

Community Preservation Committee

February 2, 2023

Online Meeting

Draft Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Mike Dissette called an online meeting of the Community Preservation Committee to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were Mike Dissette, Jane Healey, Mark Rosen, Thomas O'Brien, Jamie Gagnon, Joe Morgan and Chuck Griffin. Don Walters and Joe Teixeira were absent. Also in attendance were Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. FY23 Applications for CPA Funding

a) First-Time Homebuyer Program

Newburyport Affordable Housing

\$250,000

Susanne Cameron and Madeline Nash described the proposal to serve a new group of first-time homebuyers. The average home cost in Newburyport is just under \$900,000 and rents are out of reach for many prospective tenants. The program currently in place is for those who earn no more than 80% of the median income in the area. It places a deed restriction on the property. The new program would allow the Trust to reach more homebuyers. Those earning up to 100% of the median income would qualify and there would be no deed restrictions. It is expected that 10 to 12 new homeowners would be served. They would be able to purchase homes that sell for \$450,000 or less. Down payment assistance in the form of a deferred loan would be limited to \$20,000. The loan would be forgiven after five years. It would be paid back in full if the owner were to sell or refinance the home in less than five years.

Mark Rosen asked about the median income in the area. The median income for a family of four in the county is \$118,100. Mr. Rosen said he does not think ten families would be able to find two bedroom houses in the city for less than \$450,000. He said one-bedroom condos are selling for this price. He commented that the applicant is asking the CPC to set aside money without the certainty that houses in the required price range would be available. He said only a small population would be served and the CPC should grant money to programs with a wide impact on the community.

Jamie Gagnon asked about the market conditions in other communities. Ms. Cameron said in Boston up to \$50,000 is provided for down payment assistance. She added that the average life of a mortgage is seven years.

Jane Healey said that she found on the internet that 15 houses in Newburyport were sold for under \$450,000 in the past year.

b) Newburyport Custom House Masonry Repair Portico Roof

Newburyport Custom House

\$150,000

Community Preservation Committee
February 2, 2023

Greg Colling described the project to repair the masonry on two facades of the Custom House. In 2005, the east and north sides were repointed. The work was not overseen by a preservation consultant and the mortar mix was incorrect. Ferris metal setting wedges were left between the stones, which caused rust and cracking. Water is entering the building through open joints. The south and west facades were repointed correctly in 2013. The funding would be used to spot repair the east and north façades with Portland cement and lime mortar. The work would prevent water and water vapor from entering the building. It would buy a few years for the applicant to obtain funding for the full cut and repoint work that was done on the south and west facades. In addition, the roof on the front entrance portico has failed. The roof must be replaced and the condition of the structure beneath it evaluated. The bead board ceiling would be put back in place if possible or replaced in kind if not. The requested funds include a contingency, as the condition behind the ceiling at this time is unknown.

Mark Rosen asked about the scope of the project. Mr. Colling responded the scope of work is the spot repairs of the north and east facades and the repair of the portico roof. Mr. Rosen said the application is inconsistent. It includes the replacement of the bead board ceiling, but it is not yet known if this would be necessary. The applicant would have been granted too much money if it is found the ceiling could be put back in place.

Chuck Griffin recommended that zinc be used instead of lead coated copper. He also said a 10% contingency should be carried.

Joe Morgan asked how long the building would survive without the full cut and repoint work. Mr. Colling said the spot repair should last five years.

**c) The Perkins Art and Research Center
Historical Society of Old Newbury (Museum of Old Newbury)
\$210,251**

Bethany Groff Dorau described the plans for the use of the third floor of Perkins Art and Research Center for the enhanced storage of the museum's collections. She said a great number of objects from the history of the community have been donated in recent years. The third and fourth floors of the Cushing House are full of artifacts that need better care. Only one-third of the 240 framed paintings in the collection can be displayed at any one time in the Cushing House.

In the past year, the Museum has studied the feasibility of rehabilitating the Perkins Mint as an archival and storage space. CPA funds are being sought for the first phase of this work, which involves the provision of a climate-controlled storage space on the third floor of the structure. The framed paintings would be stored laterally and flat storage would be provided for unframed pieces.

Chuck Griffin said the cost of \$60 per square foot is a good value for the money. He said the inclusion of a 10% contingency is a good idea.

**d) Newburyport City Hall Renovation Feasibility Study
Mayor's Office
\$47,000**

Kim Turner said funds are being sought for a feasibility study on the reorganization of City Hall. The building is overcrowded and outdated and its history is obscured. The offices are not

Community Preservation Committee
February 2, 2023

organized effectively and the public experience is chaotic. An upgrade of the systems is needed. A consultant would be hired to provide a preliminary analysis and review of the building, an analysis of codes, a review of necessary permits, a schematic design, phasing and cost estimates.

Mike Dissette said a preservation restriction was placed on both the interior and exterior of the building and any changes to its interior must be done with a sensitivity to its historic character. Ms. Turner said there are no plans to remove any walls.

Joe Morgan said the building is being inefficiently used and obtaining additional usable space should be possible. He said the Historical Commission should be given the opportunity to review the feasibility study before it is completed.

4. Minutes

Mark Rosen moved to approve the minutes of the January 19 meeting as submitted. Chuck Griffin seconded the motion. The motion was approved by an 7 to 0 vote (Mike Dissette, yes; Jane Healey, yes; Mark Rosen, yes; Thomas O'Brien, yes; Jamie Gagnon, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Chuck Griffin, yes).

5. General Business

Katelyn Sullivan will provide at the next meeting information on the budget, the revenue turnback and the two bonds that were approved last year.

6. Upcoming Schedule

The next meeting of the CPC will take place on February 16.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.