

**Northampton Community Preservation Committee Minutes
October 19, 2016**

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

Members Present: Brian Adams, Chris Hellman, Linda Morley, Jack Finn, Ann Brooks,
David Whitehill, Jeff Jones , Julia Chevan
Staff Present: Sarah LaValley

Brian called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

General Public Comment

None

Chair's Report

Brian stated that Debin has unfortunately left the Committee due to work conflict, and welcomed Ann Dewitt-Brooks as the new representative from the Planning Board. Sarah will send a thank you .

Approval of Minutes

October 5, 2016 –Linda moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by David W, the motion carried unanimously, with a clarification to the discussion regarding percentage of pristine open space.

Meetings With Applicants

Beaver Brook/Broad Brook Improvements – Broad Brook Coalition & Leeds Civic

Bob Zimmermann, Broad Brook Coalition, and Jason Johnson, Leeds Civic Association provided an overview of the project. Beaver Brook/Broad Brook (BB/BB) was acquired in 2010, and is 110 acres of former farmland, with two former house sites along Route 9. Not far from the frontage, Beaver Brook crosses the parcel, and the proposal deals with the acreage between Route 9 and the brook. A large community cleanup was held in 2013, and an invasives removal project was undertaken the following year with a grant, but funds have not been available for followup. The area is easily accessible, although not very welcoming in its current state. The project includes creation of a parking area at the adjacent corrosion control facility, a map board, picnic tables, trails, a wildlife blind, and habitat management for turtle species. The area is a gateway to Northampton, and could possibly be the site of a welcome to Northampton sign in the future. Jason stated that he believes the area is very special, but also neglected, and that the project will increase its visibility and allow more people to enjoy it.

Ann asked if the small planned parking lot will be enough. Jason replied that there is currently no parking available at all. The Water Department has offered their lawn area, but the larger paved area cannot be used due to deliveries.

Linda asked about membership numbers of the applicant organizations. Leeds Civic is about 140 people, and BBC has 225.

Brian asked about invasive plant control. Bob stated that there are some volunteers with pesticide applicator licenses, and a consultant could also be hired.

Chris asked if permits are required. Laurie Sanders stated that she has obtained a permit for cut-stump invasive treatments around the City, and that the full project also has wetlands and Natural Heritage approval.

51 Main Street Historic Building Study – Trustees of Smith Charities

Lydia Szych, President of Smith Charities provided an overview of the project and the operations of Smith Charities. In the past, the Charities made profits through mortgage lending, but interest rates are now so low that profits have slowed. MassHistoric recommended beginning to address the issues with the historic building, which was constructed just for Smith Charities, with a study. Other member communities are also being asked for contributions.

The second floor is currently unheated and unused, and if that could be rented, those proceeds could then be used for additional programming.

Chris noted that all CPA projects must demonstrate enhancement to the public good, but that is a challenging case to make in this instance if Smith Charities could operate elsewhere, and a private entity could utilize the building.

Linda stated that the building is clearly historic, and that a study is needed, but a redesign of the interior to create revenue would likely not be eligible for CPA funds.

Ann noted that if the second floor is damaged, that could be CPA eligible, but that it is also not accessible to the public.

Sarah stated that similar discussions were held when the Three County Fair requested funds for a grandstand study, and the CPC then funded only those elements of the study directly tied to preservation.

David W. asked about the basis for the study cost estimate. Lydia stated that she used example studies from similar projects.

Hampshire County Courthouse Restoration – Hampshire Council of Governments

Todd Ford, Executive Director, provided an overview of the building's history, including past and present uses. An initial assessment was funded by a private foundation, and \$500,000 was set aside as part of a bond bill for repairs, although access to that funding is challenging. The CPA funded repairs to the front stairs previously, and the priority now is the tower and roof, which have been documented as very damaged, and are actively losing bricks and other elements. Other member communities are also being asked for funds, and Northampton will not be asked for additional funding if it is awarded this round.

Linda asked if the bond would fully fund the project. Todd stated that it would fund the initial estimate, but it is anticipated that more work will be needed.

Brian asked what would happen if the CPA funded the request, but the bond funds did not become available. Todd replied that the funds could not be used, and would be returned, and added that the CPC is invited to a tour on October 21 at 2:00 with local legislators and press.

Review and Approve MOU for Historic Northampton Collection Preservation Small Grants Project Recommendations

Linda moved to approve the MOU as drafted by staff. Seconded by Ann, the motion carried unanimously.

Other Business Not Foreseen When Agenda was Published

Linda asked staff to follow-up with Wayne Feiden regarding maximum income eligibility for CPA funding – these are 100% of AMI, not 120%. Sarah will do that.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.