

Community Preservation Committee
April 9, 2015, 7pm
Police Station Conference Room

Present: Linda Smiley, Don Little, Mike Dissette, Bob Uhlig, Dan Koen, Jane Healey, Paul Healy, and Leah McGavern

Absent: Judith Grohe

Mike Dissette said that 22 applications were received this round seeking about \$560K in CPC funding. The CPC plans to deliberate in May, and make their recommendation to the Council in early June.

Newburyport High School Exterior Woodwork Restoration – Phase III
Newburyport Public Schools
\$171,100

Steve Bergholm, Director of Facilities for Newburyport schools, presented the application for the NHS Exterior Woodwork Restoration project. He explained that Phase I was front center façade, portico, and finials, which was completed last fall. Phase II is for the repair of the two side front facades and is scheduled for this summer. Phase III would be for the repair of the cupola, which was designed per Secretary of the Interior's guidelines. It will include a gold painted top and the weathervane would be repaired and re-gilded. Mr. Dissette asked about the projected vs. actual bids on the first two phases. Mr. Bergholm said that the bids for Phase I came in really high but Phase II bids were very near the estimate. Their plan was to bid next winter and do the work in the summer of 2016. Mr. Healy asked about the time needed to do the work. Mr. Bergholm said that he expected it to take the entire summer. No other funding is available for the work. Mr. Healy suggested further phasing the work. City Council has filled gaps in funding in the past. Ms. Smiley asked about the condition of the cupola. Mr. Bergholm said it was not a structural problem at this moment but it would continue to deteriorate. He noted that there were leaking problems in the attic around the cupola. They were hoping some of the Phase II work will correct it but can't say for certain. Mr. Bergholm added that it would be best to get all the work done at once while the staging was up. Mr. Uhlig asked if the cupola was supposed to be illuminated. Mr. Bergholm said they had both interior and exterior lights but were turned off for energy purposes and neighbor complaints. Mr. Koen asked if the engineering had already been done and asked if it could be further phased. Mr. Bergholm said this part of the project was already broken off of Phase I and it would be difficult to further break it down.

Belleville Congregational Church Restoration
Belleville Congregational Church Restoration Group
~~\$36,000~~, \$46,000

Norm Hansen, Chair of Belleville Congregational Church Restoration Group, requested Historic Resource funds to finish the work on the exterior of the meetinghouse. Mr. Hansen said that the parish is over 200 years old. The first two meeting houses burnt down and the current one is only 150 yrs. old. At the time of application, they had originally requested \$36,000 for the ongoing restoration of both structures and to finish the remaining west side. They would restore and paint 54 windows on the Fiske chapel that was last painted 40 years ago. (LM arrived). The revised figure of \$46,000 is for 50' of the roofline soffit area that needs to be repaired from damage that occurred from ice dams over the winter. He said it was vital for repairs to be made promptly to reduce exposure to the elements. Their insurance policy

has a \$10K deductible that needs to be met and the extra funding would go towards this. Ms. Smiley asked if they have estimates on the ice dam damage. Mr. Hansen said they have one bid and are expecting two more. The bid is slightly below the insurance estimate. She asked if they knew what caused the ice damming since sometimes it is caused by the construction of the building. Mr. Hansen said that the estimate was to ensure future prevention of ice damming. Ms. Smiley asked if structural damage would occur if work were delayed a year. Mrs. Hansen said it's been 40 years already so it probably could wait, though it was not ideal. They were also worried the windows may fall out due to the lack putty. Ms. Smiley suggested prioritizing portions of the work that need to be done. Mr. Hansen said that it was not desirable but possible. He also thought it was important to finish the west side of the meetinghouse to protect work that was done last year. The church has been a community venue, their activities are expanding, and it's in a prominent place on High Street. Ms. Healey asked about their reduction in revenue. She was told that the budget reflects amount they are obligated to give back to the church for the use of the building and their programs were still running the same. Mr. Koen asked if they have temporarily secured the building. Mr. Hansen said there was other considerable damage in other areas that were not being addressed in this application. He said that it is completely open to the weather. No temporary measures have been made to close the building though a contractor was coming within the week. He asked if they have a maintenance budget. They were told that it is less than \$2K a year to be used for emergencies. A lightning strike over the summer cost \$7K, which depleted their funds that were to be used for this project. Their top priority is ice damage and fascia repairs, windows, then painting. Mr. Koen said a temporary repair could be done to prevent further damage.

Old South Church Trompe L'Oeil Ceiling Restoration
First Presbyterian Church
\$66,000

The Old South Church repaired the roof and steeple in previous years using CPC funds. There have been roof leaks causing damage to historic trompe l'oeil ceiling, which is an old method where they paint on plaster. The historic ceiling was painted in the 1800s. Their lowest estimate is \$66K to repair plaster and repaint portions that need to be done. The Old South is an historic church that houses a Paul Revere bell, an historic organ, the trompe l'oeil ceiling, and Rev. Whitefield's crypt. There are currently only 97 members in the congregation. The building is well used by community for many events. Dennis Chambers, neighbor, talked about popularity of the church and Rev. Whitefield. The applicant noted that they were also seeking grants from other entities for other work. There is a \$46K commitment from the church already, trying to get to \$200K for the rest of the work. This was just the first phase. Ms. Smiley asked about the cause of the damage. They have spent over \$200K repairing the roof, chimneys, and steeple to prevent further damage. Ms. McGavern asked about urgency. He said it wasn't urgent. Katie Harried thought repairing would attract new members. Paula Chambers said that tour busses visit the church, which she wasn't sure if the group was aware of. It was a surprisingly large tourist attraction. Matthew Zeller talked about the popularity of the church which accommodates weddings, tours, etc.

Meeting House and Steeple Preservation Project
The First Religious Society, Unitarian Universalist
\$150,000

Bill Heenehan, representative of the FRS, said that they were thankful for prior support of CPC funding. He said that the project has doubled in size since last year to \$800K because of structural problems

discovered during the course of the project. They were seeking funds because of the total cost of the project. Due to the fact that they were already working on the steeple, the FRS voted to approve a budget and proceed with the project immediately. The nature of the problems required immediate attention and the scaffolding is in place already. So far FRS has contributed \$90K of their own funds and \$60K from other sources. Membership and trustees are seeking capital funding using endowment funding. Work will begin on Monday. Ms. McGavern asked if there was any other work that was part of the application that was not necessary. Mr. Heenehan said only the lighting, which was a very small portion of the cost. Mr. Dissette asked about the schedule. Mr. Heenehan hoped the scaffolding will be down and all work will be done by the end of June.

**Cushing House Fence Restoration
Historical Society of Old Newbury
\$23,285**

Susan Edwards, Executive Director of the Historical Society of Old Newbury, requested funding for repair of historical fences at the Cushing House, which were integral to the landscape of the HSON. The fences were created in 19th century as part of the garden. Public access is limited due to the condition. Fruit Street and High Street fences have already been done. The remaining fences were lattice board and picket fences. Ms. Edwards said that they were hoping to leverage funds with Bowlen funding for other work in the interior. Ms. Smiley asked if it was a public safety issue. Ms. Edwards said that it was as the fences were about to fall down. Ms. Smiley asked if the fences were necessary. She was told that the fences separate them from the immediate abutters and create “rooms” of the garden. She said it was an important part of the landscape design. Ms. McGavern asked if the garden was used for events, which it is. Mr. Uhlig asked if there was any way the project could be phased. Ms. Edwards said that the privy to carriage house fence is in worse condition. Dave Mack said there is also a concern with the tall lattice fence collapsing. They also said that the Perkins Mint project is effectively done. It is being used for displays, meetings, and will be on tour once a crack in the structure is fixed. Mr. Little asked if a PR existed. Mr. Mack said there was a PR on the Mint but they would entertain a PR if the Committee was interested. It is already considered a National Historic Landmark. MA doesn’t hold a PR on the rest of the property. Katie Harried spoke in support.

Other Business:

Mr. Dissette motioned to approve the 3/24 minutes and Paul Healy seconded. All voted in favor.

Colby Farm Acquisition:

The CPC previously heard the application from the Parks Department for the purchase of all of the Colby Farm lots. Lot 8 has a price of \$275K and the City has the right of first refusal. Time runs out on 4/23. Last week the Open Space Committee revisited the issue and determined that Lot 8 alone wasn’t a priority, but in the context of the whole application, realized that there is a bit of momentum since Lot 1 can carry a ball field. They were also hoping to be able to purchase Lot 7 or 2 also to accommodate parking needs and a fenced dog run. The City Council is scheduled to vote on using free cash to exercise the option. They are hoping to find out where the CPC’s opinion lies in recommending an amount for the Parks application, whether it is to offset spending or for the other two parcels. There is \$325K in OS Reserves and the City is hoping for an additional \$100K back from the Curzon Mill purchase tax credit. Ms. McGavern asked what they hoped to have in reserves. Mr. Dissette felt it was lower than needed. It had been up to \$800K in previous years. There was not much to leverage with. Ms. Healey asked about the Open Space Commission’s opinion on ball fields and open space. Mr. Dissette said their role is

more for passive recreation, passive state, habitation, etc. but said it was also valuable to preserve land without any structures. The site already has some development surrounding it, it's not wooded, close to schools, etc. Mr. Uhlig mentioned that we are still at field space capacity. There was still some potential open space out there, over 100 acres near 95/Turkey Hill Road, which is privately owned and under 61A. Ms. Smiley asked why funding is so low this year. Mr. Dissette said there was only an 18% state match this year. There are more communities sharing the pot of money. The total would be \$975K to purchase three lots. The City Council was looking for an indication on whether or not the CPC would support the Parks Department's application. Ms. McGavern was not sure how they could consider funding from this grant round prior to reviewing the other projects. Mr. Healy suggested that open space reserve funds could also be used but said he would want wording specifically about obtaining Lot 1. Ms. McGavern wasn't comfortable with putting a number on it without reviewing other projects. Mr. Dissette said reserve money could also be replenished in the grant round. Taking it out of reserves wouldn't affect amount of money to be granted this round. Mr. Little agreed that it would be difficult to make a recommendation without reviewing other applications.

The Committee discussed partially funding projects due to the amount of funds available for this round. Mr. Koen was bothered that things couldn't be fully funded as requested. He thought it was setting a precedent to partially fund projects and encouraging people to pad their applications. He felt they should be making hard decisions to fund or not fund. Ms. McGavern said that partially funding allows some to leverage. The Committee discussed the difficulties in having to entertain so many applications with such little funding, partially funding vs. not funding.

Mr. Dissette motioned to fund Colby Farm application with \$100K from OS reserves provided it is for the entire project and not just Lot 8. Mr. Koen said he was willing to do \$150K. Through straw votes, everyone present indicated they were willing make a decision that evening and were willing to fund the purchase of Lot 1 through Reserves. A straw vote then indicated that all members except for Mr. Koen were inclined to fund less than the full amount. Mr. Koen, Mr. Healy, and Mr. Little said were comfortable with funding \$150K. If the purchase of Lot 1 doesn't happen, the City would acquire Lot 8 with their own funds. CPC funding would complicate a potential sale if the entire thing falls through. Mr. Dissette motioned to approve \$100K from Open Space Reserves to be earmarked for Lot 1 with the completion of acquisition within 24 months. Ms. Smiley seconded and all voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:53pm.

Dianne Boisvert
Minute Taker