

HAMILTON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

Teleconference

March 11, 2021

Members Present: Chair Jay Butler, Shawn Farrell, Kim Dietel, Sherry Leonard, Richard Boroff, and Rick Johanson

Members Absent: Robert Preston and Chris Currier

Coordinator: Pat Shannon

**Call to Order**

Chair Jay Butler called the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) meeting to order at 7 p.m. with a quorum present.

**Approve Meeting Minutes of Feb. 11, 2021**

Shawn Farrell made a motion to accept the Feb. 11, 2021 meeting minutes. Richard Boroff seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Mr. Boroff, Rick Johanson, Kim Dietel, Katherine Mittelbusher, Sherry Leonard, Mr. Farrell, and Mr. Butler, (7-0) unanimous among those present.

**Committee Member Reports**

Mr. Farrell reported the Board of Selectmen (BOS) hosted a Human Rights (Zoom) forum last week and will be voting on Human Rights Commission membership at the next BOS meeting. At its last meeting, the BOS closed the warrant and Fire Chief Ray Brunet gave a report on his department summarizing the past year. Call volume was down mostly due to people not wanting to go to the hospital due to COVID-related concerns.

Mr. Boroff did not report on the Planning Board.

Ms. Leonard said the Housing Authority bathroom project was completed. Now they will work on the porches. Mr. Butler asked if the Senior Center will reopen soon. Ms. Leonard replied that groups of about 12 people were given Board of Health permission to gather.

Ms. Mittelbusher said at the last Hamilton Historic District Commission (HHDC) meeting, the HHDC approved the historic preservation restriction for the First Congregational Church clock tower/belfry project; the Town Hall Building Committee (THBC) gave an update on the Town Hall project; and a potential HHDC member was interviewed.

## **Review of Funding Application**

**a. Town Hall Renovation, Addition, and Preservation Project—\$1M:** THBC Chair Mike Twomey reviewed what had happened since the negative vote on the debt exclusion for the Town Hall project. He said the THBC had since removed almost \$300K in contingency. The scope has not changed. He said the goal was to have as little impact on the tax rate as possible. The impact now is more than \$4,378,443, which he thought equated to about 15 or 20 cents per thousand. He said the ask this evening of \$1M from the CPC was to try and reduce the impact on the tax rate. The CPC already contributed \$3,475,000, which was a huge boost, he said, and with some good PR, they hoped to get the project up and running and believed it was something the Town needed to do.

Mr. Butler, who is THBC secretary, said he instigated the idea of coming back to the CPC for more funding. He explained why he thought the “planets were aligned” for it—for example, the bidders had agreed to hold their bids from last October through May despite inflation and a rise in the cost of materials. Also, the Schools had pulled back the budget enough so there won’t need to be an override at Town Meeting.

Mr. Farrell said the BOS had been pondering when to put the debt exclusion on the ballot. He thought they had decided to put it on for September, but he said there has since been some confusion about that. It will be discussed at the BOS meeting on Monday night. Mr. Farrell said he was in favor of granting the \$1M ask, but noted it would tie up CPC funds for a considerable time into the future. When going out to bid, he wasn’t sure if they would have to stick with the same lowest bidder already picked. He was going to check with Town Counsel.

Ms. Mittelbusher asked how the contingency was reduced. Mr. Twomey said they took the hard construction contingency costs down from 10 percent to 8 percent. He said it was a good savings without changing the scope.

Ms. Leonard and Ms. Dietel both spoke in favor of granting the \$1M. Ms. Dietel commented she thought people would be more inclined to go to the polls if there were other votes happening at the same time. Mr. Farrell said he felt people didn’t realize how badly it was needed to restore Town Hall for fire-safety and ADA-compliance reasons. Mr. Butler clarified that the bond vote to add \$1M required a 2/3 vote for the 30-year bond and there were two prerequisites—one is that the project gets approved at a special election and two, that construction starts by Nov. 2022.

Mr. Boroff asked how long the bids were valid for. Mr. Twomey said they have a letter from the contractor to hold the bids until the end of May and into June depending on market. He detailed work that would be done, saying the THBC was in full agreement with guidance from the HHDC. Speculation was given about reasons why the funding had previously been voted down. Mr. Butler said one reason was that confusing information was given out: some people thought they were voting for \$9M rather than \$4.7M. Low voter turnout was also discussed. Mr. Farrell said only a quarter of those who showed up at Town Meeting came out to the ballot. The Town has 5,700 voters and only about 1,100 voted.

Mr. Twomey explained all the upgrades that would be done to the building. Mr. Boroff asked if building a new building would be cheaper. Mr. Twomey said a new building would not qualify for CPC funding, which he credited with making the project a go.

Mr. Johanson voiced support for granting the \$1M, saying if they waited, the building can get worse. He asked what the trigger would be that would necessitate repairing the building. Mr. Farrell said they were at that point now. The ramp on the side of the building, which was built in response to the State coming in and saying it wasn't ADA-compliant, has been there for 30 years.

Mr. Twomey discussed that the project had been whittled down as much as possible. Mr. Butler added that two professional cost-estimating companies were hired to make sure there were no frills in the project.

Mr. Farrell asked if the person hired to help spread the facts on the project had enough time to do it. Mr. Twomey said she had said she can do it. Her name is Kirsten Alexander. She lives in Wenham.

**Decision:**

Mr. Farrell made a motion to approve the "ask" from the Town Hall Building Committee for \$1M for the Town Hall Building Committee renovation project with the same requirements of the previous \$3M grant that was passed at the fall Town Meeting. Ms. Dietel seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with "ayes" from Mr. Boroff, Mr. Johanson, Ms. Dietel, Ms. Mittelbusher, Ms. Leonard, Mr. Farrell, and Mr. Butler, (7-0) unanimous among those present.

Mr. Farrell asked Mr. Twomey if he would be joining the BOS meeting on Monday. He said yes and that he would think about whether the debt exclusion should be on a May ballot or if it might be better to wait until fall. Mr. Butler said Department of Public Works Director Tim Olson said at the last THBC meeting that they wanted to give the employees enough time for the move.

Mr. Twomey thanked the CPC and left the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

**Review of Open Grants:**

**a. Town Hall Renovation, Addition, and Preservation Project:** Already discussed. Mr. Butler said the THBC meets every week now. The next meeting is tomorrow at 11 a.m. Ms. Alexander has launched her efforts: a Facebook page, website, and HW CAM videos. Ms. Leonard asked a question about whether there was another egress if someone's office was on the stage upstairs at Town Hall. The answer was yes, there is a back stairway.

**b. Affordable Housing Trust (AHT):** Construction on the Willow Street project has begun. AHT Coordinator Pat Shannon reported on what he and AHT Chair Marnie Crouch have been

supporting. He said a subordinate mortgage will be taken out to ensure the nine units stay affordable in perpetuity. Eighteen units will be added to the SHI (subsidized housing inventory) effective when they pull the building permits. They are aiming for early April to secure all the funding and expect the project to be a quick 12-month turnaround. It was discussed that the Essex County Habitat for Humanity Asbury Street project was not moving along as quickly. Habitat for Humanity is looking at extending its option by a month. Currently they are working on the design for the septic.

**c. First Congregational Church of Hamilton, Belfry and Clock Tower Renovation:** Mr. Shannon said the historic renovation restriction has not been signed yet by the Church, but he expects it will be signed soon. No money can be drawn from the CPC until it is signed. The hope is to start construction this summer.

#### **Hamilton Wenham Regional High School Turf Field Activities**

Mr. Butler said he put this item on the agenda because there has been talk that some people did not vote for the Town Hall project debt exclusion due to worries that the funds were necessary for a turf field for the Schools. He said he talked to a School Committee member who said there was money originally in the budget for capital, but it has been taken out to avoid having an override. He also learned there was a contract developed in November to change the design of the field that had previously been proposed. It was amended to include 2-5 tennis courts. A working group was going to be set up. A local support group, TURF (Towns United for Recreational Fields, has been set up, but the group doesn't have its 501(c) status yet to do fundraising. He didn't think anything was going to be happening anytime soon.

#### **Process for Increasing CPC Surcharge**

Mr. Butler said the process for raising the surcharge from 2% to 3% would be about a two-year effort and it also did not look like it would be happening anytime soon.

#### **Proposed Joint Meeting with Wenham CPC**

The idea for this meeting was proposed about a year ago by Patrick Waddell, who is now Wenham's CPC chair. Mr. Shannon and Mr. Farrell both said they would follow up with him about holding this meeting in April. Mr. Butler said he would let Wenham take the lead in setting the agenda as it was their idea for the meeting. He noted Hamilton uses a two-step process for grants—one for eligibility and one for funding—while Wenham does it in one step. He said that Wenham had decided that they would no longer give money to friends groups.

Mr. Butler listed projects Hamilton and Wenham CPCs have both contributed to over a seven- to eight-year period. Mr. Boroff asked if the requests of each town happened at the same time. Mr. Farrell explained that for some projects, Hamilton required a match before it would provide the funding. Mr. Butler discussed that there are a limited number of ways for the CPC to be able to give money to the schools—playgrounds and athletic fields were among the few. Mr. Butler said

the CPC was more likely to give the money directly to the Schools rather than to the friends groups.

Ms. Leonard discussed that the grass fields, which her kids grew up using in Hamilton, are becoming rare in favor of turf fields. An advantage to a turf field is that it gives a longer playing season.

**Other Business as Necessary**

Mr. Farrell said there is a group that would like to build a skate park/BMX pump track to replace the Pingree Park tennis courts. The group went to the Recreation Board on Monday. If given access to the site, the group may approach the CPC for an ask in the future.

Ms. Leonard asked whether CPC money could go toward a dog park. Mr. Shannon said other towns had used CPC funds for that purpose.

The next meeting was tentatively set for Thursday, April 8, which may be a joint meeting with the Wenham CPC.

Mr. Farrell noted the paint is coming off the wheels of the cannons in Patton Park, perhaps due to people climbing on them or to weather. He said they should have someone on the DPW check them out. It has been less than two years since they were painted. Mr. Shannon said he would look into it.

**Adjourn**

Mr. Preston made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m. Mr. Boroff seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with "ayes" from Mr. Boroff, Mr. Johanson, Ms. Dietel, Ms. Mittelbusher, Ms. Leonard, Mr. Farrell, and Mr. Butler, (7-0) unanimous among those present.

Prepared By:

*Mary Alice Cookson*

Mary Alice Cookson  
Minutes Secretary

*8-12-2021*

Date

*\* Respectfully submitted as approved at the August 12, 2021 meeting.*

**Documents Discussed at Meeting:**

- Minutes of CPC, Feb. 11, 2021, Minutes Secretary Mary Alice Cookson

- **Application for Community Preservation Funding, Town Hall Restoration and Preservation Project Opinion on Process for Increasing CPC Surcharge, Email from Thomas McEnaney of KP Law to Pat Shannon.**