

TOWN OF SHREWSBURY
Richard D. Carney Municipal Office Building
100 Maple Avenue
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545-5398

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

January 9, 2023

LOCATION: Select Board Meeting Room

This meeting is being recorded and can be viewed through Shrewsbury Media Connection.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jason Molina, Chair
Melanie Magee, Clerk
Gail Aslanian, Historical Commission Representative
Martha Gach, Conservation Commission Representative
James LeMay, Parks & Cemetery Commission Representative
Purna Rao, Planning Board Representative
Rajesh Velagapudi, At Large Member (remote)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Debra Mooney, Vice Chair
Kathleen McSweeney, Housing Authority Representative

STAFF PRESENT:

Christopher McGoldrick, Town Planner (for Rowen McAllister)

1. Chair Jason Molina called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. The minutes of the December 5, 2022, meeting (revised version) were unanimously approved.
3. Update on State Funds: Jason noted that we originally received state funds totaling \$238,000 (numbers rounded to nearest thousand) as our normal November distribution based on our local property taxes collected. Recently, however, due to a state budget surplus, we were awarded an additional \$64,000, which brings our total state fund match

to about \$303,000, money we would not have received without the existence of the Community Preservation Act. Jason said that even if the town approves all of the projects currently under discussion, we have enough funds to cover them, but that in years to come that may not be the case.

4. Additional information received on project proposals:

Chris McGoldrick stated that no new information has come in to his office. Jason received an update from SELCO, which specified that the proposed installation of an HVAC system will work with the current electric panel in the old Brick Schoolhouse.

Jason had asked the Parks department to see if an additional basketball court (a fourth) could possibly be inserted into the current three that are due to be rebuilt. An alternative might be a little more parking (see below at 5.c. as well).

Regarding the India Society of Worcester's proposal for a community garden, the Community Preservation Coalition gave the opinion that this project is not eligible because the land is not dedicated park land. (It is zoned Rural B). As the Coalition is now stretched thin to cover the number of towns in Massachusetts that have adopted CPA, Jason questioned where do CPCs go for advice when they "get stuck" on debatable situations. Town counsel is one choice, but this is a specialized area. The Coalition noted that there is one private consultant, JM Goldson; she is the consultant who is working with the Shrewsbury Affordable Housing Trust. We need to look for other consultants plus town counsel as needed. Puna asked if it was possible for the Coalition to scale up their advisory role, which would also help giving consistent advice to all the Massachusetts CPA towns.

5. Debate and evaluation of Project Funding Applications: This is an open discussion about any questions or concerns we may have.

- a. Townwide Playground Assessment – Jason noted that we have not discussed prioritization with the applicants, but we should consider this. Melanie asked if he wanted to make a ranked list but we will not do that until February. Jim LeMay asked how the playground assessments mesh with the Arrowwood and Edgemere projects and with the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds the town has received. Jason mentioned that the ARPA funds for Edgemere may be just for the ball field. Also, there is no ARPA money for playgrounds. Being aware of what other funding sources are available may provide cost savings for CPC projects. Jim LeMay will check with Keith Baldinger and report back to Jason and Rowen.

There was some discussion about the Maple Avenue fields, (which have no CPC project at this time) in order to illustrate the need to know about other projects in town and how they might impact CPC projects. Further discussion covered the timing of the playground assessments and the Arrowwood project. Several committee members felt that the assessment should come first. Jim LeMay will consult with the DPW about the timing of the playground assessment and the Arrowwood projects and ask for feedback. Gail noted that the assessments may expose a need that the Arrowwood project has not asked for. Jason said that it was a little late to change the order of things. Martha noted the roughly equal status of the Edgemere and Arrowwood projects, but added that the Arrowwood playground had considerable public support. Melanie commented that the Public Works department can be expected to work closely with one another and could presumably be relied on to iron out the details. A suggestion was made by Rajesh that we add a contingency to the funding for Arrowwood, so that they could not begin until they had the town assessment, but Jason did not feel we should add any stipulations.

- b. Arrowwood Playground – Jim LeMay said that this is the kind of project, initiated by a resident of the town, that we want to support. It shows the value of the CPA to the town.
- c. Dean Park Basketball Courts – Jason mentioned that there might be an opportunity to relocate the third court and either fit in a fourth court or add additional parking. It would seem that now is the time to think about this rather than incur extra costs to do it later. Chris McGoldrick said that he had a reply to this from Keith Baldinger, which stated that in addition to the large amount of fill, it would trigger drainage and ADA compliance issues, reduce parking and stormwater recharge and potentially increase the cost of the project by 50 to 75 percent. They were considering adding a fence for the court that doesn't have one but would like more parks department and public input on this. It was noted that at some point there will be additional basketball courts in Lake Street Park.

Gail asked if we could have a more detailed breakdown of the costs of the project, with the idea that there might be other funding sources for some aspects of the plan. Jason replied that we are not in a position right now, at this place in the cycle, to ask the applicants to look for other funding. It is okay to ask for more information. Chris noted that according to BSC, only the design has been funded.

- d. Prospect Park Pergola Restoration – The initial comments centered on the considerable expense (\$85,000) of this study, which would presumably anticipate a very large expense for the actual work to follow. Gail wondered if it was too detailed and complex. Martha remarked that they seem to be assuming that we are going

ahead with the project and are preparing for that end. Several committee members stressed that they would like to see the pergola preserved. Gail said that having a very detailed assessment would make getting additional funding for the actual restoration much more possible, if CPC was unable to fully fund it. Jim LeMay said that the cemetery is going to be expanded into this area and the two projects might dovetail to their mutual benefit. Gail then added, without the CPC funding it is unlikely that this project would be able to go forward. Chris said we could ask the contractor (Lamoureux Pagano) to split out the design and assessment from the contract administration and bid phase, which might allow for a more acceptable cost. Martha noted that they are doing an accessibility study and this is necessary and a real benefit.

- e. Camp Wunnegan Parking Area – Melanie described the application, which asks for \$141,000, as being written as if it were going out for bid. The DPW actually plans to do almost all of the work in-house. In discussion with the Parks department, they seemed to think it was likely to come in under budget. A key expense is stormwater management, a relatively new mandate that applies to paved surfaces. Purna asked if the project comes in would the excess funding remain with the CPC; this is correct. He also noted that in light of recent increases in prices, it would not be surprising if they needed all the funding. Jason remarked that if they do much of the work in-house, the funding is basically for materials. Jason also noted that CPC funding is not allowed to be used to supplant normal town expenses. We need to be sure how the town labor costs will be accounted for. Chris has been asked to consult with Kevin Esposito on this. Martha commented that the parking area will extend access to the park through the seasons, and that the stormwater management is required and is critical to the health of our streams. Gail and Jim also strongly favored the project.

- f. 1830 Brick Schoolhouse – Gail asked, how will this project help the building itself? The damp basement seems of greater importance than heating and cooling the upper floors. The project is proposed as an aid to preserving the fabric of the building. Melanie cited an example of the Historical Society building in Northborough, which got a CPC grant of \$50,000 for renovations to the building to keep it as a more usable and functioning asset to the town. She also cited a project in the town of Arlington that provided money for a geothermal heat pump to help preserve an historic house. Jason observed that examples taken from the Coalition website might not always be the best guide to eligibility for funding. He requested that Chris get in touch with the DPW and SELCO to see if they had any evidence of problems (such as mold, water damage, etc.) in the building. They had an energy audit done recently that might have noted problems.

- g. No. 5 Schoolhouse Review – There were no questions or objections to this project. Gail noted that it was a perfect example of how to start a project: a reliable company and a small amount requested.
- h. Historic Gravestone Study – The committee generally agreed that the gravestones needed attention, it was a small amount of money, and the assessment it would provide would be critical for the preservation of the historic gravestones. Jason made clear that we are not in the business of making reproductions of any historical materials.
- i. India Society of Worcester – As Jason previously noted, the Community Preservation Coalition has advised us that the ISW community gardens project is not eligible because the property is not dedicated parkland. We regret that it took us this long to get a firm determination on this. We applaud the goals of the project and wish them success in finding other funding sources to make the gardens possible. The applicants must be notified of this decision. Jim commented on the excellent project and said it was unfortunate that it was not within our authority.

We will be voting on these proposals at our next meeting. We will allow time for those not present today to add their comments or questions, Debra Mooney has already submitted some comments.

- 6. There was no correspondence other than items already mentioned.
- 7. Next steps: The next meeting will be **February 6, 2023**. We will continue to deliberate and vote on recommendation, partial recommendation, or not recommended for these projects, and make a prioritization. We need to set dates for upcoming meetings, and plan for future work, in particular the yearly updating of the Community Preservation Plan, and any process changes that may be desired. There may be new documents to add to the Plan as well. For the Spring Town Meeting, we will need slides and/or a packet of descriptive materials to include with the Warrant. Applicants and co-sponsors should be present at Town Meeting and should be so notified.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 pm.

