

HAMILTON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes

Teleconference

June 10, 2021

Members Present: Chair Jay Butler, Richard Boroff, Rick Johanson, and Shawn Farrell

Members Absent: Robert Preston, Kim Dietel, Sherry Leonard, and Chris Currier

Call to Order and Roll Call

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) meeting did not have a quorum. Only four of the five members required for a quorum were present. An informal discussion began shortly after 7 p.m. Meeting notes (rather than minutes) were taken.

Committee vacancies – ConCom [Conservation Commission] and HHDC [Hamilton Historic District Commission] reps

Mr. Butler noted Katherine Mittelbusher resigned from the CPC. A new HHDC liaison will need to be appointed by the HHDC. The CPC may also be seeking a ConCom rep as the current liaison is usually absent from CPC meetings.

Review of informal joint meeting with Wenham on 5/20/21

Chair Jay Butler said he had distributed meeting notes for the Joint Meeting with the Wenham CPC. Neither Hamilton nor Wenham had a quorum for that meeting and not much was discussed, but it was agreed it was good to hold the meeting. Mr. Butler said both CPCs are aware the big future grant request will likely be for a turf field for the high school.

He said he had since met twice with Wenham CPC Chair Pat Waddell as both CPC chairs are on the Turf Field Committee. He listed the members. They are uncertain at present about whether the Turf Field Committee falls under Open Meeting Law but are getting confirmation on that. An engineering study was already done and there is a new proposal to add four tennis courts and a softball field to the engineering study (an added \$35K cost). That will push the scope of the project to more than \$10M. The additional scope is meant to address Title IX considerations. Mr. Butler said they are hoping to have a cost estimate for the project by October. He said both he and Mr. Waddell stated the CPCs would not give a

grant to the Turf Field Committee but rather directly to the School Committee because of unhappiness over what happened in the past involving the Winthrop School playground. The playground was presented in one way to the CPC and a grant to the friends group was approved. However, when the friends group gifted the money to the Schools, apparently they were free to spend it any way they like because the Schools did not build the playground to be ADA-accessible as it had been described at the time of the grant hearing. Richard Boroff said he didn't see how that happened and it didn't make sense to him.

The current plan for the Turf Field Committee (fundraising group) is to submit 501C paperwork. Mr. Butler said Wenham will come up with the correct amount so Hamilton may use the \$500K from the Patton Estate that's already been set aside. Hamilton's share (65%) is the \$500K; Wenham's share would be 35% or about \$200K. It was unknown whether the School Department would contribute anything or just rely on the fundraising group. Mr. Butler talked about the history of this project over the last more than 10 years and all the many steps that would need to happen.

Mr. Butler said some high school juniors had voiced complaints at the meeting about the lack of maintenance to the athletic fields. Mr. Boroff asked who was responsible for the maintenance and Mr. Farrell, who is a teacher, replied the Schools. Rick Johanson asked if the CPC can place a contingency on a grant, requiring that a maintenance plan be in place, citing that this was a safety issue for the students. Mr. Butler said yes.

Committee Report

Mr. Farrell reported he is no longer the Chair of the Selectboard. The new Chair is William Olson and Vice Chair is Jamie Knudsen. Mr. Farrell reported on the cell tower progress and said the Selectboard is working on providing sensitivity and anti-bias training for the board that may also be offered to other Town committees as well.

Review of Open Grants

- **Town Hall Renovation, Addition, and Preservation Project**

Mr. Butler recapped that the vote on the funding of the Town Hall renovation did not pass. The money for the CPC bonds that were passed needs to be held in virtual escrow. (Grants of \$1M plus previous \$3M were approved by Town Meeting but not at the ballot.) Mr. Farrell asked what happens now because the grants were approved and yet the money was not. Mr. Boroff asked if that meant the money was set aside. Mr. Butler explained the CPC would be bonding the project, so while it wasn't set aside per se, the required funds need to be encumbered or escrowed until November 15, 2022 when the construction is required to start under the grant agreement. CPC members speculated on what the payments would be per year for the bonding and compared the payments to those of Donovan Field and Sagamore Hill, which were bonded.

- **Affordable Housing Trust**

Mr. Butler said he traded emails with Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) Chair Marnie Crouch who said the Willow Street project is definitely underway. He discussed the current Habitat for Humanity project on Asbury Street and other affordable housing projects, including Asbury Commons by Harborlight Community Partners and one being considered at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary that involves converting dorm buildings into affordable housing. Another project being discussed is 50 luxury homes near Chebacco Road with the developer (Larry Smith) agreeing to pay the Town about \$1M in lieu of building affordable units there. Mr. Butler noted Ms. Crouch said she does not foresee an AHT ask of the CPC at the Fall Special Town Meeting (STM). The Harborlight project is guessed to be about six years out and the Gordon-Conwell project is about four to five years out if it comes to fruition.

- **First Congregational Church of Hamilton: Belfry and Clock Tower Renovation**

The historic preservation agreement was finalized just before former CPC Coordinator Pat Shannon left the Town, but the Church has not submitted any bills yet, according to Mr. Butler.

Hamilton Wenham Regional School District Athletic Facilities Improvement Working Group

Mr. Butler said this the official name of the Turf Field Committee fundraising group. The next meeting is planned for the last week in July. Mr. Johanson asked if the CPC would be contributing a lump sum at once or offering grants in stages. Mr. Farrell suggested that the CPC ask the group for a capital plan. Mr. Butler said it will take a long time to amass \$10M, and they may want to select one piece at a time for the CPC to contribute, but it depends on the ask.

Mr. Johanson, who is new to the CPC, asked about the members' role—whether it was advising potential applicants or just reacting to the grant requests. Mr. Butler said the CPC was more reactive than proactive, although he noted each year a public meeting is held and ideas for future grants are solicited. He said the list of potential future projects appears on the CPC webpage. He also maintains a list of all past grantees and said most people are aware of the process. Mr. Farrell said the CPC often asks for “skin in the game” from those making requests. Mr. Johanson said in its purest form, the CPC makes the best decisions for the Towns and members don't join who have conflicts of interests.

Mr. Farrell said some Wenham residents are currently looking to convert the tennis courts at Pingree Park into a skate park; the group has been meeting for about a year now. Mr. Butler said Mr. Waddell had said someone might want to refurbish the courts and they are also looking at the West Wenham playground. Mr. Farrell said the courts are probably not salvageable. Mr. Johanson said he was talking to a parent who wanted to have a bench

added near a local skating pond, but he thinks the land there isn't Town-owned. Mr. Farrell noted the CPC helps with all sizes of projects. Mr. Butler said he thought the Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) had recently suggested that the CPC focus on larger projects, but there isn't anything currently on the Capital Plan that qualifies for a CPC grant.

Mr. Farrell asked if the turf project working group would have an idea soon about what amount they might want from the CPC. Mr. Butler said they have no idea at present and are only in the stage of getting the word out to the community. He guessed they would have an answer to that question by Fall Town Meeting.

Mr. Butler brought up the idea presented by Mr. Johanson at a previous meeting that perhaps they might tie together the idea of raising the current surcharge (from 2% to 3%) to the turf field ask. Mr. Farrell said unfortunately they did not do that a while ago to have it in place for the Town Hall renovation ask. Mr. Butler said the timeline on getting a revised surcharge approved would be about two to three years. He discussed the process. Mr. Johanson asked if they could have a sunset on the surcharge whereby they would raise it to 3% for a period of time (perhaps a five-year commitment) and then have it go back to the 2%. Mr. Butler said unfortunately no. Mr. Farrell said even undoing the increase to the surcharge would require a citizen's petition, Town Meeting vote, and vote at the ballot. He said while he liked the idea, they couldn't guarantee how it would go. Mr. Johanson said he was surprised at how difficult it was to get people to buy in to the Town Hall project. Mr. Boroff said people don't always understand the process or the details that have been looked at. Mr. Butler said if the CPC votes no on any project, it is dead and if it approves a project, it goes to Town Meeting.

Mr. Johanson asked if the CPC was supposed to be recruiting volunteers for the CPC. Mr. Butler said the statute defines what reps they need and members are appointed by those committees while other members are at-large. Mr. Boroff is a rep from the Planning Board, for example. Mr. Butler said one reason for the success of the CPC is that members have not come in with agendas. Conflict of interest rules were discussed. The May 6 election result regarding the Town Hall project was discussed. Mr. Butler said there are 5,755 voters in Hamilton and only 17% of the population (981 people) voted. The project lost with 513 votes "no" and 432 votes "yes."

Potential move back to in-person meetings after 6/15/21

Mr. Butler said they were waiting for Governor Baker to decide whether they can still do Zoom meetings after the emergency order expires on June 15. Mr. Farrell said the Selectboard has been discussing a hybrid model enabling people to choose to attend in person or participate by Zoom.

Other business as necessary

Mr. Farrell brought up that the wagon wheels on the cannons in Patton Park need repainting. They were painted just two years ago. Mr. Butler will see if he can find the information on the vendor used.

The next CPC meeting was set for Thursday, July 8, at 7 p.m. Mr. Butler cited the CPC will need to update the CPC plan, come up with the meeting calendar for 'FY22, and hold the annual election of Chair and Vice Chair.

Coordinator vacancy

The position has been posted. It was noted a new finance director (Alex Magee) was recently hired.

Other business (continued)

Mr. Farrell brought up that Chris Currier had not been attending meetings over the past three years and perhaps they should reach out to the ConCom about it. Mr. Butler said they were not allowed to jettison members.

It was discussed that they might need some emergency preservation work to be done at Town Hall. Mr. Farrell asked if that might trigger having to bring everything up to code. Mr. Butler said he did not think so, but something needs to be done. He said there was no "fluff" in the proposed plans and budget. Mr. Boroff asked if it was realistically better to build a new building; Mr. Butler said it then could not be funded by the CPC. Mr. Butler also mentioned that the State would probably not allow for an option of a phased approach to renovating the building because once any work hits the 30% of the assessed value trigger, the whole building would need to be brought up to code. Mr. Butler said in the interim, they are not in ADA-compliance and at any time a directive could be issued to make the building ADA-accessible or move out. Mr. Farrell asked if it had not been decided to keep the staircase (the building was built in 1898), would it have made any difference in the vote? Mr. Butler said he did not think so. He said if/when they attempt to bring the project back, the costs will have increased costs by about 30%.

Mr. Farrell asked Mr. Butler if he would talk to Mr. [William] Olson about holding the CPC public hearing as a joint meeting with the Selectboard the third week in July. Mr. Butler said it was his plan to have the CPC review his presentation at the next CPC meeting in advance of the hearing. Mr. Farrell suggested adding information on the 3% surcharge by showing the figures from Wenham, which has the 3% surcharge, and suggesting the idea of moving to 3% and then trying to move it back to 2%. Mr. Butler noted the CPC has discussed that it cannot be the recognized committee that drives or sponsors the idea. A citizen's petition would be needed. Mr. Farrell said he imagined there might be a glut of money coming in from the Registry because of the great number of house sales in the area. Mr. Butler gave

some figures and history and reminded all that the only money that can be used toward bonding are from the surcharge not the State match.

The meeting concluded at 8:41 p.m.

Prepared By:



7-8-2021

Mary Alice Cookson
Minutes Secretary

Date