

Northampton Community Preservation Committee Minutes
April 6, 2016

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

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

Brian called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

General Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

None

Chair's Report

None

Public Comment Session on CPA Applications

Shepherd Barn Repairs

Kiki Smith, Historic Northampton Board president, stated that there is a large demand for CPA funds this round. Work on the barn would not be able to start until spring 2017, so an application can be submitted in a later round. If the dendrochronology is funded now, that would provide additional information about the barns history and allow additional project planning to take place.

Chris asked if there is any concern about a delay to the structural integrity of the barn. Kiki replied that it is hard to tell.

Debin expressed excitement about Historic Northampton's new leadership, and asked whether any temporary support for the barn could help stabilize it for one year. Kiki will request this information from the builder and follow-up with staff.

Laurie Sanders, Historic Northampton co-director echoed Kiki's support for the project, and stated that there are many new and exciting things happening with the organization.

David D. asked whether dendrochronology could provide any insight into weather and natural history. Laurie replied that it would be able to yield information beyond just age and structural condition.

Academy of Music Historic Curtain

Debra j'Anthony, Exexutive Director stated that timely preservation of the curtain is needed; lead clamps are pulling on the fabric and it is no longer protected by the main curtain. She is excited about this preservation opportunity and hopes that the CPC will recommend funding.

Kiki Smith stated that she is also a theater professor at Smith College, and supports the curtain's preservation as a piece of theater history, as well as the history of Northampton and the Academy of Music. It depicts the old hoe shop that no longer exists, and she hopes it can be saved.

Fitzgerald Lake Invasives Control

David Pritchard, Broad Brook Coalition (BBC) stated that BBC is full of active volunteers, but that additional help is also needed.

Laurie Sanders stated that she completed the first Rediscovering Northampton in 1993, and then revisited each conservation area in 2015 for the update. Twenty years ago swallowwort was not present at FLCA, and buckthorn was very limited. Endangered plants in the area are threatened by the imminent spread of invasives.

First Churches Windows

Reverend Todd Weir thanked the Committee for their thoroughness in reviewing applications and expressed support for the project.

Reverend Peter Ives stated that the building is one of the most extraordinary in Northampton, and receives a great deal of public use. The church took out a \$2 million loan for extensive work to the building, and the stained glass, which the church is obligated to keep and maintain, is also under a great deal of pressure.

Francine Riddell stated that she was baptized at First Churches, and that her daughter is now in classes there. The church is asking for the support of the community through CPA funds so it can preserve history for more generations.

David D. asked if there are any historical documents that explain the Tiffany window's placement. Reverend Weir stated the only references that were able to be found were in the church newsletter. It is planned to be replaced in the same location.

Housing for Homeless Youth

In addition to the homeless youth project, Rick Hart expressed support for the invasives removal project and all historical applications, noting that First Churches is a community resource as much more than just a church.

Mo Maginnis stated that First Churches is in many ways the center of Northampton. She has been involved with Friends of Hampshire County Homeless Individuals (FHCHI) for many years. The shelter population changes over time, and now there is a big demand for youth housing. The project will have a big positive impact for a lot of youths without support.

Michael Tremblay, Servicenet, stated that he has worked with many homeless youth over the years, and noted that many people are forced to leave foster care at 18 without any basic life skills, and get stuck in a cycle of homelessness. There are no other comparable resources like this in the area.

Michael McSherry, Edwards Church Pastor, stated that a society is judged by the care it takes of its most vulnerable, and expressed support for the project.

Reverend Weir stated that he is also involved in several housing organizations, and noted that young adults don't thrive in the general homeless population. A facility like this is a critical opportunity that will provide important skills for a successful transition into adulthood.

David D. asked how the housing will be financially managed. Rick Hart replied that FHCHI will purchase and renovate, then transfer to DialSelf for management.

Financial Review

Sarah provided an overview of the funding available for the round, including cash available on-hand and limitations on bonding.

Debin expressed dislike for bonding of projects. David W. stated that rates are currently very low and bonding could make sense, although the Committee should consider whether each award being recommended would be worthy of paying for over a number of years.

Begin Funding Recommendations for Round 1 2016 CPA Funds

Brian suggested that the Committee have an initial discussion, but leave final decisions until the next meeting.

The CPC discussed the four proposals submitted by the Planning Office.

Brian asked about possible issues with Article 97 of the state constitution, which requires a 2/3 vote of the state legislature for conservation properties to be used for other purposes, in light of the legal challenge issued by natural gas pipeline developers. Sarah stated that conservation restrictions provide an additional level of protection, and that CR language can also be very specific if needed.

The Committee agreed that partial funding of the Reservoir Road land acquisition would not make sense.

Julia noted that the Sheldon Field acquisition project also creates an opportunity for trail land for Rainbow Beach access. Chris noted that the project can't guarantee this possibility. David W. added that this project seems to have the least immediate public benefit.

There was agreement that the rail trail is not critical to fund this round.

David D. noted that bonding for Pulaski Park, along with the reduction in the Shepherd barn project would allow all projects to be funded. Jack noted that judicious discussion could potentially reduce the need for bonding.

Brian noted that the site visit to the Academy of Music provided additional insight into the curtain. David W. added that the fact that one must see the curtain in order to appreciate it is a concern, and there doesn't seem to be a strategy for providing public access.

There was general support for the youth homeless housing, Pulaski Park, FLCA invasives, and potentially partial funding for the First Churches windows, and the Conservation Fund.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.