

Community Preservation Committee

February 29, 2024

In Person Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Katelyn Sullivan of the Planning Office announced the meeting would be recorded and broadcasted.

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

Roll Call

In attendance were Chair Mike Dissette, Vice Chair Jane Healey (At Large)*, Biff Bouse (Historical Commission), Chuck Griffin (Parks Commission), Joe Teixeira (Conservation Commission), Jamie Gagnon (At Large), and Andrea Weetman (At large).

Katelyn Sullivan & Director Andy Port from the Planning Office were also present.

*Vice Chair Jane Healy was present via Zoom

Unable to attend: Jen Bluestein & Tom O'Brien.

1. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Chair Mike Dissette welcomed to the group Andrea Weetman as At Large – still awaiting to be sworn in.

Chair Mike Dissette asked for nominees for Vice Chair.

Chuck Griffin moved for Jane Healey as Vice Chair with Joe Teixeira as 2nd

Chair called for discussion or other nominations with none offered.

Vote taken by raise of hand with all in favor.

Chair Mike Dissette asked for nominees for Chair.

Chuck Griffin moved for Mike Dissette as Chair with Jamie Gagnon as 2nd

Chair called for discussion or further nominees with none offered.

Vote taken by raise of hand with all in favor.

2. Bartlet Mall Restoration Project Update and Withdrawal Request for the Restoration of Swan Fountain Application

Chair Mike Dissette called for Kim Turner to speak.

Kim Turner explained this request was withdrawn as the project has been temporarily paused due to the bids coming in higher than expected. They will continue to seek grants and come up with other fundraising ideas to bridge the gap. She advised they have requested to withdraw the bond application and this year's request for the Swan Fountain restoration with the possibility of some bonding compacity to come back to for the project.

She clarified there are information regarding outstanding accounts, which total 3. The first of 3 being the specimen trees at Bartlet Mall where the Park's Manager has been slowly adding and replacing trees in the Upper Mall section. Funds for this project are not at \$7700 as note, they are down to \$4,887.37.

2nd account for the Swan Fountain restoration allocation from a few years ago of approximately \$126,000 they would like to request an extension to hold the funds to allow for leverage for matching funds as they request grants & other donations.

3rd account is for the walkway which has about \$11,500 remaining of funds. Explained that the work will be done as the larger project moves forward and the remaining balance will allow for fundraising & to match other grants.

She concluded the Frog Pond improvements of \$200,000 has been expended completely. Those funds were used for design engineering to get them to the point they are at now, which is shovel ready.

Chair Mike Dissette ask for confirmation that neither the walkway or fountain open projects can go forward without full pond mall improvement? Also asked when they expect to back with a ready project?

Kim Turner confirmed, yes and they hope to be ready to move forward by the next CPC application cycle.

Chair Mike Dissette clarified the request is to withdraw the present application for this cycle and the function of CPC to recommend to City Council to pull back that bond.

She confirmed.

He explained they will need to formalize the recommendations to withdraw and for extension where this filters down to adjusted budget for this year's cycle. Also, the vote will be conducted at the same time of deliberations for all applicants.

Call for questions from committee? None

Call for questions from the public? None

3. Presentations

Chair Mike Dissette reviewed the process of presentations, explaining applications have been reviewed by the Committee ahead of time. Applicants will be asked to present the most important details and any new information in the 10-minute allotted timeframe. Following the presentation the committee will ask questions first and then open the call for public questions. He explained there will be no deliberations at the presentation meetings as deliberations will be held end of March.

a) YMCA Market Street Apartments:

YMCA

\$15,750

Chair Mike Dissette called for presenter David Webster.

David Webster (Housing Authority Committee member) advised the funds are being requested for the upkeep of the exterior of the building on Market Street. He reviewed the slides which indicated the number of housing units and income qualifications which fall in the very low income for the

area. He explained how the Y has tried to minimize rent increases at the property for several years which results in rent being significantly below the HUD standards. He provided the normal average rent for single household is \$778 and the Y collects \$538 which has allowed individuals (some formerly homeless) affordable housing at this location for as long as 10 years. The low rent causes the operating budget to be very tight especially with the increase in utilities and staffing costs which leaves very little to invest in the property itself.

Chair Mike Dissette asked to confirm CPA money was involved with the expansion & rehabilitation of the building in 2013? Also, to confirm they are serving a tenant community that doesn't otherwise have options in Newburyport for housing.

David Webster confirmed and member Jacqueline Meers explained there are multiple residents who would be in a nursing facility but they have been able to provide them with in-home care to remain in the community.

Chair Mike Dissette asked to confirm the concerns for the conditions of the building are due to water penetration and structural aspect.

David Webster confirmed and reviewed the building was built in 1890 which requires a lot of work to keep with the character of neighborhood and city. He explained funds are to preserve the structural integrity of the building, repaint exterior, caulk as needed, repair penetrations and prevent further water damage. He added there are gaps in joints, cracked clapboards and shingles where water may penetrate the building, and the goal is to seal it up as best as possible.

Call for questions from committee? None

Call for questions from the public? None

**b) Meetinghouse Emergency Roof Replacement:
First Religious Society Unitarian Universalist
\$80,000**

Chair Mike Dissette advised this presentation has been rescheduled for March 7th.

**c) The Perkins Art and Research Center Phase II
Historical Society of Old Newbury dba Museum of Old Newbury
\$77,536**

Chair Mike Dissette called for presenter.

Bethany Dorau (Executive Director of Old Newbury) requested \$77,536 for preservation & rehabilitation of the 1st & 2nd flr of the Perkins building.

She reviewed Phase 1 has been funded which is in progress with Steel Contractor actively putting in shelves.

She reviewed the building is historical and by adding appropriate storage, climate controls, & security they can preserve precious historical archives housed there.

The funding will allow a third of the 1st floor with sliding archive racks to assist in preserving and storing archives. She explained shelving is covered under the CPC guidelines.

She reviewed slides that included a sampling of pictures from the collection with the oldest landscape pictures in the city as well as drawings and journals from all time periods and historical figures.

She explained the 3rd floor is over packed with archives and not adequately climate controlled making it hard to access materials with the risk of potential damage of archives. These archives would be moved to the new shelves on the first floor.

The 2nd floor which houses the library is also over packed. The new plans include a modest research library with shelves to allow for natural light as well as carousels to allow for space to exhibition space & adequate protection from light.

She reviewed the location of the building and historical importance. Community resource which hasn't been utilized since restoration preservation in 2015-2017.

Reviewed breakdown of how the Phase 2 funding of \$116,200 would be allocated and noting the \$77,536 request from the CPC would be used for the shelving units. Museum funds will cover the rest.

Jamie Gagnon questioned if the shelving will solve the problem and Beth confirmed it would.

Chuck Griffin questioned if it would allow for the 3rd floor to be open for presentations and she explained it would not due to accessibility and lack of climate control. Beth added they are looking to add climate control to use the 3rd floor to store hard objects like silverware or pottery. The 2nd floor will be accessible to the public through this project. She reminded them that the building is a residential structure and the weight of the books is also a concern.

Chair Mike Dissette asked to confirmed that Phase 1 had some engineering evaluation of loads and whether the structure can handle the loads an if that covers Phase 2? Beth confirmed that a study was completed recently which assessed the weight load for the entire building and reinforcement has been done.

Call for further questions from the committee? None

Call for question from the Public?

Connie Preston of 18 Atwood St advised she is supportive of the Museum of Old Newbury. She questioned whether the Perkins building has the capacity to hold additional weight and allow the museum to continue its goal of acquiring more works. If not, what alternatives do they have?

Beth advised there will be 30% additional capacity once in the Perkin's building which should be enough for the next 5-10 years to grow. Future alternatives may include an offsite solution or scanning/technology options for permanent storage.

**d) Rehabilitation of Firefighters Memorial
Newburyport Fire Department
\$65,000**

Chair Mike Dissette

Presenting: Chief Bradbury & Ken Parseghian

Ken Parseghian (President of the Firemen's Sick Benefit) advised they met with Oak Hill Cemetery and Historic Commission to discuss the project and as a result made some updates

to help move forward. The Memorial is in the back of Oak Hill Cemetery on Parker St and is the first thing people see when they use that entrance. They reviewed they own that plot & use it to remember& honor fallen members as well as for their annual Firemen's Memorial Sunday service held in June, which is an official holiday through the state. Plot was purchased by the Firemen's Sick Benefit in 1946.

Funding will be used to rehabilitate the monument to stop erosion, add curb appeal, and accessibility. Oak Hill Cemetery is historic and it the memorial has been deemed historic as well significancy due to location.

Project to include creating ADA accessible ramp which was added since the original draft. Contractors and artists submitted bids that came in a little over budget but since have agreed to do the work within the budget. Also, the project will involve updating the surrounding landscape of outgrown greenery which is 30-40 years old.

Another update of the design was changing the walkway in the front from circular to straight to avoid disturbing any plaques of those laid to rest there, plus accessibility.

Public benefit is to preserve the monument & history of the Newburyport Fire Department, show community support to the sacrifices made, & create better accessibility for viewing as well as more appealing to draw more in to visit.

He reviewed slides from Oak Hill Cemetery requesting changes which have been addressed and from the Historic Commission stating the memorial is a site of significance now.

He reviewed the timeline slide that showed the conceptual design is in place with adjustments as described in the presentation. They received a bid from Visionary Landscapes with renditions of approximately \$85,000 but agreed they could make the \$65,000 budget work. They do plan to get some other estimates as well for comparison. This contractor has done work in the city. Hoping to have the work start after the June service in conjunction with the contractors and cemetery's needs.

Ken Parseghian explained they do not have funding of own to do this so asking CPC for the funds.

Chief Bradbury added this is an active plot with a recent burial. He believes the last time work was done on this memorial was in the 1940s and an important site to keep updated.

Vice Chair Jane Healey asked how recent is the \$65,000 bid from contractor?

Ken Parseghian confirmed it was as recent as the past 2 weeks. They worked with the landscaper who had upped the bid to \$80,000 but then refigured it & agreed in last 2 days to do it for the \$65,000.

Chair Mike Dissette advised the process typically wouldn't provide access to the funds until the fall and confirmed that would still work for the timeline?

Ken P confirmed that should be fine and if it couldn't get done in the fall, then they could do it the following spring.

Chair Mike Dissette confirmed they will double check the numbers(bids) with others and if there are any changes or they do go with another contractor to update the application.

Ken P agreed.

Vice Chair Jane Healey asked that they consider plantings that are site specific and draught tolerant to minimize maintenance.

Ken Parseghian advised they revised the plans for this and he has done landscaping himself so he will ensure of proper plantings. The planting area has plenty of water access/runoff to keep the lot healthy.

Biff Bouse thanked them for making the changes to include the ramp and thinks it looks nicer and really important piece to have added.

Ken Parseghian agreed the new plan looks better and the ramp was needed. They have many veterans who visit and would require the ramp.

Chuck Griffin asked if the budget includes the granite wall, what the height is, and if it could be designed for seating?

Ken P confirmed the wall is New England fieldstone, will a bluestone cap which is included along with the brick work. He advised it's about 2ft on the low side, drawing doesn't show but will be a little bit of granite to hold back dirt. Not designed as a seat but could act as one if needed.

Call for further questions from committee? None

Call for questions from the Public?

- Connie Preston questioned how many plots are in the area where department owns & how many are occupied? She added the memorial services there are fantastic. She asked how expensive it would be to have lighting there & the importance of having lighting.

Ken P responded there are 8 plots with 2 being occupied. He advised there may be a motion in the next meeting for all future burials to be cremations to avoid disturbance of the land.

Chief Bradbury added there are limited requests for burials there as you can't bring your spouse.

Ken Parseghian addressed the electrical question advising the line item in budget for conduit was eliminated as there is no electric in the cemetery and it would have to be metered from the pole. The city just did the rail trail and the cemetery did the driveway in that section so they want to avoid digging up work that that was just done. They are looking at solar options instead; possibly solar spotlights at a minimal cost.

**e) Atkinson Common Rock Tower Restoration
City of Newburyport Parks Commission & Division
\$128,700**

Chair Mike Dissette called for Kim Turner to present.

Kim Turner (representing Parks Commission) explained the presentation would provide an update on last year's approval for funding for Phase 1 as well as the request for funding Phase 2 for restoration of the Rock Tower.

She reviewed slides that provided a history of the land which also explained the land was donated to the city in 1873 and is overseen by non-profit group, Belleville Improvement Society. The wooden platform observation tower was donated in 1917, deteriorated, and was replaced in 1931.

1935 work on tower began and completed 1936 with not much work done since. Concerns and repairs needed include significant water damage and issues with the stairs, roof, trees are overgrown and blocking the view, and there has never been a plaque to advise of its

significance. Also, the gates and windows are been barricaded and welded shut due to vandals.

She reviewed recent work that has been started in the past 3-4 years which includes a temporary wooden stairway to allow contractors access during construction, steel beams added to support weight, the base cleaned and repointed, and some concrete reconstruction. Last year with CPC funds of approximately \$60,000 the floors and ceiling were repaired and drains installed to prevent pooling but water is still causing deterioration. Of the 5 phases of work to be completed Phase 1 is done.

Phase 2 scope of work will focus on the cleaning and repointing of exterior masonry which will require a lift to complete. The recent estimated cost of this phase is \$128,700 which includes a contingency.

Phases 3-5 cost has gone up due to inflation, which is to be expected. Expensive project but important piece of history to restore.

Public benefit is in line with the mission of CPC by preserving Newburyport scenic heritage. Recreational facility piece is still being determined with the goal to have the tower reopened to the public. Possibility of future use for events like wine tastings, weddings, fundraisers, or just public access to the tower.

Reviewed the park layout and trees obstructing the view.

Chair Mike Dissette asked if the reason of the single quote due to the specialized work? He also asked if the phases could stand alone without delaying the other?

Kim Turner confirmed and explained timing also played a factor as some were unable to get quotes in time and advised it will put out to formal bid for more quotes.

She explained they are moving for Phase 3 to have the enclosure over top of the building, which is a delicate project to keep the historic value & prevent waters penetration. Over the next year they will be working to find a solution for a roof enclosure to help deterioration.

Jamie Gagnon questioned when it may be open to public? Even the just the first level?

Kim Turner advised once the stairs meet code, which they do not, they could open to the Public. The 1st level could be possible.

Biff Bouse asked if the roof enclosure would be temporary & how much of the view do the trees block?

Kim Turner responded that the plan is for a permanent structure. There are 2 architects on the Committee and they are working through options. She advised you can't see beyond the park, so the river is not viewable even at this time without leaves on the trees.

Call for further questions from the Committee? None

Call for questions from the Public?

- Connie Preston 18 Atwood St questioned if there was still active fundraising for the project through Belleville Society? She paid for a name to be on a step in the tower from a past fundraiser and curious if there were any still going on.

Kim Turner advised she does not believe they have any fundraising at this time. They are working on what the full scope & cost will be right now.

Chair Mike Dissette asked if Phase 1 was supported by the fundraising?

Kim Turner confirmed the work 5 years ago was paid for by the Belleville fundraising.

No further questions

**f) FEMA Hazard Mitigation Program Plum Island Property Acquisition
City of Newburyport
\$395,027**

Chair Mike Dissette called for presenter.

Presenting: Julia Godtfredsen (Conservation Admin for City of Newburyport)
Request for funding under CPC for Plum Island FEMAr Hazard Mitigation project to purchase 3 properties (12 75th St, 9 75th St, & 15 73rd St).

Provided a history of Plum Island barrier beach which is a critically important natural resource that protects main land off the ocean and provides critical habitat for species. The beach is affected by waves, winds, and currents of the ocean & shift in time as a natural process.

They have seen dramatical change over the past few years with about a 500 ft loss of dune with the most likely cause due to the work done on the south jetty which created dramatic change with the current. The swirling current is scooping out sand from the island.

UNH conducted a study showing the change and loss over the period of under one year from 2016-2017. In 2017 still some healthy vegetation in front of the house and the city added sand to protect the dunes. She referred to a slide with a picture from 2021 that showed deterioration of concrete blocks and vegetation being pulled out by the water. Due to the

2021 situation, the city started working with groups to put together a highly engineered shoreline protection project to try to prevent further damage of the beach, city infrastructures that were being compromised, and one of the homes that was already condemned. Efforts made were unsuccessful.

2023 Army core of engineers dredged the river and put the sand from the river onto the beach to reserve the dune. 215 cubic yards create 13 acres of new beach.

2024 the water is back. Pictures in slide showed the water up beyond the houses.

She provided information about a special opportunity under FEMA hazard program that was brought to their attention in 2022. Program at this time was offering more money with a reduced match amount where the Federal government would cover 90% and the local government coverage only held to 10%. The program is ideal for Newburyport's situation and the 3 home owners have agreed to participate in the program. Explained it's a voluntary program and the city applies on their behalf. It also required a cost analysis which was completed and submitted to FEMA and looks like they may receive the grant where the government would pay approximately \$3.9 million (State) and \$395,000 from the city. Process would involve the 3 structures being demolished, dune grass planted, and the space returned back to its original state and become permanent City beach front property.

Goal is to have the lots opened to the public & once the jetties are repaired properly it will help protect the land & restore the dunes.

Chair Mike Dissette question the total acreage of the plots, if they are adjacent, and how long the restoration with the new dune grass will last absent the fixing of jetties?

Julia advised all plots are adjacent. Total acreage is .41 acres which is listed in the application. Her explained she is unable to answer what the life of the restoration without the jetties being fixed would be. She advised they are pretty certain the jetties are the problem but to have modifications completed they need to have a study completed. Section 111 study is being done by the Army Core Engineering & unsure when the study will be completed.

Chair Mike Dissette questioned what hazard is being mitigated?

Julia advised storm damage, flooding, erosion, taking people out of harm's way, restoring open space, and protecting natural resources.

Chair Mike Dissette does it protect other structures?

Julia explained it will move people out of harm's way and prevent current owners from selling and repeating the need to protect those living there.

Chair Mike Dissette asked to confirm the formula for purchase price is fair market value.

Julia advised they don't discount for the risk; they look at fair market value. GZA hired to do benefit cost analysis. With that they do take into consideration fair market value, other work done out there from state & city, & rate of erosion and threat to home and probability of having to own the homes in future.

Chair Mike Dissette asked if part of calculation is the demolition & disposal?

Julia confirmed it is and also includes permitting.

Chair Mike Dissette asked if there is any other source of funding sought aside from CPC?

Julia advised there is not. City will be responsible for the 10% without a selected pot of money to come from. She noted it is an acquisition of Open Space and the plan does call out Plum Island. She referred to page 57 of the Open Space plan that notes converting developed land to create open space.

Director Andy Port added he reached out to Ethan Manning for other sources and alternatives were questioned. He explained there may be the ability to use PI Fund as a funding option.

Chuck Griffin questioned if the city done this before- buying property, or is this the first time.

Director Andy Port advised this is first time that he is aware of.

Julia addressed whether the land will stick around if bought by explaining they are not sure how it will play out in the immediate future, but they feel confident the problem is close to being addressed and resolved by the Army Core of Engineers. She advised even if the erosion continues it will be built back up once the jetty is fixed. Pattern of the sand leaving and returning once it's fixed. Do view this as a more permanent acquisition of open space.

Chuck Griffin advised he & his wife lost a place in Salisbury & always thought there was no guarantee for houses to exist and home owners just hope to get help from FEMA. Concerned about extent of the obligation with so many valuable houses in that area.

Julia explained they haven't used money to purchase property but have these fund to protect the property.

Director Andy Port reviewed in the past it's been more soft funding from the city to protect the area like sand bags and replacing the dunes.

Andrea Weetman asked when the study will be completed?

Julia advised they should have something this spring to determine if the jetties are the problem.

Director Andy Port explained they should complete the analysis by spring. Timing more to do with whether or not that is the solution. How long takes to do the design or construction which may happen in series. Analysis will help with potential solutions and then how quickly it may be done.

Jamie Gagnon questioned why this wasn't one of the proposals to support in the mayor's letter?

Director Andy Port explained the mayor will put out his most important projects but that doesn't necessarily mean it isn't important.

Julia noted the date of the letter from December and at that time they may not have indicated the importance as they weren't sure if FEMA would grant the award.

Jamie Gagnon questioned the high percentage of the CPC funds being requested for this project?

Kim Turner advised it falls under the Open Space reserve fund that it would be pulled from rather than the normal budget. Separate budget from the pool used for other projects.

Joe Teixeira explained the federal program is fairly new and related to the erosion being seen around the country. He spoke to the hazard mitigation issue with the houses coming down during storms causing debris and a domino effect with damage as that debris impacts other homes, the streets, sewers, and water flow. May be more common in the future to see this funding.

Call for questions from the Public?

- Connie Preston 18 Atwood St advised she is very aware of this grant & wanted to convey the importance of understanding that the home owners can withdraw from participating at any time. She advised the committee should be prepared to answer the question of how will the space be maintained as open space should the matching grant be approved. Where will the funds come from once it becomes open space as that may be a question from other councilors.

-Steven Mangione (geologist) Advised he has coastal transport experience and wanted to address the geologic effect of a big storm & the sediment transport that occurs during these big storms as well as some day to day. The big events move most of the sediment & we should expect to see a big storm in the next 5-10 years which will take away the sand & create the need to move the existing infrastructure like storm drains away from the shore. Feel money can be better spent than buying these homes.

No other questions

g) Open Space Reserve Fund

**City of Newburyport/ Open Space Committee
\$70,000**

Chair/Presenter: Mike Dissette

Explained this is a similar application as in the past to address future opportunities to acquire open space when presented. Having savings account in hand in significant amounts allow to move quickly and attract partners in nonprofit/communities to make the acquisition. In the past dozen years, the committee has attempted to slowly grow the funds. They have used \$300,000 at time and then built it back. There is over \$900,000 in the account and this year asking to add \$70,000 to it. He has been asked what the number needed is before they stop asking and it's been suggested to make it \$1 million. He added it's necessary to continue to do this and address large opportunities that come up like areas adjacent to the reservoir and the town forest. Agricultural restricted, not being farmed and elderly owners is something watching with Greenbelt to be prepared for an opportunity. Additional large track in little river water shed. This amount will go into a reserve and not dedicated to any particular project until CPC reviewed

No questions from committee or public.

4. Other Business from Chair or Planning Director

Chair Mike Dissette advised no other business. Director Andy Port advised no other business. No questions.

5. Approval of the 1/18/24 and 10/19/23 minutes

Chair Mike Dissette motioned for approval of the 10/19/23 minutes with motion from Joe Teixeira & 2nd from Chuck Griffin.

Vote taken with all in favor.

Chair Mike Dissette motioned for approval of 1/18/24 minutes for approval with motion from Joe Teixeira & 2nd from Chuck Griffin.

Chair Mike Dissette requested correction of his name and Jen Bluestein on page 1 and paragraph on page 3 to correct to show "in person" in place of "early" in reference to the meetings.

Vote taken on minutes, with mentioned corrections, with all in favor.

6. Meeting Adjournment

Chair Mike Dissette confirmed meeting adjourned 8:55 pm.

Motion by Jamie Gagnon & 2nd from Joe Teixeira.

Roll call taken with all in agreement.