

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

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

February 6, 2023

LOCATION: Select Board Meeting Room

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

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jason Molina, Chair

Debra Mooney, Vice Chair

Melanie Magee, Clerk

Gail Aslanian, Historical Commission Representative

Martha Gach, Conservation Commission Representative (remote)

Kathleen McSweeney, Housing Authority Representative

James LeMay, Parks & Cemetery Commission Representative (remote)

Purna Rao, Planning Board Representative

Rajesh Velagapudi, At Large Member

STAFF PRESENT:

Rowen McAllister, Assistant Town Planner

1. Chair Jason Molina called the meeting to order at 7:17 pm.
2. The minutes of the January 9, 2023, meeting were unanimously approved.
3. Budget review: Rowen presented a spreadsheet with financial data for FY23. Our total revenue plus the state match totaled approximately \$1.8 million. Adding up the 5% which must be set aside for administrative expenses, and 10% for community housing (which currently has no projects submitted) we have the remainder which could be expended for any other qualifying projects. Our open space and recreation projects total about \$600,000 and our historic preservation projects come to about \$150,000, so the requests for projects come to just under \$787,000. If we add up the project requests and the mandatory set asides this comes to just over about \$1 million.

Rajesh had a question as to the fiscal year and whether any projects extended over two years. Jason clarified that all these projects were only to be used in FY 24, and some of them covered only phase one of a continuing project.

Rowen described how the projects that are approved at this meeting will appear on a budget article for the may Town Meeting. She expects to have it for the committee to see and offer comments at our March meeting. Purna asked if, as we had no community housing projects could we use the community housing money for other projects. Rowan said no and explained that the difference between the allocated funds and our total funds is an unallocated fund that can be used for any CPC project. Rowen and Jason reviewed the overall funding arrangement of 10% for open space and recreation(treated as one), historic preservation, and community housing to be used or set aside each year, plus 5% for any administrative expenses. The remaining 65% of funds is in an unallocated fund available to any of the funding categories. Jason explained that the reasoning behind this specification in the CPA law was meant to make sure that each category had some specific funding applied to it even if no project was presented in any particular year.

A question was asked about the surplus distribution of \$60,000 of state money and whether that was included in our budget. Rowen said that because this was not in the original FY 23 budget, we cannot use this money yet. A further question asked if we had any state match for 2022, and Rowen explained that the state match only matches the previous year, which would have been before we were an active committee.

4. Deliberation and Voting on each project funding application.

Jason detailed how the committee reviewed the project eligibility, the formal application, meeting with the applicants, did due diligence as best we could, and reached out to the Community Preservation Coalition. He noted that we started out with 13 projects and ended up with eight. He reminded the committee that we can recommend, not recommend, or recommend less funding for these projects, but ultimately Town Meeting has the final say. He expected that a nine-member committee such as the CPC could be expected to reflect a variety of viewpoints, and that any applicants listening to our deliberations should know that these discussions are not a reflection of their effort in creating the application. There are also going to be some questions of priority. Applicants watching should know that after this committee, the projects will be open to questions from the 240 town meeting members, with a further variety of opinions.

Gail asked whether we have any restriction on the number of projects we approve. Jason replied that we are not limited as to number, the only limitation is as to whether we have the money to cover them all. At this point the total expenditure for all eight projects is still well under the amount we have available.

a. Townwide Playground Assessment

Jason asked Jim LeMay of the Parks and Cemetery Committee if he could comment on this project. He replied that the parks department had wanted something like this for years but never had the funds. He said this would be a first step in carrying out much needed improvements. Debra noted that the comprehensive reviews are timely and a good investment of CPC funds. Kathy asked about the relationship to the Arrowwood project. Jim replied that Keith Baldinger of the DPW said that these are all priority items and they will do their best to carry out each one without one being co-dependent on the other. Jason added that these two projects had two applicants, one of which was enthusiastically community-driven, and we wanted to allow this one to shine on its own. He noted that this situation had been comprehensively examined and questioned. He said that this playground assessment will lay the groundwork for many projects to come as well as more immediate work on Edgemere, and that he thought it was a great idea. He called for Jim to make a motion as Parks commissioner. Jim made a motion that CPC recommends that the Playground assessment, with a budget of \$70,000, move forward for committee vote. The project was unanimously approved by rollcall vote.

b. Arrowwood Playground

Jim LeMay summarized the work done by local resident Jenna McCann in originating the project and seeking input from the Parks Department. This grant is asking for funding for the design of a new playground to replace the existing facility to be used by children under 12 and also encompass part of the site not currently in use. He stressed her comprehensive work in taking the initiative.

Debra asked whether the \$40,000 being requested would be enough to complete the design work, and Rowen replied that it would be. Jason noted that they would benefit as well from the playground assessment. There were several positive endorsements from CPC members. Jim then made a motion to recommend that the committee approve the grant of \$40,000 for this project. The committee then unanimously approved the motion in a rollcall vote.

c. Dean Park Basketball Courts

(Here Rowan reminded the committee that a vote by 5 members is sufficient to approve a motion.) Jim described this project as the result of an earlier study in which the sum of \$375,000 was recommended for the work. Gail noted that this was a large sum but many people in town would benefit from it. Other committee members also spoke in favor of this project as in line with community needs. Jim made a motion that the committee recommend to Town Meeting that they approve the sum of

\$375,000 for the refurbishment of the Dean Park Basketball courts. The committee unanimously approved the motion by rollcall vote.

d. Camp Wunnegan Parking Area

Jim described this project as providing a safe and accessible parking area for a park that currently has none. Several committee members spoke in favor of the project. Melanie noted that it would allow the Trails Committee to lead guided walks in the park. Gail remarked on the admirable degree of camaraderie and cooperation by the parks and other town departments. Jason thanks the Conservation Commission for reviewing the land title and giving their okay to the project. He also said that the parking area would be followed by a phase two in which a handicapped access trail will be constructed. Martha added that this would allow full access to some of the highlights of the park. Jim made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting move forward with the Camp Wunnegan project in the amount of \$141,822.81. A rollcall vote was taken and the project unanimously approved.

e. No. 5 Schoolhouse Facility Review

Jason asked Gail Aslanian to introduce the project. She described the building as privately owned (by the Shrewsbury Historical Society) and one of the few historic buildings still remaining in town. It had formerly been used for programs primarily to portray education in the early years of the town, but with current ADA regulations this had to stop. The project is to fund a study to see if there are ways to retrofit the building to make it ADA compliant. This study is the first necessary step to make the building usable

There was some discussion between Jason and Rowen as to the ownership of the property which concluded with agreement that, in part because of the small scale of the project, the public interest is being served by this funding. Any follow-up second phase work on the building will require further scrutiny. Gail made a motion to recommend that the committee approve the project for the No. Five Schoolhouse Accessibility Transition Plan Phase One in the amount of \$1994. A rollcall vote was taken and passed unanimously.

f. 1830 Brick Schoolhouse Heat Pumps

Gail introduced the project brought forth by SELCO which will install two heat pumps in the building, which is town property. Reflecting on previous CPC debate, Jason noted that the responses from SELCO concerning the benefit to the building from the greater control of temperature and humidity are convincing. Kathy noted that the building will be more usable and Rajesh commented that the costs to heat and cool the building may be reduced. Debra was also in favor as it created a more

favorable environment for the preservation of a historic site, plus there may be cost savings, and greater usage of the building. Gail made a motion to approve the funding of the 1830 Schoolhouse heat pumps in the amount of \$65,000. The motion was approved unanimously in a rollcall vote.

g. Prospect Park Pergola Assessment Study

Gail described the project as a comprehensive study of the existing pergola by the firm of Lamoreaux Pagano Associates. She noted that originally she had suggested trimming some of the items to reduce the cost (\$85,500) but came to the conclusion that complete assessment would prove to be of value if the project went forward and the applicant (Brenda Nagle of the Friends of Prospect Park) wanted to seek additional funding, for instance from historic preservation grants. She notes that restoring the pergola is likely to be costly and the CPC might not be able to fund the entire restoration. She said that the pergola is a vital part of that location and with all the work to be done on the cemetery expansion and other improvements to the park, that site will be a gem. It is also the only remaining piece of history there.

Purna thought that this was a good use of CPA funds and doing a thorough job was best in the long run. He noted that good planning documents are always helpful. Gail recalled that this was a quality company that the town had worked with very successfully in the past. Debra loved the idea of the project and agreed that Lamoreaux Pagano was one of the best but wondered if the last three items (drawings and specifications; responding to bid phase questions; and contract administration during construction) were premature. Jason replied that could be addressed in the grant agreement so that milestones would have to be reached before the following work could be accomplished. This application is only for the study and not actual physical restoration work. There was further discussion on how this would be administered (by the town, not the Friends of Prospect Park).

Jason said that he agreed with going forward with this assessment study, but expressed concern that when we get the final report with a cost for the restoration .it could be astronomical, and we will have to prioritize between other potentially expensive choices. He hoped that the restoration cost could be expressed as a series of options (good, better, best).

Martha said she supported this study, but that she also expects the restoration costs would be very high, and suggested that the Friends of Prospect Park may want to start considering additional sources of funds. Debra agreed, and said that having the schematics at that point would give them an incredible fundraising tool. Further discussion went on in a similar vein. Jason reminded the committee that this was a significant historic asset. Gail made a motion to recommend the approval of the

Pergola Restoration Study in the amount of \$85,500. The motion was approved unanimously in a rollcall vote.

h. Historic Gravestone Restoration Study

Again described by Gail, this is an inventory and assessment of the historic gravestones in Sections 1-9 of Mountain View Cemetery. The amount asked is \$5,500. She stressed the necessity of this preliminary step to protect these gravestones. Gail made a motion to recommend that we allocate \$5,500 for the Mountain View Cemetery historic gravestone restoration phase one inventory. The rollcall vote was unanimously in favor.

Jason noted that this concludes our recommendations. We have eight project to go to town meeting. He congratulated the applicants and asked if they had any feedback to the committee on how to improve the process. These comments can be sent to Rowen in the Planning Department.

5. Meeting dates. Rowen sent out a poll and the result was that a majority of committee members could come on March 6 and April 3. The March meeting will be taking up the draft budget article for Town Meeting and we will be starting our conversation about improving our process. April 3 will be a public hearing to get public feedback on the needs, resources and opportunities in Shrewsbury. This is according to our charge to annually get that updated. It will be held in the Select Board meeting room unless we expect an unusually large turnout. Rowen asked if members from other committees could determine if they will be continuing on the CPC by the April meeting and gather any input they might have from their respective committees. She will send out guidelines to those members. Jason mentioned the ADA survey recently completed as the type of document we should fold into the CPC Plan. At large members whose term is expiring will get a letter from the Town Manager's office asking if they are seeking reappointment. The Select Board will vote on the reappointment. Kathy suggested that the group meeting of the CPC, Housing Authority, and Affordable Housing Trust representatives be reconvened before the April meeting. Rowen agreed. Jason hoped that we could get more input at the public meeting from community groups that may not have been represented last year, and mentioned sports groups in particular. He said that if groups found it more convenient to have representatives of the CPC at their meetings, we could probably work something out. It would not require the attendance of all nine CPC members.

At the April meeting we will pick the meeting dates for the rest of the year. We will have to make time to update the Community Preservation Plan and possibly make changes to any forms if necessary. Rowen asked for a motion about the meeting dates. Debra made a

motion to hold our next two meeting on March 6 and April 3, both at 7 pm, with April 3 being our annual public meeting. The rollcall vote was unanimously in favor.

6. Correspondence

There was none. However, Rowen had been in contact with the Grafton CPC and they provided information on how they conducted aspects of their work. They recommended that applicants attend the Town Meeting at which their projects will come to a vote. Rowen will continue to build regional partnerships with other CPA administrators in the area. Jason noted that as the Coalition has become more stretched to serve increasing numbers of communities, it is a good idea to reach out to other CPA communities, specifically mentioning Grafton and Northborough. CPA specifically encourages regional solutions.

7. Next steps

Jason encouraged committee members to reach out to our individual networks to talk about CPA, encourage new projects, and advise people to come to the public meeting. Gail asked how we should prepare for Town Meeting. Jason went over the general outlines and once again strongly encouraged applicants to be there, as questions might arise that only the applicant could address. Letters will be going out to the applicants who were successful tonight. There is another letter that goes out as well, after Town meeting, and Rowen had a sample draft provided by Grafton. She will present it at the March meeting so that the committee can review it. Purna asked whether town counsel could look at it as well and Rowen agreed.

There was a motion to adjourn, approved unanimously at 9 pm.