

**Northampton Community Preservation Committee Minutes  
March 4, 2020**

**Time:** 7:00 pm  
**Place:** City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street (BEHIND City Hall)

Brian Adams	✓
Linda Morley	✓
Julia Chevan	✓
Chris Hellman	✓
Jeff Jones	✓
Martha Lyon	✓
Dan Krassner	
Jack Finn	✓
Alan Verson	✓
Sarah LaValley - staff	✓

Brian called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

**General Public Comment**

None

**Approval of Minutes**

Linda move to approve the November 6, 2019 minutes. Seconded by Chris, the motion carried unanimously.

**Chair’s Report**

Brian stated that the override passed overwhelmingly. An open house at the Glendale Road Habitat for Humanity will be held on March 20. The Back Porch music festival was held recently at the Academy of Music, and many acts commented on the beauty of the space, which was renovated using CPA funds. Brian also encouraged CPC members to visit the Leeds rail trail.

**Public Comment Session on Applications**

No public comment was provided.

**Meeting with Applicant – Omasta APR**

Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability, stated that 25% of the City is permanently protected, most of that is conservation land. A small percentage of this is farmland, in most cases held privately. The City holds Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR) on private properties and the state hospital agricultural land, and the Department of Agricultural Resources holds an APR on City owned open space in the Mineral Hills. The biggest threat to most agricultural land in Northampton is the land lying fallow and being lost as farmland.

Wayne provided an overview of APR’s. Land rights are seen as a ‘bundle of sticks,’ and a permanent restriction is an acquisition by another entity of some of those sticks. Any restriction in excess of 30 years must be approved by the relevant state agency. APR’s are most commonly placed on prime agricultural soils; the state will cover 80% of the value in those cases with the municipality covering the remainder. With the Omasta APR, the owner will donate a section that does not contain prime ag soils, and the City will also obtain a trail easement on the APR portion. The appraisal is the difference between farmland and development value. The property contains a lot of road frontage, and the full appraisal was over \$600,000. The City match is \$75,450. The Committee discussed threats to farmland, current farmers retiring, and newer farmers, including younger generation and recent immigrants, being priced out from acquiring working farms. The APR program helps to open doors by creating an affirmative obligation to keep land in agriculture. Chris asked if the property would be developable absent placement of an APR. Wayne replied that it mostly would, except for some wetland areas. Wayne noted that marijuana is not classified as an agricultural product. Brian asked if taxes will be reduced. Wayne replied

that the farm is currently enrolled in the Chapter 61A program, so taxes will remain about the same. There are no restrictions on the house area, and houses are often sold separately from farmland. Julia asked APR program funds on hand from a prior CPA award. Wayne stated that another CPA funding request for the APR program likely won't be made, since the demand was less than anticipated. The remainder of that fund will be utilized for this acquisition. Jeff asked about farmers walking away from agricultural areas. Wayne noted that this happens most often with smaller borderland parcels, and margins of field edges creep in over time. Sarah noted that the surplus \$150,000 from the state distribution won't be able to be expended until FY21 since it was received after the tax rate was established, but the funds are on-hand and a recommendation can be made. Jack moved to recommend fully funding the project as requested in the application. Seconded by Linda, the motion carried unanimously.

### **Community Preservation Coalition Dues**

Linda moved to pay the \$4,350 invoice. Seconded by Martha. Chris noted that the Coalition promised an additional funding source of CPA revenue to increase state match, and the recent Act to Sustain Community Preservation with increased Registry of Deeds fees did that, but that he is not sure if the value of their lobbying program. Jeff stated that he would like to see more communities adopt the CPA, even if it results in a reduction of the local state match; it's a benefit for the Coalition to promote in new communities and assist communities without staff. The motion carried 8-2, with 2 abstentions.

### **Review and Approve Council Orders for Small Grant Recommendations**

Martha moved to approve the orders with minor corrections. Seconded by Chris, the motion carried unanimously.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 PM.