

TOWN OF BELMONT

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Minutes: Wednesday, November 12, 2014, Town Hall Conference Room #1, 5:00PM
Present: Floyd Carman, Anthony Ferrante, Lisa Harrington, Gloria Leipzig, Anne Marie Mahoney, Paul Solomon, Margaret Velie
Absent: Joe DeStefano, Andres Rojas
Other: Stuart Saginor (Community Preservation Coalition), Michael Trainor

Margaret Velie called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

Community Preservation Coalition Presentation: CPA Update and Training

Stuart Saginor began his presentation by explaining that the role of the Community Preservation Coalition is to provide technical assistance, advocacy for ballot measures, and training for municipalities that have adopted the Community Preservation Act. Currently there are 158 CPA communities (approximately 45% of the municipalities in Massachusetts). Through FY14, towns and the state have appropriated a total of \$1.4 billion for CPA projects, with an additional nearly \$790 million leveraged from outside funding sources.

The Community Preservation Trust Fund is primarily funded through \$20 fees collected at the Registry of Deeds. The Registry collects between \$20 mill and \$50 mill annually through earmarked fees. The current year collection was the lowest recorded at \$20 mill, and \$8.6 mill of that was used by the state for various other unrelated projects, leaving a balance of \$11.4 mill for the CPA state match. The reduced state match was largely due to the decline in the number of registry fees collected, as depicted in the attached chart. Eventually the State will likely include contributions to the CPA trust fund as part of the regular budget. However, Mr. Saginor cautioned that CPA communities should expect smaller matches, similar to that which was granted this year, for at least the next few years.

RECREATION

In 2012 the CPA legislation was expanded to allow rehabilitation and restoration for CPA Recreation projects. Mr. Saginor clarified that stadiums do not fall under eligible Recreation projects as Recreation is a sub group under open space, and valid Recreation projects must address assets that are as close to their "natural state" as possible. Closed structures are only eligible if they are necessary for running the open space/recreation asset. As with all CPA asset categories, CPA funds can only be used for capital projects.

HOUSING

Mr. Saginor stated that one of the benefits of the CPA is that it allows communities to have local control over the creation of community housing. He also discussed the definition of "support", the action word that can only be used under the community housing CPA asset category. Support was more clearly defined in 2012 in order to clarify that first time homebuyer, rental assistance, and other grant programs are examples of allowable CPA projects.

HISTORIC

As with all CPA asset categories, historic preservation projects must be conducted in accordance to the standards of the Secretary of the Interior. Mr. Saginor noted that CPA money has been used to restore three copies of the Declaration of Independence.

OPEN SPACE

Mr. Saginor cautioned that justifying open space preservation as a valid CPA project can be difficult because compelling evidence is needed to show that the work could not be categorized as rehabilitation. It must be clear that project would help preserve a parcel that is danger of harm (i.e. invasive species, retaining wall). Mr. Saginor also reminded the CPC that a permanent restriction on ANY asset category must be owned by a third party. The Town cannot own both the land and the subsequent deed restriction according section 12 of CPA legislation.

Anne Marie Mahoney left at 6:38pm.

QUESTION: CPC RESERVE FUND

In response to the CPC's interest in reserving a portion of the annual collection for future acquisitions, Stuart Saginor stressed that a new reserve account outside of the four already set aside through CPA legislation could not be created. As an alternative, the CPC could appropriate more than the required 10% into any of the already existing accounts. This would, however, force the CPC to designate these funds to a specific community asset category during the initial appropriation. The CPC could also decide to only spend from annual revenue and never draw from the fund balance. According to Mr. Saginor, most communities have a relatively large fund balance. A specific fund balance was not recommended, as each community's needs are different, but Mr. Saginor cautioned that the residents may respond unfavorably if the fund balance is too high. Seeing that a large portion of money is not being spent, residents may get the impression that their tax dollars are not being used responsibly and seek to revoke or lower the local CPA surcharge.

QUESTION: HOMER HOUSE

In response to the question of whether the CPC can fund private historic projects, Mr. Saginor noted that 30-40% of historic CPA projects have been private. He explained that it was necessary to demonstrate a clear public benefit to the project. One method is to place an historic preservation restriction on the property, thereby ensuring that the property will remain an historic asset in perpetuity. However, given the high cost associated with obtaining historic preservation restrictions, this would not be a reasonable course of action for smaller CPA projects.

In terms of the Homer House, which is owned and maintained by a private organization (Belmont Woman's Club), the CPC could issue a grant for rehabilitation work under the condition that the building is available free of charge to other community groups for a certain number of days during the year. The CPC could also use funds to purchase the property, but the ongoing maintenance costs associated with the property would be significant. The property could be leased to the Belmont Woman's Club as a means of offsetting these ongoing maintenance costs. The CPC could also issue a CPA grant under the condition that the Town has the first right of refusal and that the Town would be reimbursed were the property ever sold.

Mr. Saginor confirmed that other communities have required historic preservation CPA projects to obtain additional private funding.

Approve Minutes

Motion to approve minutes of October 8, 2014 as amended approved unanimously.

Article 15 CPA Town Meeting Vote Technical Correction

Amend Motion to approve two technical corrections to the description of the funding accounts, from Article 15 for the Community Preservation Committee Budget from the 2014 Annual Town, based on guidance from the Department of Revenue, was approved unanimously

Other Business

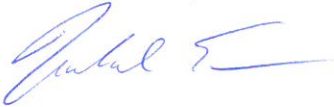
Administrative Expenses

- Motion approved unanimously for payment of \$572.32 (16 hours @ \$35.77) to Michael Trainor for administrative work.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 10, 2014 at 5:00PM, Town Hall Conference Room 1.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael Trainor