

TOWN OF BELMONT

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Minutes: Thursday, November 13, 2014, Town Hall Selectmen's Room, 7:00PM
Present: Floyd Carman, Anthony Ferrante, Lisa Harrington, Andres Rojas, Paul Solomon,
Margaret Velie
Other: Michael Trainor

Margaret Velie called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Introductory Remarks

The CPC is conducting its third year of the CPA funding application process, with approximately \$3.5 mill already approved in prior years. Past projects range from high profile examples such as the rehabilitation of Joey's Park, to less visible projects such as the preservation and digitization of Belmont's vital records.

Final Application Process and Timeline, FY2016

By September 30, 2014, the CPC had received eight preliminary applications. Of those eight applications, seven were invited to submit final applications for further consideration.

Applicants were notified whether additional written support should be included with their final applications. All applicants should include any foreseeable impact their project would have to the Town Budget as part of their final application submissions. The CPA application timeline was reviewed, and applicants were reminded that they would be required to participate in committee presentations, the League of Women Voters meeting, and Town Meeting if their final applications were approved by the CPC.

Projects Eligible for Final Applications

Margaret Velie introduced the six members of CPC that were present for the public meeting. It was then explained that each project sponsor would give a five minute presentation before answering questions from both the CPC and the general public.

Belmont Veterans Memorial Restoration (\$60,000)

Kevin Ryan, Belmont Veterans Memorial Committee

Kevin Ryan explained that, while the Town has a history of being very supportive of its veteran population, some repair and maintenance is needed for a number of the existing memorials. One company estimated that the WWI Memorial needed approximately \$50,000 in repairs.

While originally the preliminary application was submitted as a three part project, the restoration of the WWI Memorial was the only part that the CPC identified as legally eligible for CPA funding. Therefore, only the WWI Memorial restoration will be included in the scope of work for the final application that is to be submitted. The remaining pieces of the original project will be funded through outside sources.

Per the CPC's request, the Belmont Historic Society will provide a written endorsement of the project.

Margaret Velie cautioned that while refurbishing and restoration work is allowable under CPA legislation, maintenance is not. It is important that the language of the final application reflects the proper and legal usage of CPA funds in order for the CPC to grant its approval.

Lisa Harrington and Floyd Carman noted that the public procurement process would have to be followed should the CPC grant its approval. Andres Rojas added that any budgetary shortfalls that exceed the CPC's grant would have to be addressed through outside funding sources.

Wellington Station Exterior Restoration (\$26,300)

Emilio Mauro, Belmont Historical Society

A visual landmark of the Town, The Wellington Station is owned and maintained by the Belmont Historical Society but is used by many other community groups. The building predates the Town itself. It was originally a school, then a railroad station, and then a summer house, before the Belmont Historic Society purchased the building in late the 1970's. The building is opened to public on occasion and is a museum to the Town's historic connection to the railroad.

The roof needs to be replaced before inclement weather damages the building's structure. Part of the requested \$26,300 includes a contingency budget of \$3,000 in the event that the wood decking and other areas require minor repairs as a result of the roof work. The Belmont Historic Society maintains the property but this large capital project is beyond their budgetary limits.

Emilio Mauro confirmed that no private funding would be used in conjunction with CPA funds for this project. Joe Cornish, honorary member of the Belmont Historical Society and Wellington Station master, had a preservation carpenter examine the property last year. The preservation carpenter determined that the building is in good condition aside from the roof. Therefore no other major renovations are anticipated for the property at this time.

Belmont Village Electrical Upgrade – Interior, 19 Buildings (\$522,500)

Donna Hamilton, Belmont Housing Authority

No substantial upgrades to the original 1949 electrical system were made until the CPC approved projects to update the underground wiring in FY13 and the interior wiring for six of the buildings in FY14. The requested \$522,500 will complete the interior electrical upgrades needed for the remaining nineteen buildings at Belmont Village. Donna Hamilton acknowledged the Belmont Housing Authority (BHA) is requesting a substantial amount of CPA funds, but it was derived from a reasonable estimate for the remaining work that needs to be done to complete the project.

Donna Hamilton acknowledged that subsequent repairs to the walls may be required after upgrading the interior electrical work, but surface mounting the new electrical work may be an option to avoid such repairs. Andres Rojas responded that he would prefer to avoid using external surface mounting so that the new wiring upgrades are not overtly visible.

Floyd Carman inquired whether subsequent funding requests are to be expected from the BHA. While Donna Hamilton could not comment on other projects, as such decisions are up to the BHA board members, the amount to be requested in their final application is the last piece of funding needed to complete the electrical upgrades at Belmont Village. The project could be split between two separate years, should the CPC wish to spread the total cost of the project over two separate funding cycles.

Per the CPC's request, Fire Chief David Frizzell will supply a letter of support with the final application, stating that the original 1949 wiring represents a significant fire hazard to Belmont Village.

Winn Brook & Pequossette Tennis Courts Restoration (two projects - \$295,000 each)

Andres Rojas, Board of Selectmen (on behalf of David Kale, Town Administrator)

The Board of Selectmen was approached by advocacy groups to seek repairs for the Winn Brook and Pequossette tennis courts. Both locations have significant cracking and, although there is no related study at this point, it is believed that both locations are fairly well-used. CPA applications were submitted for both locations because their restoration needs are equally valid. Both projects address the mission of the Grove Street Master Plan to systematically improve parks. However, if only one could receive CPA funding this year, Andres Rojas suggests addressing the Pequossette tennis courts first, as that area of the Town has not received as much attention as Winn Brook in recent years.

Anthony Ferrante raised concerns that the Recreation Commission was not consulted beforehand regarding this project. He also noted that Belmont has twenty-four tennis courts, as compared to the seventeen in Lexington which serve a much larger community. Anthony Ferrante suggested using CPA resources to fund a town-wide study to determine the true usage of Belmont's tennis courts, the optimal distribution for tennis courts in the Town, and the optimal stakeholders not yet addressed. This project would be useful not only for examining these two projects but also for the many other tennis court related projects likely to arise over the coming years.

Andres Rojas stated that the Board of Selectmen would agree with this approach but David Kale would have to be consulted as the Town Administrator and sponsor of the CPA project. Anthony Ferrante suggested that David Kale attend the Recreation Commission meeting on November 19, 2014 to discuss this issue. Floyd Carman further suggested that David Kale and a member of the Recreation Commission attend the CPC meeting on December 10, 2014 to give an update before final applications are reviewed.

Digitization of Belmont Newspapers, 1890-1923 (\$25,000)

Elaine Alligood, Board of Library Trustees (on behalf of Maureen Connors)

Originally the scope of work also included digitizing records from 1924-1983. However, Newsbank owns the rights to the articles published during this time period. It may be possible to address the Newsbank articles at a later date, but the final application this year will reflect a revised focus that includes only the public domain records dating from 1890-1923. The reduced scope of work will ultimately reduce the cost of the project, but a specific figure is not yet available.

The goal of the project is to have these articles available to the public online. In addition to making the documents more easily accessible, digitizing these articles will ensure they are preserved beyond the shelf life of acid paper, microfilm, and other hardcopy archival materials. The Town Clerk and School Department will be submitting letters of support with the final application for this project.

Floyd Carman noted that this project, like the digitization of the Belmont Media Center and Town vital records, would be of great benefit to the Belmont school system.

Homer House Restoration (\$100,000)

Susan Smart, Belmont Woman's Club

The cupola suffered extensive damages during the winter when significant material loss occurred and water began leaking into the building. A temporary netting, funded by the Belmont Woman's Club, allowed the building to remain open for tours and the annual Strawberry Festival. These events are part of a larger strategy to raise public awareness and increase membership. Susan smart acknowledged that she understood "that the doors were closed, looked impenetrable, for many years." But the organization is "working to correct that perception." The Belmont Woman's Club has also introduced a "friend membership program" as an added effort to increase current membership. By increasing membership it is hoped that the Belmont Woman's Club can increase their annual revenue in order to help address all necessary repairs as detailed in the CPA-funded William Flagg homer House Building Survey and Investigation. However, the unexpected damages to the cupola necessitates that the Belmont Woman's Club appeal to the CPC for additional funding for restoration.

The cupola is the focal point of the Winslow Homer house tours because of the beautiful vista that can be seen from that location. Any surplus CPA funding awarded after the cupola restoration work has been completed will be used to restore the porches, which are currently unusable due to severe rot. The building itself is remarkably sturdy, given its brick framework covered by stucco, but the wooden elements have been damaged over time.

The Belmont Woman's Club is pursuing additional, outside funding by capitalizing on the historic connection the building has to the famous American painter Winslow Homer. Although the building survey and investigation suggested that over \$1 million is needed for repairs, the Belmont Woman's Club is adamant that they will not seek annual CPA funding to address these repairs. It is hoped that CPA funds can be granted for restoration of cupola to allow the organization time to become self-sustaining with their building repairs going forward.

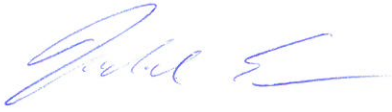
Lisa Harrington noted that a Town-owned historic preservation restriction would have to be placed on the house before any CPA-funded restoration could begin, in order to ensure the property will remain part of the historic inventory in perpetuity. Historic preservation restrictions cost a significant amount of money and take time to acquire. Floyd Carman added that the Town would expect a "return on the investment" in the event that the property was sold at any point in the future. Such measures would need to be put in place before any presentation at Town Meeting.

Susan Smart stated that the Belmont Woman's Club currently has fewer than 100 members. It is hoped that the organization's new strategy will attract younger membership. The Belmont Woman's Club also plans to have the building open to the general public on more occasions throughout the year.

Floyd Carman asked what the Belmont Woman's Club had obtained in private funding. Susan Smart stated that \$10,000 was donated from a private entity and another corporate foundation might be interested in a grant proposal. The Belmont Woman's Club is seeking private sources of funding so as not to be a burden to the Town.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Trainor", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Trainor