an explicit use? The application does not include an actual interior design of what they plan to do.

Did they discuss a plan for State Funding?

It is possible to be on the State Register and not qualify for State funding. This building is listed on the Massachusetts Historical Commission's data base which does not guarantee State funding. This is a catalogue of historic assets and lists all historic buildings. There is the National Registry of Historic Buildings. Only two properties in Southborough are on the National Registry (Sadie Hutt and South Union School). There is also the National Registry for Historic Districts (Southborough downtown is on this registry).

The Massachusetts Preservation Project Fund (MPPF) is a matching-grant program that supports preservation of historic properties owned by municipalities and nonprofit organizations. St. Marks was able to receive MPPF funds due to being part of the historic downtown district. The Town library and Town House were not eligible for MPPF funding and are in the process of obtaining their PRs. Claire Reynolds will investigate MPPF funding for the Sawin Grist Mill project.

Do they have a plan to put a PR on the building?

They are aware it is needed but may not have the guidance to make it happen. Obtaining a PR on the building can cost money and if they get MPPF funding then they will need to find an organization to hold the PR. The CPC has funded only one private property which is St. Marks. One reason St. Marks received MPPF funding is because they had a PR on the building.

Is it possible to visit the property as was done with Lynne Spencer (Principal, Preservation at Spencer Preservation Group) at St. Marks?

It may not be possible to enter the structure due to its condition. Benjamin Smith will ask if the Committee can visit the property.

- **Southborough Golf Course: Install New Irrigation System**
CPC Funding Requested: **\$525,000.00**

When the Golf Course warrant article was approved, the Selectmen imposed a requirement that the golf course be enrolled in Audubon International. This requirement is significant because it certifies the Golf Course is managed with basic ecological guidelines.

Benjamin Smith asked for any comments and questions from the Committee.

The golf course has a revolving fund available. Does this fall under maintenance which is not covered by CPA funds? Why is this not paid for out of the revolving fund?

This project may be a capital expenditure and not maintenance. It could also be an expansion of the golf course.

What is in the revolving fund and its capacity? Does it have bonding capacity? Could the revolving fund off set some of these expenses?

NE Golf is responsible for maintenance. What is the fee now and will the fee go up? Will the revolving fund pay for the increase in fee?

Presentation Dates

October 12 – Presentation Meeting

November 2, 2023 – Regular Meeting

November 15, 2023 – If needed

All applicants will be invited to the October 12, 2023 meeting.

South Union School Review

Tabled for discussion later in the meeting.

Review: Affordable Housing Trust Fund Strategic Financial Plan

Doriann Jasinski sent a text to Benjamin Smith requesting that we table discussion of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Financial Strategic plan until SHOPC can meet with the CPC. Benjamin Smith explained to her that the Committee is only discussing parts that pertain to the CPC and we will forward any comments to SHOPC.

The CPC was not a part of the discussion when this Strategic Plan was done. Benjamin Smith is listed as part of their focus groups but he was never informed of this and never received their invitation to meet. Benjamin Smith thinks it is a good idea to meet with SHOPC to make sure the strategic plan adequately reflects the CPC and Affordable Housing.

The Committee reviewed a copy of the AFHTF Financial Strategic Plan.

- ❖ *Page 3: However, those funds have not yet been transferred to the AHTF, in part because there was no strategic plan for how to use them. This has created expenditure challenges for the AHTF, as easily-accessible funding is essential to the creation of Affordable Housing*

CPC feels that some context is helpful here. A Strategic Plan was never a requirement for the transfer of funding. The funds approved at the 2008, 20010 and 2011 Annual Town Meetings were not formally requested by AHTFC until March 23, 2022. Upon receiving the request from the AHTFC, the CPC, SHOPC and the AHTFC worked to find a path forward for the transfer.

- ❖ Page 3: *The AHTF needs to be able to move quickly to secure a property before it is off the market*

From 2006 to 2011 the CPC received applications from AHTFC which they approved and sponsored Town Meeting warrant article to fund the AHTF. These amounts requested and approved were above the 10% required housing set-asides for 5 of the 6 years, approving a total of \$ 459,503.62 of CPA funds for Community Housing. The AHTFC has not submitted an application since 2012.

- ❖ Page 6: Under Zoning Barriers: Paragraph one and seven need to be updated.

- ❖ Page 9: Under Local Housing Toolkit:

Paragraph three and four need to be updated to reflect Southborough's adoption of the Business Village zoning district.

- ❖ Page 15: Under Staff and Volunteers: *The AHTFC engages directly with the following partners: Community Preservation Committee (CPC).*

The CPC is listed but was not contacted or invited to participate. In an attachment to the Strategic Plan, the attendees of various focus groups are listed. Ben Smith is listed as an attendee at the Housing Service Providers/Advocates focus group on January 4, 2022, but he was not notified of and did not attend. The CPC welcomes our inclusion in this list of partners to AHTFC, and we look forward to participating in the creation of affordable community housing.

- ❖ Page 15: Under Staff and Volunteers: *There is also no staff support for the Community Preservation Committee (CPC).*

Although the hours are limited, the CPC has had administrative support staff since 2007, and since 2021 has had the services of a CPA consultant.

- ❖ Page 16: Last three paragraphs; discussion of CPA funding to the AHTFC.

The AHTFC submitted applications annually for 6 years and the CPC supported funding those requests. Each such transfer was for at least the 10% CPA affordable housing set-aside, and in one case was \$100,000. In each case this money was transferred without a specific project indicated.

- ❖ Page 17: Untitled table listing select CPA communities and their historic affordable housing CPA funding strategies and amounts.

As discussed in the previous comment, CPC has transferred funds to AHTFC without requiring that the funds be spent on a specific project. In fact, if one includes the recent approval of a

\$196,000 transfer, again without a specific project indicated, Southborough CPC has transferred more non-project-allocated funds (roughly \$400,000) than every other community listed except Chatham.

❖ Page 17: Section entitled, “Assessment:”

The second paragraph suggests that work be done to *encourage the CPC to be better advocates for Affordable Housing*. It is difficult to imagine how CPC could be a stronger advocate for affordable community housing. Over the years the CPC has hosted three seminars on creating affordable housing with a focus on how to effectively leverage Town funds for affordable housing – Habitat for Humanity gave an excellent presentation on work they did in Holliston, Massachusetts, and Shelly Goehring (Circuit Rider, Massachusetts Housing Partnership) gave a presentation in 2017 and again just this last year in 2023, on how to leverage Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Funds. Shelly Goehring’s full CPC June 27, 2023 presentation can be watched on YouTube. All three presentations had valuable information to offer. The Southborough Affordable Housing Trust Fund Committee and SHOPC were invited to attend these presentations.

The CPC worked hard alongside nine other community commissions, committees, and organizations in asking the Select Board to bring a Chapter 61 Property Right of First Refusal for 25 acres on Deerfoot Road for a combination CPA project for Open Space, Historic Preservation and Community Housing with a main focus on Community Housing. The Select Board voted 3 to 2 to not hold a Special Town Meeting to allow Southborough citizens the opportunity to vote on it. Select Board Member Lissa Braccio and Brian Shrifrin voted to support bringing the project to a Special Town Meeting

It is important to note that our charter does not empower us to create projects; we can only recommend the funding of projects presented to us in accordance with the Community Preservation Act (CPA). When affordable housing projects were not being proposed, the CPC worked hard to spur interest by those empowered to create projects.

8:20PM Meeting adjourned for a brief break

8:22PM Meeting reconvened, quorum present

❖ Page 20: Section entitled, “Other Actions,” the discussion of a potential affordable housing project at 28 Boston Rd.

❖ CPC wishes to note that CPA funds were available at the time, but CPC did not receive a request.

❖ Page 22: Discussion of “payment in-lieu” provision.

CPC wishes to note that this is allowed under current zoning, and in fact AHTFC has received such funds in the past.

❖ Page 23: Section entitled, “Board/Committee Member Focus Group,” discussion of sites for affordable housing.

CPC suggests the creation of a list of current viable properties, including Town-owned properties.

- ❖ Page 26: Section entitled, “Board/Committee Member Focus Group,” discussion of CPA funds.

Every appropriation of CPA funds begins with an application to CPC. We welcome such an application from AHTFC. CPC has a remarkable track record at Town Meeting; for 21 years, every single CPC-sponsored warrant article has been approved. We look forward to working with AHTFC to craft another successful warrant article.

Benjamin Smith wanted to acknowledge the work Doriann Jasinski has done to make the Town aware of the continued need for affordable housing. Doriann Jasinski was previously a member of the CPC and now is the head of SHOPC.

Benjamin Smith suggested putting together a document with all our comments and suggestions for SHOPC. This document will accompany a letter explaining we reviewed the AHTF Strategic Plan and wish to offer the following comments. The CPC would welcome the opportunity to meet with SHOPC and further review this document.

Benjamin Smith asked the Committee to send any further questions and comments to Frederica Gillespie and these will be included in the document. Committee authorizes Benjamin Smith to compose a letter to be reviewed by the Committee and he will write to Doriann Jasinski.

- ❖ The title: Affordable Housing Trust Fund Financial Plan is misleading. It was drafted by SHOPC who hired MAPC to put it together.

Review August 14 letter from AHTFC

The letter requests the transfer of money from the CPC Affordable Housing Fund to the AHTF.

The AFHT funds were previously approved to be transferred at Town Meeting. The CPC was to understand that the warrant article stated these funds would be used quickly. The AHTF funds have not been used to date. Benjamin Smith has seen a big change in the AHTFC and this is helpful to break the log jam between the CPC and the AHTFC. He suggests voting to transfer the money to the AHTF. Frederica Gillespie pointed out that Shelley Goehring, the DOR, and the Community Preservation Coalition recommend when the CPC recommends affordable housing trust funds to Town Meeting a grant agreement is a must. Frederica Gillespie discussed the Massachusetts General Law (MGL) 44b Community Preservation Act Community Housing Requirements and will send a copy to the AHTFC.

Motion by Lisa Braccio and seconded by Grant Farrington to transfer \$196,276.62 to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and concurrently send the MGL 44b Community Preservation Act Community Housing Requirements to the members of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Committee.

Discussion: None

Vote: 5 Ayes

Motion approved unanimously

Documentation for Transfer of Funds to AHTFC

Select Board member, Kathy Cook thinks the Affordable Housing Trust Funds may be better in the AHTF due to timing. In case a real estate property becomes available they can act quickly. She pointed out that the Trust fund is a separate entity from the Town. She would like to continue developing a healthy dialogue with the CPC.

Benjamin Smith asked if they were requesting all funds be swept over to the AHTF or funds transferred for a specific project? Kathy Cook thinks the structure of the AHTF needs to be looked at. She also added that there is not a lot of affordable housing in Southborough. Must find a better structure to get things done. Lisa Braccio pointed out there is no true affordable housing in Southborough. This is a bigger problem and a legislative problem.

Shelly Goehring's presentation discussed how to leverage CPA short money and work with a developer who would go after grants. This process could take 10 years. Had we started 10 years ago we would be done by now. The affordable housing done in other towns is tasteful. Takes planning to do this. There are huge opportunities working with Shelly Goehring. Sam Stivers mentioned that he is working with Framingham Housing Authority to explore other models the Town has not considered. He was encouraged to watch Shelly Goehring's Mass Housing Presentation to the CPC on YouTube.

South Union School Review

Discussion of comment letter from CPC to the Select Board. Recreation, Historic, OSPC, Planning Board will submit their own letters. SHOPC not included as they have their own document.

- ❖ Without the landscaping the building is nothing.
- ❖ Open space – this area of town is the most densely developed part of town. The open space area is a feel-good space.
- ❖ Great sense of community. Easy and safe for children to walk to. Meeting place for families at the playground and sledding hill.
- ❖ Kate Matison – Committee discussed her impassioned talk regarding the importance of this building within the community. How it was important culturally for the new immigrants who worked in the mills. A majestic building sitting upon the hill overlooking the mills.
- ❖ Town has not maintained the building. They have not taken care of painting, woodwork, or landscaping.
- ❖ Consider how much money has been spent on the North side of Town. St. Marks, The Burnett House, etc. and now the Town is seriously considering tearing down this building when over \$433,000 has been invested.
- ❖ This building is a gem. Once this building is gone you can never get it back or the sense of community it provides.

To be added: The consensus of the Committee's vision of historic, neighborhood as well as John Parents' comments regarding the building's condition. Monies invested were \$433,593 of CPA funds and \$58,000 in Town funds. The cost of the elevator is not known. Because of this building the CPC now requires a PR on all historic buildings.

Chairman's Report

Benjamin Smith received an invoice from the Community Preservation Coalition for annual membership dues. The Community Preservation Coalition in Boston helps advocate for the CPC and the State. They remind us of critical dates for getting a match and information on the State match. We use them as a sounding board for our project questions. They help review our articles to make sure they comply with State law.

Benjamin Smith asked for a motion to continue our membership for another year.

Motion by Grant Farrington and seconded by Brett Peters to authorize payment of the Community Preservation Coalition annual dues.

Discussion: None

Vote: 5 Ayes

Motion approved unanimously

Business of the CPC

- Minutes

Motion by Kristin LaVault and seconded by Brett Peters to approve the CPC meeting minutes of August 22, 2023 as written.

Discussion: None

Vote: 5 Ayes

Motion approved unanimously

- Next Meeting Dates

October 12 – Presentation Meeting

November 2, 2023 – Regular Meeting

November 15, 2023 – If needed

Adjournment

Motion by Lisa Braccio and seconded by Kristin LaVault to adjourn

Discussion: None

Vote: 5 Ayes

Motion approved unanimously

9:20 PM Meeting Adjourned

Minutes respectfully submitted by
Elizabeth Carroll
Administrative Assistant