

TOWN OF HARWICH
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Approved 1.12.23

**Community Preservation Committee Regular Meeting Minutes
January 5, 2023**

Recording and Taping Notification: As required by law the Town may audio or video record this meeting. Any person intending to either audio or video record this open session is required to inform the chair.

I Call to Order

Harwich Community Preservation Committee Meeting called to order with quorum of committee members present by Chair Dave Nixon at 6:03 PM, on Thursday, January 5, 2023 at the Harwich Town Hall, Donn B. Griffin Room.

Present: Chair Dave Nixon - Aye; Vice-Chair Kathy Green - Aye; Carole Ridley - Aye; Elizabeth Harder - Aye; John Ketchum – Aye; Bob Doane – Aye; Mary Maslowski– Aye; Kelly Barber – Aye.

Meeting called to order.

Absent: Joseph McParland III

II Guests Welcomed

No Public Comment

III Approval of Minutes:

- A. CPC Meeting – December 15, 2022 - Postponed

IV New Business:

- A. Final night - Presentations of the 2022/2023 CPA Funding Requests. Applicant will be given 5 minutes to present, followed by a 15-minute increment of time for discussion with CPC members.

Project applications can be found on: <https://www.harwich-ma.gov/community-preservation-committee/pages/2022-2023-cpa-funding-requests-for-fy2024>

OS 1 Bells Neck Road-Herring River Land Preservation Project – Contribute to Land Purchase Price – Harwich Conservation Trust. Project Manager – HCT Executive Director Michael Lach. Requested Amount: \$125,000

Presented by Project Manager – HCT Executive Director Michael Lach

- The purchase of this land would preserve this wonderful, undisturbed, pristine property for environmental prosperity, protecting wildlife habitat and native plants and wetlands cover – no invasive plants, which is quite unique, protecting water quality in this nitrogen sensitive area with its proximity to the river and herring run, with Nantucket Sound downstream, and historical preservation interests – buffering an adjoining historical cemetery (there is a trail to the cemetery).
- The project total is \$325,000 that includes the land purchase price is \$311,000, some costs associated with land purchase, closing costs, and fundraising costs. The conservation restriction will be held by the Harwich Conservation Department. The HCT is requesting \$125,000 towards this project. The remaining balance will be fundraised by the HCT. They are optimistic about their fundraising abilities. They have set a deadline of Dec. 31, 2023 to raise the remaining funds. They plan to apply for a State grant.
- The land is appraisal at \$311,500.
- They have submitted many letters of support.
- They have been through the Harwich Conservation permitting process. This 2.87 acres of land would be preserved as it is now. They don't have any plans to add anything, nor create recreational access. There is no trail to the marsh. The land has public road frontage, allowing public vista views. If anything would be added in the future, they would need to go through the town's permitting process. The conservation restriction could add language to allow for public access in the future if the CPC would prefer as often CPA funded projects have had access. Other conservation restrictions have allowed this option in the written document.
- Kathy reported the Real Estate/Open Space Committee visited the site and supports this project. They don't feel it is workable for recreational use. A committee member questioned if they didn't want to add a trail, what about adding a platform like another site in town? But it was noted there is public benefit beyond public access with the preservation of the water quality and flood prevention.

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B. Follow-Up: Discussion with BAMC Chair David Spitz – Option of combining **H4** Brooks Academy Exterior Preservation Project (Request: \$250,000) and **H5** Brooks Academy Windows Restoration Project (Request: \$440,000).

- Mr. Spitz had emailed the committee the optional Revised Application, we will call just H4, while there might be a small cost savings in merging the two projects, in staging & protection and carpentry, they are offset by increasing the 15% contingency to the more realistic 20% level. Conclusion, there is no great cost benefits in the combining the projects.
- Downside of submitting two separate warrant articles: 1) Town Meeting may only vote one project in and not the other. Both projects are necessary. 2) If one project's estimates are off, they cannot borrow from the other project's funds to complete the work. They may find cost savings while work is being done. Sharing the costs may just be a better option. The HDHC supports both sections of the restoration.
- The excavation of the foundation will begin soon. The building is not being lifted. The windows shouldn't be affected; they don't plan to remove them for this foundation work.
- The storm windows were questioned. The project's historian has gone back and forth on whether to keep the existing storm windows. What is the cost, or other implications, of keeping the existing storm windows? It is thought that all the windows do open. If they use fixed storm windows, what about the moisture problem? Could weeping holes be drilled in them and then provide enough air circulation? Would that be enough for any moisture problem?
- If the windows are opened and we use storms with screens, is that something that would happen? The building does have climate control.
- The proposed windows are solid windows with a bar across to look appropriate from the street. Is this the best way to go? Many committee members commented they want the project done correctly. Which is better – a double hung windows or a solid window with a middle bar?
- A proper plan with a count and type of the windows and storms was requested.
- The Town has inspected the building's systems and have rated them in good shape. Their mechanical engineer has written a report, so they know what maintenance is needed going forward.

Mr. Spitz was asked to get back to the committee with the answers.

C. Discussion and possible voting on the 2023/2023 CPA Funding Requests:

Chair Nixon and Vice-Chair Green met with the Harwich Finance Director Ellis to get the CPC bucket numbers. The amounts need to come from her. We may not know what is available to allocate next meeting. We may not know the amounts until sometime in February. We need to get our warrant articles into the BOS before that. We have an idea, a proximity of what may be available. But we need to know the baseline. What is in the buckets, what was last certified, and what is a conservative estimate of what will come into the buckets?

We received word from the Community Preservation Coalition that the State is giving Harwich some \$715,000 in the third round of distribution. We also heard that next year our numbers will decrease, maybe by half, as Worcester is coming in. That is a large city, which will drain more monies from the whole.

The committee went over each of the presented projects:

OS1 Bells Neck Road-Herring River Land Preservation Project, Harwich Conservation Trust, Request \$125,000

It was suggested this is not a large requested amount, and the only project for the Open Space bucket. We would be investing in this ecological valuable land, preserving and protecting its pristine habitat. Passive recreation language is commonly added to conservation restrictions if desired. One member is so in favor of this land purchase, they suggested increasing the requested amount to secure it.

CH2 Harwich Affordable Housing Trust Funds, Harwich Affordable Housing Trust, Request \$500,000

Many members stated their support affordable housing, but this is a tough ask. Many reported they were not happy with the Trust, as it lacks any strategy and accountability moving forward. Only in the last few update status reports has the Trust provided any information in their work. After years, they are still working on their Action Plan. The Trust doesn't even know if it will be a fiduciary or non-fiduciary and what that means for the Trust moving forward. A few members reported that the CPC has supported to fund the Trust, as a leap of faith in the beginning and have continued supporting their financial requests multiple times, but the Trust has not proved they are capable of providing housing. Only one parcel of land has been purchased and they don't know what to do with it. The Trust may do good work in the future, but there are other things it can do now before acquiring more funds.

CH3 Lower Cape Housing Institute, Community Development Partnership, Request \$15,000

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The requested \$15,000 is funding for two future years of the Housing Institute, but traditionally the CPC funds it just a year at a time. It is unknown how much CPA CH bucket money is available to spend this year, we may only be able to fund it for one year at \$7,500. Many committee members commented they think this is a great training program with merit. It was suggested CPC members should participate. The sparse numbers of Harwich participants are troubling. How can we get more participants from Harwich to attend? We don't know if any Harwich Affordable Housing Trustees have participated in the Institute.

H4 Brooks Academy Exterior Preservation Project, Brooks Academy Museum Commission BAMC, Request \$250,000

H5 Brooks Academy Windows Restoration Project, Brooks Academy Museum Commission BAMC, Request \$440,000
Work on the Academy's windows and exterior was discussed as one project.

Many committee members feel the Academy is an important historic town owned building and the work has merit, and consider working on the Academy as the first priority of historic preservations. However more answers are needed in the projects' presented plans. They want the work done correctly. It is a lot of money when we don't know how it will be maintained and how the building will be used in the future. We were told the town is putting together a more realistic maintenance plan for moving forward. And regardless of the Harwich Historical Society's plans are unclear, this important building needs to be preserved.

- Mr. Spitz will be addressing the committee's concerns expressed earlier in tonight's meeting.

H6 Revolutionary & Civil War Memorials Project, Harwich Cemetery Commission, Request \$256,282.40

Robbin had said she was waiting for the town to finish setting up an account to allow for contributions to this project's costs. We don't know how much could be contributed to the project. Couldn't we wait to fund it or fund it at a lesser amount? Though the project has merit, the fundraising opportunities, maybe even contributions from Brewster's CPC, probably made this project not a clear priority to fund this year for many committee members.

H7 North Harwich Cemetery Fence Post & Rails Project *Revised, Harwich Cemetery Commission, Request \$94,600*

Noting that it is a worthwhile project, the HDHC lists this HP project the last in this year's line of priorities for HP funds, compared to the Old Fire Station, etc. The site is unsightly and needs attention, but it has other competition for the HP funds, and maybe could wait a year. We have replaced railings before.

- A committee member has sent Robbin a list of questions requesting more details about the number of rails, the posts to be repaired vs. replaced, and the digging up of the buried railings. More investigation about what is really needed and where to go from there.

H8 The Old Fire Station - 203 Bank Street Project, Harwich Fire Association, Request \$350,000

Many committee members could support this project, noting how appealing it would be to rehab this very visible, unsightly building, adding that it wouldn't be about just the aesthetics, but it would also highlight the historical aspects that may draw attention across different age groups. It would be an improvement to the area and another draw to the nearby walking trails. The motivated group's timeline stated it would happen soon. If they show the town is invested in the exterior of the building, it might just make the fundraising for the interior easier. A complete renovation. Many also worried if there were enough CPA money to fund this exterior project. The requested amount is a big ask. One member classified this project was a second priority in the HP list.

- The one vendor's submitted estimate for the brick veneer work is awfully expensive. Another job estimate was requested.

R9 Harwich Oak Street Bikeways Crossing Lights Project, Town of Harwich Administration Office, Request \$13,000

A nodding support of the project. No additional information was requested. Many agreed there is a real need for the bike crossing lights. A member commented they felt the Bikeways Committee's applications are thorough. They follow through on their projects and return unused CPA funds when the projects are complete.

R10 Senior Softball Fields Restroom Project *Revised, Harwich Youth & Recreation Commission, Revised Request ~~\$170,000~~ \$150,000*

A nodding support of the project. Many agreed the need for the restrooms has been made clear. The men's Cape Cod Senior Softball League's contribution of \$20,000 towards the projects is a motivating action. Not before mentioned, but the girls' softball league also uses these fields.

- Question: What type of restroom is it going to be installed here? Is there any cost savings with doing it with Sand Pond Restroom project?

R11 Brooks Park Tennis/Pickle Ball Court Re-Surfacing Project, Harwich Youth & Recreation Commission, Request \$110,000

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Many committee members stated they could support this project. A member commented at first thought this was a maintenance project, but now understands it is not. It was added that the Rec. Dept. spent a lot of money last year filling in the surface cracks, but waiting to resurface may make the job a more costly affair as the surface condition worsens and deteriorates. Another member added they hoped there was enough CPA funds to afford this project. These are high use courts.

R12 Sand Pond Restroom Additional Funding Project, Harwich Youth & Recreation Commission, Request \$35,000

It was noted that it is disappointing that they are back requesting more funding for the restroom project started years ago. Many members commented they don't think enough answers have been provided; they are concerned about the type of system is best to use to protect the water quality in the pond.

R12 Project Questions:

- If they are going to add a new septic system for the restroom at the pond - would the Town and Eric consider a different type of tech for the waste management?
- One member would like an answer from the Town on the water quality benefits on using a tight tank system vs. a fast system in this area.
- Would a tight tank be more environmentally effective in this area?
- Could the Board of Health Director to attend Thursday's 1.12.23 meeting to discuss?
- What are the costs differences between the two types of waste management? Cost to purchase and install each type?
- Since the restrooms will be used for many 3 to 4 months a year at the pond, what are the maintenance costs of the two systems?
- If multiple tight tank systems are purchase, will there be any cost savings?
- If the project is changed to a tight tank system, the CPC would request a revised application to cover the change in project's cost.

Dave will try to get the answers from both Eric and BOH Director O'Neill.

R14 Skinequit Pond Remediation Project, Harwich Natural Resources, Request \$92,000

Note: John Ketchum is a resident in this area. He will contact the State's Ethics and Rules and get an answer regarding how much he can participate or if he must recuse himself from the discussion/vote on this project.

- This project's discussion was tabled until next meeting.

(Withdrawn Applications: R13 Veterans Complex Pavilion Project; CH15 Adult Shared Living – From the Ground Up; CH16 Adult Shared Living)

VI Other:

VII Next meeting's Agenda points - Thursday, January 12, 2023 at the Harwich Town Hall, 6:00 PM

- Possible voting on 2022/2023 CPC Funding Project Requests
- Follow-ups

VIII Adjournment

A motion was made by Elizabeth Harder, seconded by Kelly Barber to adjourn.

Vote: Chair Dave Nixon - Aye; Vice-Chair Kathy Green - Aye; Carole Ridley - Aye; Elizabeth Harder - Aye; John Ketchum - Aye; Bob Doane - Aye; Mary Maslowski - Aye; Kelly Barber - Aye.

Motion passed.

Adjournment at 8:39 PM