

Meeting Minutes

Stoughton Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

Meeting held in the SRA Office, 7 Pearl Street

Wednesday, August 2, 2023

Members Present: Chairperson Mark Zamanian and Member Rich Terry

Members Attending Remotely: Vice-Chair Dwight MacKerron, Treasurer Michael Barrett, Members Donald Brady, and John Morton [at 7:05]; Program Administrator (PA) Barry Kassler

Members absent: John Linehan, Laurice Rubel and Bunmi Olotu

Preliminary Items:

Mr. Zamanian read the Governor's Order authorizing remote meetings, explained that Governor Healey extended the order through March 31, 2025, and gave the remote link information for the meeting.

1. **Call to Order:** MOTION: Mr. MacKerron moved to open the meeting at 7:04 pm; seconded by Mr. Terry and so voted unanimously, 5-0: Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.

2. **Chairperson's Report:** Mr. Zamanian reported that he, Mr. Barrett and Mr. Kassler met online with representatives from Hebrew Senior Life (HSL) on July 28 regarding HSL's intent to create 210 affordable senior housing units in Stoughton on property they own. We are expecting to see a pre-application to the CPC for CPA funding to support the affordability aspect of the project. *[Mr. Morton joined the meeting at 7:05.]*

3. **Administrator's Report:** Mr. Kassler reported that all of the Grant Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding for the eleven projects approved at May's Annual Town Meeting have been fully signed and are on file. He will be working with Procurement Officer Fran Bruttaniti to assist in getting the projects started. He also reported that the Massachusetts CPA Coalition is changing to a new sponsor, from the Trust for Public Land, which will remain as part of the Coalition's Board, to an entity named Third Sector New England, which serves non-profit organizations. The Coalition's services will remain the same. Annual Coalition dues, which formerly were billed in July, will now be billed in September. Our dues will be \$3,500 – the same as last year.

4. **Treasurer's Report:** None.

5. **Public Comments:** None.

New Business:

6. **Historic Preservation Restriction (HPR) for Stoughton Depot:** Mr. Kassler explained that because the Depot was purchased using CPA funds, a permanent restriction must be placed on the building, as is true for any real property acquired with CPA funding. Mr. MacKerron stated that the Stoughton Historical Society, which has been asked to hold the restriction, will be meeting next week to formally endorse and accept that role. He is concerned that the criteria which the restriction will include have not been determined yet. The building is already on the National Register of Historic Places. He speculated that some new proposals for the building may be controversial with regard to whether or not they would be in accord with such a restriction, particularly commercial uses. The Society has agreed in principle to hold the restriction, but hasn't formally voted on it yet.

Mr. MacKerron stated that the Society would look differently upon temporary versus permanent changes to the building, and would regard additions more favorably than removals. Mr. Kassler noted that because the building is already on the National Historical Register, there are already some restrictions on what can be done with the property which would to some extent mirror what would be included in an HPR, and that fact also places it under the Massachusetts Historical Commission's jurisdiction. He added that he is working on creating a draft Historical Preservation Restriction (HPR).

Mr. Zamanian noted that the Select Board voted to keep the building in public use. Mr. MacKerron stated that there would still be judgment calls that would have to be made. He added that for now, he believes the Historical Society could agree to hold the restriction and we can work out the details later. Mr. Morton asked if the state Historical Commission (MHC) was aware of the Town's plans for the building. Mr. MacKerron responded that the MHC is not currently involved in the process. Mr. Morton stated that he would like to have the CPC be able to review the draft HPR that Mr. Kassler is working on before forwarding it to Town Counsel. Mr. Zamanian asked Mr. Kassler to bring the draft back to the CPC as Mr. Morton has requested.

Project Updates:

7. **Update on West Street Barn Evaluation:** Mr. MacKerron referred to the consultant's report, which presents a total estimate of \$165,000 for work to bring the barn back into condition for reuse. He stated that the Historical Commission had expressed the opinion that they believed it makes sense to wait another year before requesting CPA funding from Town Meeting (TM). He also noted that they would have to secure permission from Conservation and the cooperation of Town Forestry to be

able to clear the overgrown vegetation around the barn as the first step. He added that he personally was open to a persuasive argument that it would be better to not delay a year in seeking renovation funding.

Mr. Zamanian stated that the consultant's report recommends first taking action to prevent the structure from continuing to deteriorate. He added that the first time the barn came before Town Meeting, they were not receptive, particularly because no evaluation had been done, and no plan was in place, nor estimates of cost from a professional. He believes that it would make sense to aim for getting on the next Annual TM warrant, rather than gambling that the building would make it through two more winters undamaged. If we have an application, it gives the Town the option of moving forward at the next TM. Also, he noted, the sooner this project is proposed, the less expensive it will be to stabilize the building.

Mr. Terry expressed his agreement with Mr. Zamanian's assessment, noting that at the very least, the Town has a responsibility to maintain the building as its owner. His idea is that the building, once it is restored, can be used to teach Stoughton school students about the town's agricultural history. Mr. Barrett added his agreement to not waiting an additional year, but cautioned that we would have to have a defined use. He believes it will be more difficult to gain approval if we wait and the barn continues to deteriorate.

Mr. Zamanian said he will contact Conservation again, noting that they have lately been very busy. He believes that perhaps a joint application including Conservation as one of the applicants may make sense. Mr. Terry noted that the Town already has a budget to maintain its properties, adding that there should be a way to access that resource to help maintain the barn. Mr. MacKerron said he can ask the Historical Commission if they are interested in filing an application. Mr. Zamanian stated that it could come directly from the CPC itself. Mr. MacKerron asked if the CPC itself had ever been the proponent of a project, or if that would be allowed. He noted that the process has not been smooth getting TM approval, as it failed in its first attempt. He also noted that it was harder to get approval for repairs before we had done a study.

Mr. MacKerron wondered what amount of funding would make sense to request, adding that we would need to specify which parts of the project should be given priority, and be done first. He is concerned that unless we account for contingencies, the money will run out before the project is completed. Mr. Morton noted that the CPC needs to prioritize which projects it spends its money on, in order to be more effective at TM. He agreed that the barn has worthwhile historic value, and suggests that Conservation develop a specific plan for the use of the property – perhaps something that directly involves the public, such as having farm animals that people could visit and learn about.

Mr. Zamanian agreed that public involvement is important to gaining approval. He believes there an application for this upcoming year should be filed. Mr. Kassler noted that we can always pull the article prior to TM if we decide not to go forward. He also noted that the first attempt to request money for the project ended up in a tie vote only needing one more vote to pass, adding that it occurred at a Special TM, which is always a more difficult venue to gain approval at than Annual TM. Mr. Zamanian noted that TM had asked at the first vote whether there had been a study done, and at that point there had not. At the second TM, funding for just such a study was approved, and we now have that study in hand. At this point, he stated, it now makes sense to take the next logical step, which is to propose funding the renovation itself.

Mr. MacKerron again asked for guidance in determining what amount to request. Mr. Zamanian suggested contacting Ms. Bruttaniti for that guidance. The request would include the \$165,000 in cost estimates provided by the consultant, and would add a contingency for escalation, plus the cost of design, plus costs for a project manager. Mr. Morton stated that \$200,000 in total would be reasonable. He noted that the original request for the Capen Reynolds project didn't include these additional costs and ran short. Mr. MacKerron noted that a big question when restoring antique barns is whether to reinforce the original beams using the same method used when they were originally created, which would increase the cost of the project. He also noted that there are three different categories of tasks involved in the restoration, so multiple contractors would likely be involved. He recommended starting with the structural issues; he believes that clearing out the trash and cutting back the vegetation, which should be done prior to any work on the building, should not be a huge expense. Mr. Zamanian suggested that Mr. MacKerron approach the Historical Commission and see if they are willing to submit an application for the next Annual TM.

Mr. Zamanian suggested having Mr. Kassler oversee the project to ensure that it stays within budget. He agrees with adding the contingency, design costs and project management costs to the project, using the consultant's construction cost estimates as a base. Mr. Zamanian said he had spoken to Ms. Bruttaniti, and is comfortable going forward because she is comfortable with the cost estimates. Mr. MacKerron noted that it makes sense to include design costs in order to avoid problems during the construction phase. But he again noted that we need to determine how we want to support the original beams; he would rather not have to use crossbars, which would make the barn look "jury-rigged".

Mr. Zamanian asked whether it is the will of the committee to ask the Historical Commission to submit an application before the September 25 pre-app deadline in order to get the process moving. He agreed that we can always pull the request later if

we need to. Mr. MacKerron said he will follow up with the Historical Commission, and if they agree, will get a pre-application filed by September 25. Mr. Zamanian asked if we could at least get a sense of whether the Historical Commission is on board by our next meeting in early September. He asked Mr. Kassler to check with Procurement in order to price out adding contingency, design, and project management costs.

Mr. Terry noted that the USDA has a grant program for restorations that might be worth looking into; Mr. Zamanian thanked him and asked him if he would do so. Mr. Morton noted that any work the Program Administrator does for the project should be paid out of the administrative account versus coming from the project budget, and recommended contacting Town Counsel first if we want to change that. Mr. Kassler agreed, and stated that any work he does to assist the progress of the project should be part of his normal job responsibilities, and should come from the account that his pay is drawn from, rather than from the project account. Mr. Zamanian stated that because someone will need to be placed in the role of Project Manager, it makes sense to determine what the costs would be, and to budget for it within the project application. Mr. Morton noted that there will be a general contractor whose job it will be to oversee the subcontractors as part of overseeing the project.

Mr. Zamanian asked Mr. Morton to relate this conversation to Conservation. Mr. Morton said he will ask Conservation to prepare a plan for a use for the barn.

8. Update on Stoughton Ancient Documents: Mr. MacKerron reported that the Stoughton Historical Society has the scanned documents on a “hard drive”, but they have not been uploaded to the Internet. He can ask the librarian if the library could host the documents on the library’s website, and if so, post a link from the Historical Society website to it. He would have to first get the Historical Society’s approval, and then get the agreement of the library. Mr. MacKerron said he would make getting this done a priority; he added that there is not much funding left in the account, should any be needed. Mr. Kassler stated that this should be technically easy to accomplish by having the library upload it onto its own website, and having the Historical Society create a link to it from its website. Mr. Zamanian stated that since it was public money that made this project possible, the public should be able to see the results. He asked Mr. MacKerron if it made sense for the committee to revisit this at our October meeting, which he agreed to. Mr. MacKerron did not believe Canton had put their documents from this project online yet, either, but noted that this was not an impediment to Stoughton doing so. Mr. Barrett added that we can promote the posting of the documents online by discussing it at our October meeting, and directing people to its online location.

Administrative Items:

9. **Approval of Minutes of June 7 and June 28:** Mr. Terry noted one typographical error on the last page of the June 28 minutes. **MOTION: Mr. Barrett moved to approve the June 28 minutes as amended; seconded by Mr. Morton and so voted, 6-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

MOTION: Mr. Barrett moved to approve the minutes of June 7 as presented; seconded by Mr. Morton and so voted, 6-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.

10. **Reminder on CPC Term Renewals:** Mr. MacKerron and Mr. Terry have been sworn in. Mr. Morton will get sworn in as soon as possible. Mr. Kassler will follow up with Ms. Olotu.

11. **Other Unanticipated New Business:** Mr. MacKerron noted that he plans to submit an application to the CPC for another batch of historic signs.

12. **Schedule Next Meeting:** The next meeting was scheduled for the first Wednesday in September, on the 6th.

13. **Reorganization:** *Mr. Zamanian turned the meeting over to the Vice-Chair, Mr. MacKerron.*

Mr. Morton nominated Mr. Zamanian for Chair. There being no other nominations for the position, **Mr. Morton moved to vote on the nomination; seconded by Mr. Barrett and so voted 6-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.** *Mr. MacKerron turned the meeting back to Mr. Zamanian.*

Mr. Morton nominated Mr. MacKerron for Vice-Chair. There being no other nominations for the position, **Mr. Barrett moved to vote on the nomination; seconded by Mr. Morton and so voted 6-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

Mr. Morton nominated Mr. Barrett for Treasurer. There being no other nominations for the position, **Mr. Morton moved to vote on the nomination; seconded by Mr. MacKerron and so voted 6-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

14. **Adjournment:** **MOTION: Mr. MacKerron moved to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Morton and so voted 6-0, at 8:12 pm: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

Respectfully submitted,
Barry Kassler
Program Administrator, Community Preservation Committee

Approved on September 6, 2023