

**Town of Hamilton  
Community Preservation Committee  
February 14, 2008**

**Attendees**

The meeting was held in the Memorial Room of Town Hall with the following Committee members in attendance: Tom Catalano, Dave Carey, Peter Clark, Chris Davis, Leigh Keyser, Ray Whipple, Peter Britton, Peter Dana, and Lindle Willnow. A quorum was present. Christine Berry as CPC Coordinator was also present, as were several members of the public.

**FY09 CPA Recommendations**

**Town-Wide Survey as follow up to Master Plan and Open Space Plan Survey**

This proposal requests \$2,500 in funds to conduct a follow-up survey as part of the Master Plan Implementation. The cost for this project would come out of the 5% cap on CPA administrative funds. The Planning Board needs to update the Master Plan. Things in the community have changed, the taste of the town has shifted and the survey would include more fiscal questions this time around.

While the CPC would like the survey to go out this spring particularly for feedback for the Community Preservation Plan, it likely won't be ready until sometime in early FY09 as the existing questions need to be updated and refined. Questions will include CPA issues such as open space, housing, recreation, and historic preservation.

The Committee voted to allocate no more than \$2,500 to the Town-wide Survey as a follow-up to the Master Plan and Open Space Plan. Funding will come from FY08 or FY09 CPA administrative funds.

**HW Community House Portico Preservation Project**

The Community House is requesting \$120,000 from Hamilton CPA funds for an estimated \$217,000 project. The applicant is also requesting \$60,000 from Wenham CPA funds. The Community House has struggled with water infiltration in its portico area dating back to the 1960s. The portico acts as the main entrance and egress to the building. The Community House received funding in FY08 from both Hamilton and Wenham for Phase 1 of the portico preservation project which included preparation of preliminary architectural plans, development of drawings, and cost estimates.

The Community House has a long history in Hamilton and has been used actively by many community groups over the years. The building is eligible for the State Register of Historic Places, and the Community House has begun the process to have the building formally added to the Register.

A resident stated that the Community House is a great resource, but questioned whether it was eligible for CPA funding as it is not town owned. The Committee explained that it does qualify under the historic preservation criteria and that it is a locally significant resource and provides a public benefit.

The Committee discussed the idea of matching Wenham's CPA contribution and/or the amount raised by the Community House for this undertaking. The Committee recognized

that this strategy might stall the project if funding is not secured by Wenham and fundraising efforts. The Committee felt other parties must contribute to this project and that the Community House has a good endowment and is well-respected with many members.

The Committee voted to recommend CPA historic preservation funds to this project at a two to one match of the dollar amount that Wenham CPC recommends at not to exceed \$120,000. The Committee also stated that the Community House must have full funding and an approved financial plan in place prior to breaking ground.

### **Preservation of Weaver Pond at Patton Park**

This proposal requests \$10,000 in funding for the rental of a commercial pump to dewater the pond during the winter months to freeze the nuisance vegetation that has been destroying the pond. The Wenham CPC has also been asked to contribute to this project, but has not yet made a decision.

The dredging project that was undertaken at the pond several years failed to address the nuisance vegetation. In addition to the drawdown of water planned for this winter, the current Vegetation Management Plan also calls for the use of herbicides in the spring to address the weed population. If the herbicide is successful, CPA funds for the pump may not be necessary.

The Hamilton Fire Department has a pump capable of drawing down the pond, but not at the rapid rate that is needed for this proposal. Working in concert with the Wenham Fire Department pump truck, a less expensive pump rental may be adequate to pump down the pond. The Committee also felt that a less expensive cost estimate for the pump could be secured.

There is no guarantee that this will solve the existing problem at the pond, but it should solve the problem for a number of years.

The Committee voted to recommend funding at not to exceed \$2,500 in CPA Recreation funds for this project and asked that the applicant work with the Fire Departments of both towns to secure use of their pump trucks. Lindle Willnow abstained from voting on this project.

### **Asbury Grove Tabernacle Restoration Project**

The applicant is seeking \$35,000 in funding to make repairs to the historic tabernacle located in Asbury Grove. The applicant discussed various ways in which the Tabernacle could be used by the larger community such as use as a rain site for the Patton Park summer concert series, an alternate meeting site, and other use possibilities to ensure public benefit. Any agreement for such use must be written and signed by both parties. Brad Tilley, the applicant, described willingness on the part of the Board of Directors to do so.

Christine will contact Town Counsel, Donna McKenna, to ensure the public uses the Committee is proposing adequately address public benefit.

There was concern expressed about precedent opening the door to other religious organizations. While other communities have funded similar projects, it will be a tough sell

at Town Meeting. The First Congregational Church is central to Hamilton's Historic District and the viewscape along Bay Road. This is not the case for the Tabernacle. Mr. Tilley reminded the Committee that this is the last wooden Tabernacle remaining in the country and that Asbury Grove is part of the Town's history. The Committee agreed that there is a strong historic preservation component.

It may be difficult to garner support at Town Meeting for this proposal. Each project will be presented as a separate article at Town Meeting. The Town Meeting presentation should show the community tie to Asbury Grove and the other funding secured by Asbury Grove for this project. There will have to be a strong education component at Town Meeting.

There was discussion of simply bringing the project before Town Meeting because it is eligible, but not recommending it. However, the CPA legislation states that the CPC is the recommending entity to the legislative body, in Hamilton's case, Town Meeting.

The CPC expressed concern over the political ramifications of funding this project when the Town is experiencing financial hardship, and when residents will be asked to approve a large override. Dave Carey stated that CPA is not intended for the usual municipal projects. It is funding for projects that were getting bypassed in tough financial times.

Asbury Grove contributes approximately \$140,000 a year in taxes to the Town. The Grove contributes approximately \$2,800 per year to the CPA surcharge. This is not the case for the First Congregational Church.

The Committee voted to recommend \$35,000 in CPA historic preservation funding for this project. Both Tom Catalano and Peter Dana abstained from the vote. This funding is contingent upon a written agreement detailing general public uses. Peter Clark and Chris Davis offered to assist with hammering out such an agreement.

### **First Congregational Church of Hamilton**

The Committee had previously discussed a willingness to consider funding only the clock repairs to the clock which is estimated to be \$71,218. However, the clock, owned by the Town, is now operational. The Town has a contract with a contractor in Maine to perform periodic maintenance of the clock. The clock is in generally good condition. When it does stop, which should be quite rare, it will need an operator to restart it. The bell has not been operational for some time and does not chime.

The Committee and the applicant began discussing the possibility of funding repairs to the bell so that it would be operational along with the clock. The bell is damaged and would crack if rung manually. An external ringer, hitting the bell on the outside would not damage the bell. The bell could be programmed to ring. The cost estimate for this work would be approximately \$11,000. The Committee asked that the Church amend their application for funding repairs to the bell.

Questions were raised about whether the bell needed to be rung in a historically accurate fashion. That was decided not to be the case. A similar analogy is funding for the updated heating system at historic Town Hall. The Committee felt the ringing and preservation of the

bell was an important historic resource for the Town. It was discussed that the Church is an important resource in the district and that the bell serves as an important role.

The Committee voted to recommend not more than \$11,000 in CPA historic preservation funding for this project. The applicant will submit a revised application to Christine who will circulate it among the Committee.

### **Replacement of Floor at Senior Center/Old Library**

The COA is seeking \$9,000 in CPA funding to replace the flooring at the Senior Center. Dave Carey provided an update on Reinhardt's study of the building, which is expected to be completed soon. Reinhardt has determined that the high traffic location and small size is not advantageous to a developer. Currently the second floor cannot be occupied. The building has the potential to support several other possible uses, including document storage, teen center, meeting space, etc. Partitioning or the addition of a small wing could provide expanded office opportunities. The COA currently uses approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the downstairs, including the kitchen, for its programs.

Currently, the building is not deemed historic under the criteria set forth in the CPA statute. However, an informal polling of the Historic District Commission indicates that they would be willing to designate the property as "culturally significant" thus making the building eligible for CPA funding under the historic resources criteria.

The Committee voted to recommend not more than \$9,000 in CPA historic preservation funding for this project.

### **Additional Reserves**

In order to fulfill the requirements of the CPA, the Committee voted to reserve 10% of FY09 CPA revenues into the open space and community housing reserve accounts each. The Committee also voted to set aside 5% of FY09 revenues for administration. The Committee also expressed interest in funding a portion of the FY09 CPA projects out of previous years reserve accounts, where applicable.

### **School Street Well**

It has been determined that the likelihood of a purchase of a conservation restriction by the Town on the School Street well is slim due to difficult negotiations with the landowner and unrealistic values on the owner's part. The Committee may want to consider putting this funding back into the Open Space Reserve CPA account. Dave Carey suggested that Christine work with Allison to include this on the agenda of an upcoming Board of Selectmen's meeting.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm in the Memorial Room at Town Hall.

### **Meeting Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30pm.