



TOWN OF GRAFTON

GRAFTON MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER
30 PROVIDENCE ROAD
GRAFTON, MA 01519

Community Preservation Committee

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GRAFTON, MA

Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes March 23, 2023

The Meeting was called to order by John Stephens at 7:00pm. In attendance were: John Stephens, Ken Holberger, Justin Wood, Jack Kelley, Brook Padgett, Kristen Belanger, Paul Scarlett, Sandy Brock, and Eric Swenson. Staff in attendance: Joann Duncan

John welcomed Jack Kelley as the new member of CPC from the Grafton Housing Authority.

Treasurer's Report

Paul stated he, Ken and John met with Mary Lauria to review the report. The green items are estimates of the surcharge amount; which is a low amount based on input from the Coalition. All items in green are the estimates. He then reviewed the report with the committee. The proposed grant amounts have been added allowing the committee to see their impact on the Fund. A motion was made by Justin, and seconded by Brook to accept the Treasurer's Report. Motion passed unanimously.

Clerk's Report

Justin made a motion seconded by Brook to approve the meeting minutes. Ken stated line 151 needs to be changed to read: can be created without the switch backs. Motion passed unanimously with noted change.

Affordable Housing Trust Annual Report and Request for Fund Transfer

Bruce Spinney was in attendance to discuss any CPA funds used from the Trust in the past year. He stated none were used. He reviewed with the committee the status of the AHT projects. The biggest item right now is the Housing Production Plan. Pulte money is being used to complete this plan. New census data and material will be incorporated. Karen Sodenberg is the consultant being used for the Housing Production Plan.

He stated that safe harbor status was taken away because the building permits were not pulled for 8 Pine Street.

Annual Spring Town Meeting Grant Proposals Institute Woods Recreation Path Design and Engineering

Fiona Coughlan, Grafton Town Planner was in attendance to review the Institute Woods Trail Grant Proposal. She explained the effort began back in 2018 due to concerns about the Grafton and Upton Railroad propane facility and it's proximity to the North Grafton Elementary School (NGES). VHB was contracted by the Town Planner at the time to draft a feasibility study. When she came to this position she finalized the study which had three concepts. She indicated they were all very expensive. After speaking with town volunteers and staff it was decided this plan needed to be re-reviewed. The primary purpose would be for a shared use path but would also need to serve as an emergency evacuation route. She went back to VHB and discussed the weaknesses in the first study and the need to update the study to be more in line with the Town's needs and wants.

She did apply for a Mass Trails grant but will not hear back from them until May. She has had a conversation with Pulte (developer of housing project on Institute Rd) about this project. She also reached out to Town personnel about their thoughts on the project.

Ken stated that both the Police and Fire brought up maintenance of the trails in their response for information. For the trail to meet the emergency use conditions, the snow would have to be cleared all winter long. Fiona followed up with VHB about that issue. Final responsibility was not designated. She believes it would be the town's responsibility. Ken emphasized if it is covered with snow it's emergency use would be mute. Fiona stated the issue around maintenance would be finalized in this version of the study.

Sandy asked about the real intent of the trail. Fiona stated the trail would need to be wide enough to allow an ambulance to get through.

Paul asked Fiona the primary purpose of this trail. She stated it would be to be a recreation trail. A shared use path with the emergency route secondary.

John stated the way the trail is constructed would need to take into consideration that it is 3-6-year-olds that would be evacuated from the school.

The original study was \$14,000 and this one is seeking \$18,000. Fiona stated this will be an updated analysis with more detail on the logistics and teeing it up to be ready for the next phase. There would be no outlying unanswered questions.

Brook does not feel this is a worthwhile project especially since the final cost would be so high. He does feel it is a good use of CPA Funds or tax payer money.

Ken stated the questions raised tonight have spoken to how much of this is trail and how much is emergency access. It raises the question of how much is fundable under CPA and how much is not. He stated the committee would need to understand the split between trail and emergency access. Paul stated he had similar thoughts to Ken. While he believes it will be used as a multi-use trail, the piece that would make it emergency access moves the cost too high.

Jack stated it is a wonderful concept, but the benefit is not big enough.

Kristen stated that the comments from the Superintendent stated the school would most likely shelter in place if there were an emergency.

Justin stated he is in favor of funding the feasibility study to at least identify what can be done. He sees the value in doing this feasibility study, getting it updated and determining what can be done. He stated it is worth it to bring it to the Town Meeting.

Eric asked if a smaller study could be done. Fiona stated the original number from VHB was much higher, she would not be able to get them down further.

Norcross Park Inclusive Playground

Jen Andersen, Recreation Director reviewed the grant request with the committee highlighting the aspects of the playground that need to be replaced and the plan to make this an inclusive play space. This playground is best suited to be an inclusive playground given the ability for a poured in place rubber surface. There will be a play space for ages 6-24 months and this will be the first playground in Town accommodating that age group. She reviewed all the amenities and the cost of the project, outlining the CPA Funds being sought and the other funding sources.

The accessibility commission has issued a letter of support and asked for one more accessible swing. This would cost about \$5,000 and Jen feels Recreation can cover this expense.

Justin raised a concern about poured rubber surfaces and is this the best surface. Jen stated it is common in the industry. Sandy stated she has not heard of similar concerns as Justin.

Housing Authority Rental Assistance

Eric stated the request is for \$10,000 to establish an account used by the Affordable Housing Trust for emergency rental assistance for residents of the Grafton Housing Authority. Jack stated when potential residents are finally accepted to the Housing Authority they are often in a situation where they cannot make the first month's rent. This fund would be used in those situations.

Eric stated the average monthly rent payment is based on residents' individual income. \$200 - \$1,000 a month for individual and family apartments can be up to \$1600. Amanda Brady, Executive Director of the Grafton Housing Authority told Eric the average is about \$500 per month. It is expected assistance will be mostly for individuals as there are fewer families in the Housing Authority.

About 20% of the residents have jobs that determine their rent. Income loss would not be a scenario where this happens because if they lose their job, rent goes to zero. This would help if their income were affected by medical expenses, car issues, family issues. Hardship will have to be documented.

This assistance program would be administered by the Executive Director of the Housing Authority. She would send a bill to the Affordable Housing Trust.

Eric gave an example of this type of program on the cape and islands.

John asked if the project should have a sunset date.

There was a discussion about how the accounting on this would work. Should the account remain a CPC account in the CPA Fund, or should the money formally transfer to the Affordable Housing Trust.

John stated at this time, the committee would vote on whether or not to take the projects to Town Meeting.

Ken made a motion seconded by Justin the Institute woods trail study be taken to town meeting. Ken stated part of this is to have people do a site walk and it includes a potential trail ending on sawmill. He feels it would be a good idea to do this project. In addition, VHB should determine what portion of this trail would be recreation and which would be emergency use. John stated it is more an emergency road than a recreation trail. Motion failed 3-6.

Justin made a motion seconded by Paul the Norcross Park Inclusive Playground be taken to Town Meeting. Brook recused himself. The motion passed 8-0.

Justin made a motion seconded by Eric the Housing Authority Rental Assistance Program be taken to town meeting. The motion passed 9-0 motion passed.

Warrant Articles for Spring Town Meeting

A motion was made by Paul and seconded by Brook to approve the wording of the Affordable Housing Reserve Transfer article as written. The motion passed 9-0.

A motion was made by Justin and seconded by Brook to approve the language for the CPC budget warrant articles with amounts to be filled in by the Town Accountant. Motion passed 9-0.

A motion was made by Ken and seconded by Brook to approve the Pell Farm bond payment article as written with the amount of \$62,500. Motion passed 9-0.

A motion was made by Ken and seconded by Jack to approve the bond payment article in the amount of \$72,100 and with a change in the funding source. Paul and Brook recused themselves. Motion passed 7-0.

A motion was made by Ken and seconded by Brook to approve the Norcross Park Inclusive Playground article with the changes noted in the funding accounts. Motion passed 9-0.

A motion was made by Ken and seconded by Paul to approve the Affordable Housing Rental Assistance article in the amount of \$10,000 with the funding source as noted. Motion passed 9-0.

Project Signage

John provided information on the work done to date. The committee would like to move forward with this. A motion was made by Brook and seconded by Justin the committee vote to have John move forward with the procurement of these signs and have one designed. Motion passed 9-0.

A motion was made by Ken and seconded by Brook to adjourn the meeting at 8:24pm. Motion passed 9-0.

Respectfully submitted by,
Joann Duncan

The meeting can be viewed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fl_6kGACdko&list=PL1QHaxGDk2RXD9JZxPXyqO71gkWFTL8hG&index=1