

Community Preservation Committee

November 26, 2013

City Council Chambers

Minutes

1. Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Community Preservation Committee was called to order by Chair Judith Grohe at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Mike Dissette, Judith Grohe, Mary Lou Gagnon, Jane Healey, Cindy Zabriskie and Don Little. Kate Newhall-Smith was also in attendance.

3. Minutes

Mike Dissette moved to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2013 meeting as submitted. Mary Lou Gagnon seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. Discussion of Curzon Mill Road Properties

Geordie Vining, Senior Project Manager for the Department of Planning and Development, said he has been working with members of the Welch family, who own property on Curzon Mill Road. The owners of one parcel wish to sell it within the next six months. Zoning would allow a single-family house to be constructed on the property, which could negatively impact the character of the area, wildlife habitat and views. The owners of the second parcel wish to see it protected and do not have a strict timetable.

The Curzon Mill Road area has been identified as a priority for protection in the City's Open Space and Recreation Plan. In 2005 the City purchased 5.85 acres that had been in the Current-Use Tax Program. The land is managed by the State and a conservation restriction has been placed on it. The two five-acre properties that are currently being considered are immediately adjacent to this land. The parcels front the river and trails run through them that connect with those in Maudslay State Park.

Mr. Vining has been working with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Essex County Greenbelt Association (ECGA) to explore ways in which the parcels might be permanently protected. He said the members of the Lands Committee at DCR are enthusiastic about the properties. While the Lands Committee does not have a land acquisition budget, it does have the ability to bear associated costs, such as appraisals and title exams. Approval has been given for the two parcels to be appraised.

Mr. Vining said early in 2014 he will have an estimate of the value of land and negotiations will begin. He said because the owners would be able to receive a substantial conservation tax credit, the potential for a bargain sale exists. He anticipates an arrangement in which the cost of the parcels is split between the City and DCR. ECGA would assist with the structuring of the deals. The fee of the parcels would be conveyed to the City and the conservation restrictions would be conveyed to the State, which would be responsible for the management of the land.

Currently \$737,155.68 is being held in the open space fund. The committee must make a decision on the allocation of CPA resources in the context of other open space opportunities. The City would have the right of first refusal for a 17-acre parcel at the corner of Low Street and

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Crow Lane, which is visually very prominent. Some discussion has taken place about ball fields being located on the property. Allowing a limited development might be an option. The City has made the decision to float bonds for the acquisition of other expensive open space parcels.

5. Other Business

Due to a State budget surplus, \$25 million was transfer into the CPA Trust Fund. Newburyport will receive a 52.23% match. Judith Grohe asked Kate Newhall-Smith to prepare a press release about the additional funding.

Margaret Welch has resigned from the CPC. The Historical Commission will select a new representative.

The FY 2015 grant applications are due on February 13, 2014.

6. Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the CPC will take place on Tuesday, January 28, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.