

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

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE**

**March 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  
Kathleen McSweeney, Housing Authority Representative  
James LeMay, Parks & Cemetery Commission Representative  
Purna Rao, Planning Board Representative  
Rajesh Velagapudi, At Large Member

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Christopher McGoldrick, Town Planner  
Rowen McAllister, Assistant Town Planner

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm. Minutes of the February 6, 2023 meeting were unanimously approved.

Town Manager Kevin Mizikar and Select Board member Michelle Conlin presented a proposal to use CPC funds as partial payment for a land acquisition. The land is three adjacent parcels, 443 Lake Street, 457 Lake Street, and 104 Grove Street. Mr. Mizikar described the vision behind the proposal as adding to the town's preserved and protected land and expanding the opportunities for passive recreation.

He described the history of the properties, which were part of the family farm of the Howe and Sears family, which had owned the property since the 1800's. He noted the town had purchased another section of the farm land across Lake Street in 1998 and this is now known as Lake Street Park. The current owner of the properties is Mr. Howard Sears, who specifically approached the town about buying this land in order to keep it as open space.

The parcel at 443 Lake Street consists of 1.23 acres, the 457 Lake parcel is 0.69 acres, and the 104 Grove Street parcel is 4.07 acres (a total of 5.99 acres). All three are unimproved land. The Grove Street property has a small pond. They are strategically located near other town properties. Mr. Mizikar mentioned that it will be possible for the town to acquire an easement to have access across a neighboring property at 439 Lake Street to another town property on Elliot Circle. This easement would run under the national Grid power lines. He notes that this is not part of the current proposal and no funding is being currently requested for it.

Select Board member Michelle Conlin detailed the overall vision of connectivity via a trail system. She noted that Shrewsbury residents have frequently expressed an interest in preserving open space through responses to a number of surveys. This purchase could make possible a connected trail that could extend from Route 140 by way of Camp Wunnegan, through other town property to South Quinsigamond, to Oak Street, and potentially all the way to Route 9. There is also a possible connection to the area near Jordan Pond. She provided a map of that quadrant of the town with the relevant properties indicated.

Mr. Mizikar spoke of the project as it relates to the town Strategic Plan goals of thriving, prosperity, and sustainability. Preserving this open space allows active and passive recreation, purposeful land use planning, and protecting natural resources. He also cited the town Master Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, and also the Community Preservation Plan as documents that can be cited in support of this purchase. He told the committee that the Greater Worcester Land Trust has been in conversations with his office and they are interested in holding the Conservation Restriction that is required for all land purchased with Community Preservation funds. They are hoping that the activation of the Conservation Restriction can take effect after the final sale (due to the inevitable delays that occur in filing these with the State).

The amount requested for this purchase was originally \$420,000, which is 50 percent of the cost of the three properties (the other half coming from ARPA funds), but Mr. Mizikar asked that this be increased to \$435,000 to cover other closing costs. The committee was then invited to ask questions. Jason asked if there were any discussions with the owner about some items on the properties that should be removed, and Mr. Mizikar indicated that the owner intends to get rid of those items. There are two wells on the properties, and the town would commit to dealing with them appropriately, whether by filling or securing. This should not be an issue.

Martha had questions about some piping in the pond area and Mr. Mizikar will look into having that removed. She also asked about the timing of the environmental review, would the purchase and sale agreement be subject to that, and it would. Finally, what would be the town's plan for maintaining the property; this would be possibly mowing once or twice a year, but with concern for being environmentally sensitive. Some parts of the land are wet meadow. Another question asked if maintenance requirements could be written into the conservation restriction, and they could.

Purna asked what might happen if by some chance the property might be found to have some undesirable features and wondered if this could be addressed. Mr. Mizikar said that town counsel and the Conservation Agent would look at the property and perform due diligence in determining if there are any problems. Rajesh asked if the other half of the funding was coming from a source compatible with the goals of the purchase. Mr. Mizikar told the committee that the Select Board set aside \$1.5 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) specifically for open space and recreation purchases. He noted that those funds will also be used for investments in Lake Street Park, and also for building new trails within the town. He noted that the Trails Committee is to become a more formal town committee (as opposed to the purely volunteer organization it has been) and will be able to help with these projects. Rajesh also asked if there would need to be a parking area at the new properties, but Mr. Mizikar noted that there is ample parking just across the street at Lake Street Park, but that it might be wise to designate an area for future parking use should that become necessary.

Jason had further comments on how property could be identified as priorities, considering the four areas of concern to the CPC. He noted that the committee should think about the possibilities. Melanie commented that there should be some outreach to landowners who might consider a sale to the town.

Jason said that we are not voting to recommend this project tonight, because it requires a public hearing . This public hearing will be part of our April meeting. Rowen suggested a motion to request that an article be placed on the warrant for town meeting, then hold the public hearing , then vote to recommend, if that is what we decide.

Kathy remarked that this request was brought forth outside of the schedule that other applicants had to follow, and wondered if this was something that others could do. Jason said this was an off-cycle request that we have made provision for when there is a need for swift action. He also noted that it was lucky the timing in this instance allowed this purchase to go before town meeting. If it had been a few weeks later, it might have been impossible to convene another town meeting so close to the first one. Kathy questioned whether anyone could use the off-cycle

procedure, but Jason replied that it only applied to situations of some urgency. Debra asked if we still had enough money in our CPC budget to cover this purchase. And Rowen informed the committee that there is approximately \$700,000 of unallocated funds that can be used. Martha made a motion to request that the Shrewsbury Select Board place a draft article to appropriate funds in the amount of \$435,000 for the acquisition of lands at 443 Lake Street, 457 Lake Street, and 104 Grove Street on the warrant for Annual Town Meeting 2023 and the Community Preservation Committee hold a public hearing on this item on April 3, 2023. The motion was carried unanimously. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for the project presentation to be repeated at the April 3 meeting.

Rowen has drafted warrant articles for the eight articles that we are sending to Town Meeting. She noted two recent changes in the texts suggested by the Town Manager. One was the addition of sunset dates so that funds could revert back to the CPC account after that date, with a provision for the CPC to extend the date, and another change that that dollar amounts be rounded up to the nearest \$100. If the CPC voted to extend the sunset date, it would be required that Town Meeting would also have to approve the extension(s). The sunset dates for this round are the same for all projects, June 30, 2025, considered to be adequate for most projects.

Jason had a few edits regarding the use of the wording on the eight articles and a little discussion followed. The committee discussed how the articles will be presented at Town Meeting. A motion was made to recommend these articles as amended to Town Meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

The committee then discussed the public hearing for April 3, 2023. Jason wanted to reuse his Powerpoint presentation from last time, and invite some short conversations, hoping for new or more specific ideas. Debra suggested we briefly talk about the projects we have just recommended, and refer to our goals. We are also going to have a public hearing for the off-cycle property purchase. In talking about gathering public opinions, Melanie asked if the town had a procedure for collecting opinions from those who wanted to use email instead of coming to the meeting. Rowen said she set up a Google survey type of thing that would welcome comment. This will be accessible to the public, and committee members could share the link. There was some discussion about how this would be designed.

Jason asked if the statutory members had any feedback from their specific constituencies regarding possibilities and needs. This will be discussed probably at the May meeting. The committee talked about the time frame of the April 3 public meeting. It was agreed to start at 7 pm and have an agenda so that people can have an idea about the timing of each subject. The committee then voted to authorize the planning and Economic Development Department to advertise the public hearing and application documents for the property purchase. This will be

paid for by CPC administrative funds. The committee also voted to approve the CPC budget warrant article as presented and recommend it to Town Meeting.

There was a discussion about changes to the application process. The committee considered a suggestion by the Town Manager to get all projects approved by CPC by the end of December; this would allow applicants who were not successful to apply for other town funding. Debra noted that this might benefit a municipal project but an ordinary public application would have to be submitted in June or July, an unusually short time span. The committee opted to not make that change at this time.

Jason then brought up the long time between getting the eligibility form and the final funding application. He recommended that we have a rolling eligibility application. Martha commented that the eligibility application helps people to focus on what they need to know for their full application.

There was further discussion on what constitutes the necessity for an off-cycle application. There was some concern that if funds were limited we might have to postpone something we had already approved. Some committee members felt that they had too little notice on this property purchase. Martha noted that real estate purchases are by their nature frequently rushed. Jim advised that we try to be as slow and careful as possible in these situations. Jason said that he advised keeping the procedure as flexible as possible, possibly calling a meeting as soon as possible when something comes up. Thus, there are two areas that the committee should specifically consider concerning changes: the idea of a rolling eligibility application, and tightening up the language about what is necessary for an off-cycle application. Debra recommended reviewing the part of the CPC plan that concerns the application process.

No project applicants have had any comments on the application process. Rowen recommended that we look at the town co-sponsorship procedure. Purna recommended that we get some input from the Public Works Department.

There was no new correspondence. Jason asked about regrouping for the Affordable Housing trust. This is ongoing. Jason also asked Rowen about the text of the letter that goes out to successful applicants. It needs to be reviewed by the committee in May. Rowen made some changes to our computer files so that here is only one place where we keep our shared documents.

The final business of the meeting was the presentation to Rowen McAllister of a token of our appreciation for her work with the committee this year. She is leaving to take another position in Portland, Maine. She was given a print of a watercolor version of Shrewsbury in earlier times, with our sincerest best wishes.