

**Town of Hamilton  
Community Preservation Committee  
June 11, 2015 Minutes**

**Attendees**

The meeting was held at Hamilton Town Hall with the following Committee members in attendance: Chair Tom Catalano, Jay Butler, Robert Preston, Shawn Farrell, Ray Whipple, Ed Howard, Bob Gray, and Peter Britton (arrived at 7:35 p.m.). Community Projects Coordinator Rachel Meketon, ECGA Chris Lapointe, and Trust for Public Land Greg Caporossi also present. With a quorum of CPC members present, Tom Catalano called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

**Accept May 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting and May 21<sup>st</sup> Hearing Minutes**

Jay Butler moved to accept the May 21 hearing minutes. Ray Whipple seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Whipple moved to accept the May 14<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. Robert Preston seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

**Review Open Project Accounts**

1. \$3,300 – Endangered Species project that will be supplemented with \$2,000 appropriation at spring Town Meeting. This is the second round of work done at the pond.
2. \$2,000 – Baseball diamond at Patton Park. Improvements at baseball diamond are being matched by local contractor who will build dugouts and the CPA funding will be used for benches.
3. \$35,000 – Patton Homestead Riverwalk. ECGA is prepared to invoice for the design work on the project. Outstanding issues are hearing with Conservation Commission is not closed and DEP needs to be informed about proposed height of boardwalk above marsh.
4. \$193.49 – Hamilton Historical Society picture project remaining budget for completed project. Butler moved to close this account. Preston seconded the motion. CPC has voted on funds for an additional phase. The remaining funds will go into dedicated reserve. VOTE: Unanimous.
5. \$35,000 – Model T building approved in FY'08. Discussion ensued about undefined location for Model T building and interest from firefighters in Town to have a monument for volunteer firefighters. The CPC will send a formal communication indicating for bookkeeping reasons this item was voted to be taken off the books but the CPC is willing to help when a more viable alternative and new application is brought forward. Butler moved to take this item off the books and noted formal communication to be done with Fire Chief. Shawn Farrell seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.
6. \$3,000 – Remodeling Senior Center kitchen is done. \$30,000 – bathroom renovation at Senior Center is done. \$2,200 – for balustrades at Senior Center is outstanding. Discussion ensued about how Town labor was used at Senior Center

(i.e., repairing gutters). Butler moved to have Community Projects Coordinator Rachel Meketon contact COA Director Marybeth Lawton for a report on three open expenses. Farrell seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

7. \$5,500 – appropriated last year for Town Clerk historic preservation of Town books. Meketon will investigate details.
8. \$925 – Patton Park Liberty Road project appropriated in 2013. An anonymous donor provided this funding so CPA money is not needed. Preston moved to return remainder. Farrell seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.
9. \$10,000 – Patton Park project account for cannon wheels appropriated last year. The wheels are currently being rebuilt.

**Presentation by Chris Lapointe, ECGA, and Greg Caporossi, Trust for Public Land**

Information was provided to the CPC about potential open space acquisition of 340 acre parcel on Sagamore Hill property in Hamilton and into Essex (170 acres in each town) currently owned by the Donovan family. ECGA is working towards raising funding for the \$4.8 million market value parcel which is considered a signature landscape on the North Shore. ECGA is interested in permanently protecting the connector parcel for equestrian use, wildlife habitat, trails, and watersheds. The Town currently owns Donovan field and there are a few Conservation Restrictions in the area.

If the project is increased to 500 contiguous acres it would qualify for additional funding, and motivate abutting landowners to add further Conservation Restrictions on their land. The Donovan property is in Chapter 61A (haying is done as agricultural use) so annual tax bill for Hamilton portion is \$423. This land is developable. The Trust for Public Land has an option agreement to acquire 120 acres in back land in Essex for \$300,000 from Essex Land Realty Trust. The Trust is working toward a 50 acre conservation restriction with one house lot with access through Ipswich. Funding commitments have to be in place by end of 2015 to take action.

The potential funding sources for the \$5.1 million in projects include: Mass. Landscape Partnership program, with maximum award of \$2 million grant for 500 acres, state Department of Conservation and Recreation (\$400,000), ECGA (\$1.5 million commitment), Town of Hamilton CPA funds (\$2 million), and Town of Essex CPA funds (\$100,000). Non-town sources would fund \$3.1 million. ECGA would own the land and manage the property (i.e., trails, maps, signage, mowing, and parking).

Intended uses for the property (if ECGA acquires it) would be to allow public access for passive recreation more than just open space and haying (which would continue on 80 acres). The property has incredible views (i.e., Halibut Point and Annisquam), and is essential to area watersheds. Discussion addressed if there was potential to buy federal land on top of Sagamore Hill. Two site walks are scheduled in next week of the Donovan property. There are currently no public access rights to the property but walks can be scheduled through the Trust.

Discussion addressed how a bond would likely be used for the project. The public interest would be a permanent conservation restriction that would extinguish the development rights with ECGA owning and managing property.

Discussion ensued about if the project could be less expensive by giving away some development rights to offset staggering cost of property. Lapointe cautioned that when acreage gets smaller there would no longer be eligibility for Mass. Landscape Partnership grant, and that \$1.5 million of private money would be exceedingly difficult to raise if there is a development component.

Discussion was on how CPC never had an application for open space acquisition and now the opportunity has a tight timeline by the end of 2015 and project cost of \$2 million. The Town is paying \$42,500 a year in bonding for Donovan field. The CPC needs to understand from Hamilton's financial staff what CPA funding the Town has available and what could be applied for such a project while meeting other funding criteria of CPA. Discussion addressed how \$750,000 homes would likely be built in the area if development was allowed. Also mentioned was conservation activity happening in the community (70 acres on Gardner property off of Bridge Street).

Lapointe reiterated how \$3.1 million of non-CPA money could be raised and applied to the project leveraging conservation and other funding sources for a regional project that involves many communities. Discussion addressed how all CPA funding was used for Patton Park pool project because of uncertainty about getting a two-thirds approval vote at Town Meeting. He reiterated goal to maximum funding sources so less money would have to come from Hamilton (where not to exceed amount could be reduced and this would not affect Mass. Landscape Partnership grant).

Discussion was on Hamilton's open space plan and Chapter 61 lands in Town and how the proposed project property would be ranked as a candidate to be preserved but might not be well known so publicity would be essential (i.e., through site walks and a videographer showing the property). ECGA has contacted any landowner in Essex County who owns more than five acres of land to identify preservation potential. Lapointe explained that land conservation is a combination of prioritization and opportunity and ECGA has done analysis looking at prime agricultural soils, wildlife habitat, connectivity, proximity to existing open space, trail connections, etc. For ECGA the proposed project is its top priority. He noted that potential for additional conservation that would result from the project is enormous.

Discussion addressed how analysis should be done to understand if Hamilton can afford a \$2 million investment in open space. It was noted that open space remains a high priority for the Town's residents as evidenced in CPC survey results. ECGA is developing a trail map as if the acquisition was successful.

Also mentioned was if the open space acquisition does not pass at Town Meeting and the property was going to be sold to a developer, the Town has right of first refusal and 120 days to find funding sources. Discussion was on tight timeframe and state funding schedule lining up with end of 2015 deadline. Also mentioned was if Conservation Commission or Board of Selectmen would be CPA fund applicant for this project. A few CPC members disclosed that they are members of Greenbelt so Meketon will check with Town counsel about if this presents a conflict of interest related to a potential CPC funding vote for the ECGA project.

### **Project Evaluation Scoring System**

Discussion ensued about comments CPC has received on project evaluation form to condense criteria for scoring system. Meketon summarized how she had combined the ability of the applicant to implement and maintain a project, leveraging additional public or private funds from neighboring communities, protecting threatened resources with underserved populations, open space boards and commissions where endorsements would be sought, recreation and underserved populations, historic preservation and Historic District Commission. The Committee noted that the ranking system will give an applicant the opportunity to understand CPC's decision making process on projects.

### **Operating Procedures**

Discussion addressed how the procedures are in the CPC plan on website. Meketon can provide printed copies to interested parties.

### **Updated Community Preservation Plan**

The Committee reviewed the updated plan and noted that a graphic could be used identifying Chapter 61 and Chapter 61A land in Town in an appendix. This would be done for people to understand what open space would come to the Town and CPC for acquisition which is important for Hamilton's long term capital plan. The CPC reiterated survey responders interest in open space as important to Town.

### **Follow Up on Public Comment and the Updated Plan**

Discussion was on interest in Town to potentially raise CPA surcharge to 3%. This would change the average median surcharge in Hamilton from \$111 a year to \$165.

### **Adjournment**

Ed Howard moved to adjourn at 9:25 p.m. Preston seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas Catalano Chairman