

Town of Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

Minutes of December 5, 2019

Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road

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 5:30 PM by Chair Blauvelt

Administrative Items

Minutes from November 12 and December 4 were not yet available.

Review of Step 2 Applications

Chair Blauvelt said tonight is focused on the Housing requests.

CDC for 910 Main Street:

Tim Geller summarized the application. He said this is 49 unit housing proposal. He said it's a continuation of last year's approval which was for predevelopment expenses. He said we are fully permitted for this project. He said this request hits virtually every mark – it's permanently affordable, it's on a bus line, it's near stores and is walkable. He said they request this grant amount to be released from CPA only when all other funding is in place, so there's no risk to the CPA.

Davis said most of the units will be affordable to those making 60% or less of the area median income. That 60% amount equals about \$53,000 per year for a household of four. A sample rent maximum for a two-bedroom at 60% area median income is \$1,084 per month. There was a further discussion of rents and income levels. Davis said "market rate" in this project will also be a low cost because our goal is not to make a killing, we want to swerve the community.

Davis asked about the balance of the large site. Geller said it is in a conservation restriction.

Fick asked about timeline. Geller said we are applying for the bulk of the funding in February. The project is very competitive because we have 100% construction drawings and cost estimates. If we are successful, we will hear in July, and close the funding about 6-8 months later. Construction could start in 2021 and finish 18 months later.

Blauvelt welcomed a motion on this project since it continues last year's CPC commitment. Smith moved to recommend that Town Meeting fully fund this project request of \$250,000, with the condition that CPA funding will be released at the time the project closes on the balance of its funding. Higa seconded. All were in favor.

Town, for Housing Needs Study:

Rembold said this this application is to get up-to-date information that is essential to making and implementing housing strategies. Much of the data upon which the Town Master Plan housing goals are based is now ten years old. He said the results of this housing needs study will form the basis of implementing the CPA Plan goals and the Master Plan goals. Rembold said this project is consistent with the CPA Plan priorities.

Rembold said there are funds available in the administrative budget, and this activity is eligible under that category. He said if funded with current funds, the Town could start the project immediately.

Smith moved, Fick seconded, to fund this request up to \$15,000 from the existing CPA administrative funds. All were in favor.

Town Housing Trust, for site acquisition:

Jonathan Hankin spoke on behalf of the Trustees and read a prepared statement to the committee. He mentioned that the seller is interested in selling this to the trust for affordable housing purpose and has graciously waiting for 9 months for us to raise the money. He said once the Town through the Trust has site control, we can apply for grants, make the site ready for development, and issue an RFP for developers. He said the land would be deed restricted so that it is developed for affordable housing.

Hankin said the Trust already has a spoken with interested development partners including Construct, the CDC, Habitat, and Berkshire Housing. He said the site is a very good location and has no conservation or environmental issues, and can be connected to services like water and sewer. He said at least 12 lots, and up to 22 lots, could be created by right under current rules, yielding 66 housing units. He said the Trust seeks to create a diverse well designed housing site with mix of ownership and rental units.

There was an extensive discussion about how the Trust would proceed after buying the land. Carolyn from Habitat noted that her organization is very interested in being involved and can build quality homeownership units at very low cost, so an owner's expenses are around \$1000 per month. She added that her organization is skilled in community conversations as well.

A wide ranging discussion ensued.

Davis requested an outline of the team and who will do what.

Smith said she does not have strong confidence in the Trust.

Smith asked if there are community discussions occurring. Cooke said the development process will require public hearings. Bill Cooke of the Trust said it is critical to get site control. Then an experienced developer can be brought in. He said as a town entity we have to go through an RFP for that. He said without site control, nobody will be able to provide affordable housing here. Here's a situation where a seller is willing to wait for us.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be January 6, 2020.

Adjourned at 7:00 PM

Minutes prepared by Christopher Rembold

