

Northampton Community Preservation Committee Minutes
March 14, 2018

Time: 7:00 pm
Place: City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street

Members Present: Brian Adams, Martha Lyon, Julia Chevan, Jeff Jones, Ann Dewitt Brooks,
Chris Hellman, David Whitehill
Staff Present: Sarah LaValley

Brian called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

General Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

None

Chair's Report

Brian stated that Ann Dewitt Brooks has left the planning board and CPC due to an upcoming move out of state. The Committee wished Ann well.

Sarah distributed copies of a letter to the Mayor from the Carpenter's Union expressing disappointment with implemented fir wage measures.

Brian stated that First Churches will be having an unveiling celebration for the restored windows that were funded through the CPA.

Sarah provided an update on the Acton religious buildings CPA funds case, there will be more discussions about this to come, and consideration of future funding for historic churches with CPA funds could be impacted.

Meetings with Applicants for CPA Funds

Theater Restoration Phase II – Academy of Music

Sarah stated that this will be postponed until the next meeting due to illness.

Cemetery Stone Restoration - Northampton Historical Commission

Martha recused herself from discussion.

Barbara Blumenthal, Historical Commission, provided an overview of the project. A Master Plan for the Bridge Street Cemetery was completed in 2015 with CPA funds, the Department of Public Works then funded two additional studies for the Park Street and West Farms cemeteries.

Cemetery markers document history and artwork, and are irreplaceable. The plans included many recommendations for work at all historic cemeteries; funds are being requested to address all of the identified priority 1 stones now. A competitive grant from MassHistoric will also be requested.

The Committee discussed the project inflation in the budget, noting that four percent annually is fairly typical.

Linda asked if volunteer labor could potentially reduce the overall cost. Barbara replied that volunteers might be able to be involved, but that specialized conservators will still be necessary.

Brian asked about other cemetery projects funded through the CPA. Sarah stated that the Bridge Street plan application followed-up an unsuccessful request by the Ward 3 Neighborhood Association to replace the fence at Bridge Street.

Tom Goldscheider, David Ruggles Center, expressed support for the project and noted that Park Street includes many abolitionists and founders of Florence.

Laurie Sanders, Historic Northampton, stated that the project could create possibilities for collaborations with Historic Northampton, and noted that many visitors to Northampton visit historic gravestones. Jeff noted that the project could create additional opportunities for collaboration with neighborhoods.

Martha rejoined discussion.

Historic Preservation Plan - Northampton Historical Commission

Barbara Blumenthal provided an overview of the project – the City last completed a preservation plan in 1992, which was limited in scope. The Historical Commission’s tools have expanded to include some of the regulatory recommendations from that plan, and a comprehensive and professional plan would allow the Commission to be more proactive.

The Commission received a CPA award in 2010 for creation of a historic buildings inventory, which will be an important component of the plan, but additional study is needed.

David asked why a new plan is necessary and asked if it will repeat previous work. Barbara replied that approaches and methods to historic preservation have evolved over the 25 years since the plan was completed, and that public input was also not completed as a part of the previous plan. The work of the consultant goes beyond the capabilities of a volunteer board.

Brian asked about possible partial funding. Barbara replied that the cost can’t be reduced, and that other funding sources haven’t been identified. Historic preservation also encompasses adaptive re-use and landscapes, which are also missing from the prior plan. The outreach would create a basis for public discussion and prioritization.

Brian asked which application the Commission would prioritize. Barbara replied that she finds the plan important and the gravestones critical, but that other members might have different opinions.

Discuss Small Grant Applications and Make Funding Recommendations

State Hospital Historic Signage

David moved to recommend funding at the \$3000 amount requested. Seconded by Julia. The Committee discussed the previous awards for the fountain and memorial park. One sign has been installed at the burial ground using other funds.

The motion carried unanimously.

Conservation Area Signage

Linda moved to recommend funding at the \$2900 amount requested. Seconded by Julia.

Martha noted that a design has not yet been created.

Linda suggested that the project would increase public knowledge about open spaces funded through the CPA and is a small request.

Chris stated that he would like to know more, since the project could potentially become a small portion of a larger effort. Julia added that the CPC could request that these signs be programmed into future acquisition requests, but seems like a good small request at this point since it could help get more people to open spaces.

Martha stated that she would like to know how the project fits into the City’s larger wayfinding program.

Linda amended her motion to refer the application to the full funding round. Seconded by Julia, the motion carried unanimously.

Historic Arms Collection

Martha moved to recommend funding at the \$2976 requested. Seconded by Linda.

Martha stated that the application was well-researched and put-together.

The motion carried unanimously.

Administrative Account Expenditure Requests

Community Preservation Coalition Membership Dues

David moved not to fund. Seconded by Chris.

The CPC discussed effectiveness of lobbying for additional funding from other state sources by the coalition.

Brian suggested partial funding.

The motion failed 5-1, with 1 abstention.

Linda moved to fund \$2000. Seconded by Chris. The motion failed, 3-3, with 1 abstention.

Jeff moved to fund at \$1000. Seconded by Martha. Martha suggested that the CPC monitor coalition activities. Brian suggested that staff provide a letter expressing concern in tight financial times and requesting help in understanding value. The motion carried unanimously.

Replacement Laptop

Sarah stated that the secondary staff laptop no longer functioned and had to be replaced. The order was already placed due to the CPC's snow cancellations in February. Chris moved to approve the expense. Seconded by Jeff, the motion carried unanimously.

Site Visits

The CPC agreed that site visits are not necessary for this round.

Other Business

David asked about procurement procedures for land acquisitions. Sarah will ask Wayne to include information in future applications.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 PM.