

**Town of Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee (CPC)**  
Minutes of December 17, 2018  
Great Barrington Fire Station

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Members present: Dan Bailly, Thomas Blauvelt, Lisa Bozzuto, Martha Fick, Jeremy Higa, Don Howe, Jim Mercer, Patricia Sharpe, and Karen W. Smith.

Also present: Town Planner/CPA Administrator Chris Rembold

**Call to Order** 5:30 PM by Chair Blauvelt

**Administrative Items**

Smith moved, Bozzuto seconded, to approve the minutes of November 13, amending one typo. All were in favor.

Smith moved to approve the minutes of December 3; Higa seconded. All were in favor.

**Finalize Step 2 Application Reviews:**

Blauvelt said tonight will be a discussion and vote on the applications but not a full presentation or review. He said he will have to recuse himself from two discussions – the Ramsdell library and the Mahaiwe Theater.

Fick asked for the approximate budget for this year. Blauvelt said we have up to \$1.1 million to recommend for projects or to reserve.

Conservation Commission for McAllister Wildlife Refuge: \$31,300

Smith began by making a motion to fully fund the application. Higa seconded.

Bailly said he likes that this kind of project that seems to be part of a bigger project of phased parts. They have a very good plan of where they are going for future work. Smith said she is impressed with last year's proposal and with amount of work done with a small amount of funds. And she concurs with Bailly. Fick said she thinks this is an excellent project and brings a lot to the community.

Bozzuto said she is looking at the bigger picture of the funds we have versus all the applicants this year. She said she is hesitant to fully fund a lot of things tonight. She wondered if the Commission could put in a little of their own funds to this work.

Higa wondered if the future pieces would be CPA eligible or not. Jess Toro of Native Habitat Restoration answered, saying that there are additional grant funds being requested this current year, and the Commission will have to put in their own funds for that.

Blauvelt called for a vote. All were in favor.(9-0)

North Plain Farm / Stanton APR: \$92,000

Smith moved to recommend full funding for this project. Bailly seconded.

Bailly asked about other funds. Sean Stanton said we will have to fund raise if we do not get the full amount from CPA. He said the state and federal grants are providing \$824,000 towards this.

Blauvelt asked for a vote. All were in favor, except Sharpe. (8-1)

Mahaiwe Theater: \$34,500

Blauvelt recused himself and Smith chaired.

Higa moved to recommend full funding. Bailly seconded. All were in favor, with one recusal. (8-0-1)

Ramsdell Library study: \$30,000

Blauvelt and Bozzuto recused themselves. Smith chaired.

Mercer moved to recommend full funding. Higa seconded.

Smith asked, when this study is completed will, we have a price for the total building cost? Patrick Hollenbeck from the Library Trustees said we possibility will not have the price, but we will have determined what we can do with the space and what needs to be improved. He said it will help us determine if we have the space to have everything we need for the building to be a library, including accessibility.

Howe said the Historic Commission and the Society have historic archives on the second floor. He said we will probably not be allowed to remain there since the library would want to use it as meeting rooms. Hollenbeck said we will have to discuss this. He also said that during any construction the library would have to stay open somewhere, maybe temporary moved nearby. He said we have 2 or three years to figure that out.

Mercer asked if you know yet if the Historical archives would be excluded or whether. Hollenbeck said that is right, we do not know that.

Smith called for a vote.

All were in favor except Smith, with two recusals. (6-1-2)

Town and Greyhouse for Housatonic School: \$650,000.

Bailly moved to fully fund. Bozzuto seconded.

Higa thought that an award for somewhere in the \$300,000 amount was reasonable. It would cover the study and the roof.

Fick says she has a problem to commit this for something she feels the Town has not voted on. She said what if nothing is ever actually done to reuse the building? She said \$50,000 is more reasonable.

Bill Nappo and Rembold said they are also partnering to apply to MHC for an emergency grant and for other funds to repair the building.

Howe said he has heard similar concerns as Fick. He said many people still ask him about the old fire station and say it should be torn down. He said if we recommend \$650,000 on this school there will be a lot discussion at town meeting.

Mercer said he likes that the town is working with a potential developer. He said to have that mix is important. He said he supports \$300,000 to do study and the roof.

Bailly asked if the CPA can recommend exactly what the CPA funds should be used for? Rembold said yes but he urged flexibility.

Nappo says the roof is critical but also the windows are important to do if we can. Bailly said he agrees at least the roof should be done. The windows may be important but that is a stretch at this point. As a resident of Housatonic I would hate to see that building go. It's a sense of place for Housatonic.

Bailly amended his motion to reduce the recommendation to \$300,000. Bozzuto seconded. All were in favor of the amendment.

Blauvelt asked for a vote on the main motion as amended. All were in favor, with Smith recused. (8-0-1)

Historic District Commission: \$49,000

Higa moved to recommend full funding. Bailly seconded.

Sharpe said she would support it a lower level and encourages residents to contribute.

Fick said I think this is important work, but we have more immediate needs. This could be deferred to next year. Higa said asks like this will just get tougher each year.

Smith this has merit. She would agree to a lower level around 25,000.

Sharpe says CPA could pay for the map and signage, and half of the survey research. She proposed a total of \$27,000, and said the Commission could try to raise the rest.

Smith asked if there is a financial benefit to the homeowner. Howe said no, that the benefit really is to the Town so we have knowledge of the historic significance. Sharpe said the benefit of knowledge also is a benefit to the homeowner.

Smith offered amendment to recommend funding at \$27,000 this year. Bailly seconded. All were in favor in favor except Higa, and Howe abstained.

On the main motion as amended, all were in favor, and Howe abstained. (8-0-1)

GB Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund for downpayment assistance: \$100,000

Higa moved to recommend full funding. Smith seconded.

Bill Cooke for the Trust fund summarized the program.

Howe asked how the remaining funds, about \$90,000, from the FY19 grant would be spent. Cooke said it's difficult to spend because the program limits it to 80% of AMI. Howe said you still have funds left though. Cooke said yes but there is a lot of interest from people who need those funds.

Sharpe said we have a lot of demand for our housing funds. The Trust has only given out \$10,000 or so of the existing grant. We could encourage them to use that, and apply again next year.

Higa said but their explanation is that the current money is difficult to spend. As they have success they'll use the money quickly.

Rembold said if the Trust can modify its program limits so the program reaches more people, they will spend last year's funds pretty quickly, and so they would then need this \$100,000.

Higa said this is one of the few programs available for homeownership. Other applicants focus on rental. Programs like this are really important.

Blauvelt called for a vote. All were in favor. (9-0)

Bailly left for the Selectboard meeting.

#### GB Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund for acquisition: \$350,000

Jonathan Hankin for the Trust read a prepared statement to the Committee to explain the importance of the acquisition program buying distressed properties and make them affordable homes in perpetuity. The statement is on file with the Trust's application.

Higa moved to fully fund this. There was no second.

Smith moved to fund it at \$225,000. Higa seconded.

Sharpe asked how much the Trust had now. Hankin said we have \$50,000 unrestricted, that could be used for this. The rest of the Trust's money is in the downpayment assistance fund.

Mercer asked about liability. He said distressed properties are risky. He sees the program as horribly risky.

Smith asked the Trust why not focus on one program and do it well?

Higa said he agreed there is risk, but this is the only way for moderate income people to be able to afford a home and do the rehab. Otherwise these homes get flipped and they are no longer affordable. This is the way to keep them permanently affordable. He said the first program, the downpayment assistance, is for homes that don't need much work. This is another set of properties that need work. We will increase the chances of affordable homeowner in Great Barrington.

Howe says there is inherent risk here that the CPC loses money.

Sharpe said she finds the preservation of properties appealing, but she has a concern about the scope. This program will help one person buy a house, rather than a project that helps many people rent. She said it's not a wide impact.

Higa disagreed about the impact and said rental and ownership are different. He said rental projects are for a lot of people but they are in one place and can trap people there. Homeownership builds value

Howe said there is no guarantee that values go up. Maybe we are creating a bad situation for that homeowner. They might not get ahead.

Fick said this year we cannot fund it at a level they can do much. Mercer said it's a risky program.

Higa said it's up to Town Meeting to decide, not us.

Blauvelt called for a vote. Higa was in favor, all others were against. (1-7)

CDC to create housing at 910 Main Street: \$200,000 this year, \$450,000 total

Higa motion to recommend funding of \$200,000. Smith seconded.

The committee discussed how to send a signal that it would support an application for the balance of the funding next year.

Blauvelt called for a vote on the motion. All were in favor (8-0).

Blauvelt asked for a motion to support funding up to \$250,000 next year, subject to Town Meeting approval.

Smith moved. Higa seconded. All were in favor (8-0).

**Citizen Speak** None

**Adjourned** at 7:25 PM

Minutes prepared by:



