

## **Town of Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee (CPC)**

Minutes of April 28, 2020

This meeting was held via audio/video teleconference as noted on the agenda for this meeting.

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

Also present: Chris Rembold

**Call to Order** 5:00 PM by Chair Blauvelt.

Blauvelt called the roll and all members were present.

Blauvelt asked Vice Chair Smith to Chair the meeting since he was on audio-only and could not see the other participants.

**Administrative Items:** Davis moved to approve the minutes from January 21, 2020, Sharpe seconded. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. Passed 9-0

### **Discussion of Town Meeting and Recommended Projects**

*Berkshire Natural Resources Council:*

Narain Schroeder of BNRC requested the support of the Committee to change the proposed trailhead location from the south end off of Spruce Drive, as previously presented to the Committee, to the north, off of Long Pond Road. The change is because there were title issues on the acquisition of the Barbieri land at the south. He said those title issues will take some time to figure out, but acquisition of this new proposed access is likely to happen sooner.

Smith asked who the owner of the new access area is. Schroeder said that it is owned by Jim Mercer (member of this Committee) in the name of the Mercer Nominee Trust. Smith asked Mercer to recuse himself, which he did.

Bozzuto asked how far this new access / parking area is from Round Pond. Schroeder said it is probably a couple hundred yards. He said the parking area would be across the street (Long Pond Road) from Buttowndown Lane.

Davis asked if this was the first choice, and are there any concerns we need to know about? Schroeder said no, these are both really good sites, it's just that they hope to close on the north site sooner. They hope to make both trailheads, eventually.

After discussion, Higa moved to accept the proposed change. Fick seconded. On roll call vote, all eight voting members were in favor (Mercer was recused). Passed 8-0

*Budget and Funding for FY21 Projects:*

Rembold discussed the coming FY21 budget, saying it would be advisable to reduce the expected CPA revenue (from both the local tax surcharge and the state trust fund). He suggested that revenues might be down as much as 25%, but he said there is no way to know if it will be more or less. He said some of the FY21 recommended projects can be paid using the CPA reserve fund, money not spent in previous years. But some of the FY21 projects would be paid by FY21 revenues. Since those revenues will be lower, he

recommended cutting recommended project spending by about \$75,000. He said that means cutting grant amounts, or cutting projects altogether.

The Committee had a discussion about the projects it has recommended.

Bozutto asked if there was other funding for Lake Mansfield. Rembold said not yet, since this project is needed to get other funding for later phases. He hoped this would remain in the CPA budget.

Fick wondered if it was the right time, given a potential recession, to acquire land for housing.

Sharpe asked about the historic research projects. She said if the trolley shelter is going to fall down, we should preserve it. But can the research wait, and we let these items remain undocumented?

Blauvelt suggested reducing the Housing Trust's request by \$25,000, the historical society but \$25,000, and finding another \$25,000 in other projects.

The Committee did not change its recommendation on the grant to the CDC for 910 Main Street.

There were questions about whether or not the Housing Trust's costs for the land acquisition would be lower than \$200,000, and how discussions were going with the site's neighbors. Trustee Chair Bill Cooke said the potential involvement of Habitat for Humanity has been well received. He said he thinks they have answered a lot of the neighbors' questions. Cooke said the purchase price is \$175,000, but the total closing costs are not yet known. He said the acquisition is depending on this funding from the CPC and Town Meeting. Blauvelt asked if the amount was reduced can they proceed with closing in July? Cooke said he did know. Blauvelt said he did not want to jeopardize this project. Davis and Bozzuto agreed and if there is a reduction it should be minor. The Committee requested the Trust better estimate its closing costs.

Davis wondered if BNRC could wait a year.

Bozutto said she's not in favor of cutting this or anything; she would rather reduce each project a little bit. Higa said he is not in favor of cutting the BNRC project.

Mercer asked if we should just leave these decisions to Town Meeting. We have recommended these and now it should go through that step. If revenues don't come in, then we'd have to reduce the grants. Rembold acknowledged this path but suggested it might become difficult if Town Meeting votes a certain amount and then we don't have the money. He thought it might be clearer if the Committee made recommendations.

Sharpe said some of these need the whole amount to go ahead, while other projects like the Wheeler Farmstead could do with less right now.

Howe addressed the Historical Commission items. He said the scattered site items research is not a super priority. He would give a higher priority to Housatonic Village research because there has to be documentation. He said for the Trolley Shelter budget, there was some extra built in, so a few thousand can be cut from that project, as the tree work will be done by the Town this year.

Howe added he is in full support of the Housing Trust, the BNRC trailhead, and the Cons. Comm's McAllister project.

Fick asked Bob Krol of the Historical Society what amount could be reduced from their proposal for Wheeler Farmstead. Krol asked if the Committee could reduce this year but commit the balance of funds

to next year. Smith and Blauvelt said it could only be a soft or good faith commitment but it would not be binding. Krol said a reduction of \$25,000 could still work. He said they could not go down below \$126,000; they are tied into a matching grant from the Fitzpatrick Trust.

Blauvelt suggested the following to the Committee:

Housing:

CDC for 910 Main Street housing: no change from recommended \$250,000.

Town Housing Trust for acquire land for housing: no change from recommended \$200,000.

Open Space & Recreation:

BNRC trailhead: no change from recommended \$30,000.

Cons. Comm. for McAllister Wildlife Refuge: no change from recommended \$33,500.

Town for Lake Mansfield Road design: no change from recommended \$120,000.

Historic:

Historical Commission for Housatonic Village research: previous \$21,400 reduced to \$0.

Historical Commission for landscape site research: previous \$6,000 reduced to \$0.

Historical Commission for the trolley shelter preservation: previous \$60,000 reduced to \$50,000.

Historical Society for Wheeler Farmstead: previous \$173,650 reduced to \$145,000.

Total: previous \$894,550, now reduced to \$828,500 for a savings of \$66,050.

Howe said if the trolley shelter preservation goes over budget, there's no other money, so he is concerned about a reduction.

There was more discussion about the Wheeler Farmstead amount and whether or not to reduce it to \$126,000.

Smith made a motion to accept the above amount totaling \$828,500. Higa seconded. On a roll call vote, all were in favor, except Mercer who recused from the BNRC project. Passed 8-0

The Committee acknowledged it may need to meet again before Town Meeting to make more adjustments.

**Committee Members Reports**

Blauvelt said the Housing Trust may meet to request a large proportion of its previous Downpayment Assistance grant be transferred or reauthorized to be used for Rental Assistance. He said it would need our recommendation to Town Meeting and a Town Meeting vote.

**Citizen's Speak:** None

**Next Meeting:** To be determined

Hearing no further business Smith adjourned the meeting at 6:45 PM.

Minutes prepared by Christopher Rembold

