

Community Preservation Committee
March 12, 2013
Police Station Conference Station
Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Community Preservation Committee was called to order by Chairman Mike Dissette at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Mike Dissette, Paul Healy, Judith Grohe, Margaret Welch, Mary Lou Gagnon, Bob Uhlig, Cindy Zabriskie, Jane Healey and Don Little.

3. FY 2014 Applications for Community Preservation Funds

Mike Dissette said this is the first of three meetings at which applications for funding will be reviewed. Seven applications are to be presented at tonight's meeting. Members of the audience will have the opportunity to ask questions after those made by the committee members. Copies of the applications are on file in the Planning Office and may be reviewed by the public.

Cushing Park: Design & Cost-Estimates

City of Newburyport, Office of Planning and Development
\$10,000

Andy Port, Director of Planning and Development, said Cushing Park had been the proposed site of a senior center, which is now to be located at the Bresnahan School. The City wishes to engage a landscape architect to prepare a plan and cost estimates for returning the park to its original design, when it had been known as the Kent Street Common. Because the site had been used as a parking lot for an adjacent factory, the first step in the process would be its rededication as a park by the City Council, which would make it eligible for CPA funding. The residents of the surrounding neighborhood depend on Cushing Park for off-street parking during snow emergencies. As a result it is expected that some degree of parking would be a part of the new design for the site and the landscape architect would be asked to explore alternatives for varying amounts of parking. The City is also looking into ways in which the snow removal policy in the neighborhood could be changed to allow as small of an area in the park as possible to be needed for parking. Mike Dissette said the rededication should take place before any funds are expended. Jane Healey said a study of parking needs would be very important, as the residents greatly depend on the use of the park during snow emergencies. Mr. Port said the process would include an analysis of the need for parking and this would be balanced with the desire for an active park. Parking is only needed for a few storms and the site is underutilized during the remainder of the year. The goal would be to minimize the parking in order to make the space usable throughout the year.

Inn Street Fountain & Playground Fencing

City of Newburyport, Office of Planning and Development
\$75,000

Andy Port said while many improvements have been made to Inn Street there is still more work to be done. Some of the older elements were installed decades ago and are beginning to deteriorate. The Board of Health required several years ago that the fountain be shut off due concerns about water quality. The storm water that flowed down Inn Street mixed with the water from the fountain, making it unsafe for the children that would play in it. A redesign of the fountain had been considered but it was decided that as much as possible of the historic design should be preserved due to its ties with the urban renewal process. The City is now planning to restore the fountain and add a system for recycling the water. A low barrier would be installed to keep storm water out of the fountain. A downtown group had recently installed a filter but it was not able to keep up with the volume when storm water entered the fountain. By separating the water the filter would become effective and recycling the water would make the fountain more efficient. As a part of the project signage about the urban renewal process and the design of the fountain would be installed.

A portion of the funds requested would be used for low ornamental fencing around the playground, which does not currently have a defined boundary. The fencing would protect the light fixtures and plantings along the edge of the playground and allow the installation of additional shrubs.

Mike Dissette said a budget was not included in the application. Andy Port said the figures are rough at this stage and he must meet again with the fountain consultant. He estimated that \$40,000 to \$50,000 would be required for the work on the fountain, with \$10,000 to \$12,000 needed for the fencing. The remainder of the \$75,000 requested would be used for signage. Parking revenue might be a source of additional funds for a portion of the work.

Mike Dissette asked for a report on the status of other work along Inn Street. Andy Port said the lighting is almost complete and the work to replace and repair the turrets is done. The brick on Inn Street will be reset in the upcoming year. The Street Tree Commission plans to add trees to the islands in the Green Street parking lot.

Andy Port said he would provide more detail on the budget and would indicate which items are priorities. He said the fountain, which is a historic preservation project, is the primary focus of the application. The fence around the playground would fall under the recreation category and could be installed at a later date.

Clipper City Rail Trail and Harborwalk Phase II

City of Newburyport, Office of Planning and Development
\$200,000

Geordie Vining said the City is seeking funding for the second phase of the Clipper City Rail Trail, which would extend from the eastern edge of the central waterfront to Parker Street in Newbury. The project is complex, as many types of conditions and abutters exist along the corridor and the design phase has been underway for a year. In the past grant cycles the CPC has awarded nearly enough funds for the completion of the preliminary design phase of the project. A portion of the funding that is currently being requested would be used to complete the preliminary design phase, which should be done by next spring, and enter into the construction

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engineering phase. The other portion of the application is for enhancements such as signage, seating, lighting, murals and sculpture. The DOT might provide funds for benches and trash receptacles. Funding for other enhancements are being sought from the Mass. Recreational Trails Grants Program and the Mayor Gayden Morrill Charitable Foundation. Mr. Vining said that while the current priority is the completion of the design phase, he is seeking also funding for enhancements at this time because some custom items take a lengthy amount of time to develop. The \$200,000 that is being requested is not the total amount of funding needed and he plans to ask for additional amounts in the 2014 and 2015 rounds of CPA applications. He said if no additional grants were received, funding for the project would run out in eleven months, before the next round of CPA awards. He estimated that \$100,000 would be needed for the completion of the design phase. State and federal transportation funds are to be used for construction.

Newburyport Housing Rehabilitation Program

City of Newburyport, Office of Planning and Development
\$125,000

Rosemary Coulombe said the Housing Rehabilitation Program would not exist without CPA funds. The city no longer meets the criteria for DHCD grants and has not received funds from this source for several years. The \$85,000 in CPA funds that was awarded in 2012 was recently depleted and 16 families are waiting to be income qualified for the program. Funding has been limited to \$10,000 to \$12,000 per household. The goal of the program is to keep the housing stock safe. The funds are used for roofs, windows, entrances and heating systems. The recipients of the funds enter into mortgage agreements under which 15-year liens are placed on the homes. CPA funds are not used for administrative costs. Margaret Welch asked to receive information on how many homes for which assistance has been received are in the National Register District.

Newburyport Affordable Housing Trust

Affordable Housing Trust/City of Newburyport Office of Planning and Development
\$200,000

Judy Tymon said \$26,000 of the \$50,000 awarded for the multiple-listing service and the down payment assistance program has been expended. Both programs help the city retain its affordable units. The Affordable Housing Trust is on the verge of finishing its housing production plan. The plan addresses the status of affordable housing in the community and offers specific strategies to encourage affordable housing, such as changes to zoning requirements. The Trust will be working with the City to implement the strategies in the plan and to develop projects for City-owned properties that would be appropriate for affordable housing. The plan encourages the community to work with non-profit organizations and private developers. The Trust granted \$65,000 in the past year for five affordable units at the YWCA. The goal of the Trust is the creation of new units in addition to the retention of existing ones. Ms. Tymon said the number of rental units in the community has been diminishing and there is a huge need for affordable housing units for both purchase and rent.

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Brown School Reuse/Feasibility Study

City of Newburyport Office of Planning and Development

\$50,000

Andy Port said upon the completion of the new Bresnahan School, the Brown School would no longer be used and the building would become surplus, presenting the opportunity for its adaptive reuse for affordable housing. The Planning Office is seeking CPA funds for a feasibility study that would provide guidance on the number of units and affordable units the building could house, the layout of building, the restoration of its exterior and the cost of the project. Bob Uhlig asked if the project would fall under the historic preservation category. He commented that the City has request more funds for its projects than are available in this round of funding. Paul Healy asked if the funds would be returned if the structure were not used for affordable housing. He added that the Affordable Housing Trust should be a part of the study.

Open Space and Recreation Plan: Maps & Brochures

City of Newburyport, Office of Planning and Development

\$5,000

Andy Port said he would like to produce a brochure containing a map showing the locations of open space, park and trail resources. The funds requested would be used for printing costs only.

4. Other Discussion

Jane Healey asked if the open space reserves are only to be used for land acquisition. Mike Dissette said the reserves might be used for projects.

Mike Dissette said the State match for the first round, which includes those communities with a surcharge of less than 3%, has been estimated at 26%. The expected distribution of \$25 million in surplus funds to CPA communities would not take place in time to impact this year's deliberations. The distribution date matching funds has been extended from October 15 to November 15.

Paul Healy said he was under the impression that there was more money in the open space reserves than the \$304,000 that was reported. Mike Dissette said research is being done on the funds that are to be returned from the reimbursement grants.

5. Minutes

Mary Lou Gagnon moved to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2013 meeting as submitted. Don Little seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

6. Adjournment

Paul Healy moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m. Judith Grohe seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The next meeting of the Community Preservation Committee is scheduled for March 26 at 7:00 p.m.