

**Northampton Community Preservation Committee Minutes
March 16, 2016**

Time: 7:00 pm
Place: City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street

Members Present: Brian Adams, Julia Chevan, David Whitehill, Chris Hellman, Linda Morley, Jack Finn, Julia Chevan, Debin Bruce (7:45)
Staff Present: Sarah LaValley

Brian called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

General Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

March 2, 2016

Chris moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by Linda, the motion carried unanimously.

Chair's Report

Brian reminded the Committee about upcoming site visits to the Academy of Music and historic Northampton.

**Meetings with Applicants-
Homeless Youth Residence – Friends of Hampshire County Homeless Individuals (FHCHI)**

Peg Keller stated that the Housing Partnership enthusiastically supported the application. Rick Hart, FHCHI stated that the agency is constantly monitoring homeless populations, and that youth are particularly at risk. The proposed house, which is twice as large as other shelters, is hoped to be move-in ready in one year.

Rebecca Mueller stated that within 18-36 months, a large percentage of individuals who age out of youth service become homeless. This project offers an opportunity to connect with youth and provide independent living skills.

Linda expressed concern about sustainability of programs and maintenance of the building.

Rick stated that management will be turned over entirely to Dial Self.

Phil Ridgewood, Dial Self Property Manager, stated that the organization has experience obtaining necessary capital improvement funds and planning for needed repairs.

Rebecca added that houses were sought that were not in need of significant rehabilitation; the projected budget for repairs is \$50,000.

David W. asked if the Summer Street house that was being considered is in line with that projected budget. Rick replied that it is, and that it is also the most likely candidate at this point.

Linda asked about tenant selection. Phil replied that Dial Self has worked with DHCD on other projects using HUD-approved criteria. Rick added that efforts are made to coordinate efforts between agencies, and youth homeless is a priority for all of western Massachusetts.

Sheldon Field Expansion – Northampton Parks and Recreation Department

Ann-Marie Moggio, Director of Parks and Recreation, provided an overview of the application. The agricultural parcel to the rear of Sheldon Field is already owned by the City but will be maintained in agriculture until a farming lease expires, at which point needs for recreation will be reassessed. This parcel would add to that future available area.

Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability noted that some cities address recreation needs by installing artificial turf, which eliminates the need to rest fields, but Northampton wants to avoid this approach. Additionally, the City is looking for ways to gain land access to Rainbow Beach, which is currently only accessible by boat. This project could offer a possible land swap to be able to do that.

Brian asked how the parcel would be converted to recreation. Ann-Marie stated that traditional fields are not always what is in demand, and that this parcel would be used in conjunction with the agricultural parcel to the rear of Sheldon Field.

Brian asked about recreation demand now that Florence Fields is complete. Ann-Marie stated that school department fields need to be rested; they are currently overplayed with no ability to rotate, and there are often groups who are not able to play because there are not fields available. David W. asked if that need is quantified. Ann-Marie stated that a recreational needs study was completed with CPA funds prior to Florence Fields' development, but has not been updated to include those fields or additional teams and sports.

Wayne added that standards of fields per population have been met, but requests vs. availability are not.

Linda asked what license payments for the agricultural land would be, and where those would go. Wayne stated that most licensees most often contribute labor and land improvements in lieu of payment.

Norwottuck/MassCentral Leeds Trail Extension - Northampton Office of Planning and Sustainability

Wayne Feiden stated that the first choice for rail trail development is to obtain state and federal funds, as these are generally big ticket items. There is a long bureaucratic process to obtain federal highway funding, and since this is a small project that would not make sense. Staff applied for a state grant for \$50,000, and the project, using CPA funds as a match, will only go forward if those funds are received. The trail in Williamsburg is no longer contentions, and that community has received their own state grant for trail development beginning at the town line.

Chris asked if there are any issues with access to the trail areas. Wayne replied that Northampton has a clear right-of-way up to the town line. There were discussions and compromises regarding trail surface, tree cutting and width.

David W. asked if funding could be allocated in the next round. Wayne replied that it could, but that fundraising would need to start over the summer if CPA funds won't be provided.

Saw Mill Hills Acquisition - Northampton Conservation Commission

Wayne provided an overview of the application. The City may try to fundraise rather than apply for a state grant to allow for a different application to be submitted.

Debin noted that several city projects have been submitted, and asked about coordination. Wayne replied that the City has been generally consistent with CPA requests, but other groups are also applying for more CPA funds. The acquisition is the Conservation Commission's top priority.

Jack agreed, adding that acquisition opportunities can sometimes come up at inopportune times.

Conservation Fund - Northampton Conservation Commission

Wayne stated that the fund allows the Commission to conduct efficient due diligence prior to acquisitions, and fast closings on small opportunities. Some projects will not be able to be completed if the fund is not replenished. There are three offers outstanding, not all will be able to be purchased if all are accepted.

Review and Approve Council Order for Leeds Historic Signage Project Recommendation

Debin moved to approve the Order as presented by staff. Seconded by Linda, the motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.