

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
TOWN OF WEST NEWBURY
MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING AND MEETING
November 18, 2021 at 7:30 PM**

This meeting was recorded for the purpose of preparing Minutes.

A public hearing and meeting of the West Newbury Community Preservation Committee (CPC) was held in person and remotely on November 18, 2021. Wendy Reed, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Members in attendance, Wendy Reed, Ann Bardeen (remote), Wendy Willis (remote), Gary Bill, Bob Janes, Angus Jennings, CPC Administrator Barbara Gard. Judith Mizner was absent.

Reed welcomed new CPC member Patricia Reeser (also present remotely) who was recently appointed as At-large member to serve the remainder of Sherry Pruyn's term.

Update on Soldiers & Sailors

Reed discussed the Select Board's considerations of possible disposition of the Building given the very high construction bids recently received. One option is to create a Preservation Restriction on the building and then sell the property to a private entity. The second option is demolition and then possibly build a memorial park on the property. There was a question from the Committee asking if the Select Board has someone in mind who would be willing to purchase the property with said Preservation Restriction and Reed said yes, that someone was interested in turning the property into a commercial or office space, with a studio apartment on the second floor.

Willis commented that she has seen this done recently in Topsfield and that it was a success. Gard mentioned that Historic New England has historic properties/museums that have residential spaces (apartments) within the historic buildings.

Jennings added the consideration of the previously designed "tight tank" as the septic system for the building if there is a change of use. Janes and Bill added the fact that the building has had a variety of uses in the past, with differing amounts of water use.

Reed said this could also be further discussed with the Board of Health.

Public Hearing

At approximately 8:00 p.m. Reed read the Public Hearing Notice, opening the Hearing for input from West Newbury residents and from members of the Committee.

After discussing the need to annually update the CPC Plan, she added that the purpose of the hearing was to get community ideas about how the Plan was to identify what West Newbury had in the way of Resources, and then to address Needs within Town

and finally to set Goals for the upcoming year relating to the three categories of Historic Preservation, Community Housing and Open Space/Recreation.

Reed indicated that she and Gard are working on revamping the existing Plan in order to make it more streamlined, more readable and accessible to everyone.

Reed asked members of the Committee to add their comments. Bardeen of the Planning Board mentioned the approval in Town to set up a Housing Trust, and suggested that West Newbury do as other neighboring communities have done, to make an annual appropriation of CPA funds directly to the Housing Trust. She sent her written comments and updates for the Housing section of the Plan to Gard, and Gard acknowledged that she not only received them, but made the changes to the working document; after receiving updates from the Town Planner added those as well. Gard feels that the Housing section is in good shape.

Gard stated that the Historic Preservation Section is also close to completion.

Asked by Deb Hamilton of Middle Street where they could see the current Plan, Reed stated that the current CPC Plan is on the Town's website.

Further comment from this resident suggested that if we are looking at creating affordable housing it might be useful to see a list of Town-owned land to see if there is the possibility of using any of it for constructing new affordable units; Reed described this would clearly be a Resource. Gard did reiterate that this Housing section of the Plan should be (as indications from other plans point out) focusing on the need to create Moderate/Affordable Housing both for renters and buyers, addressing the Commonwealth's goal of having 10% of all housing stock in each community be affordable.

Leigh Stoecker resident of Main Street stated, in addition, that all existing affordable housing and any that is built in the future be sustainable, with low flow water fixtures, and solar energy use if possible.

Reed asked Janes about the Historical Preservation section of the Plan; Janes responded that upcoming interests of the Historical Commission are to document historic cemeteries and bridges, mentioning that most cemeteries are already full. Reed asked if the question of cemeteries could be identified as a Need in the Plan. Janes said yes, it would be to find other places for cemeteries. The Historical Commission will be submitting a new application to survey and document the 4 historic bridges for the next round of CPA funds.

Question from Deb Hamilton - where do churches fit into the historic fabric of the town? As a parishioner at All Saints' Episcopal Church we applied for CPA funding, and did not get it. Gard responded to her saying that CPA funds are very clearly designated for preservation only, that funds cannot be used for maintenance, even if on an historic building.

Bardeen informed the group that the CP Coalition's website has a lot of information regarding the issue of church and state, but it also has information about some successful church projects.

Jennings also added that there needs to be a public benefit for the expenditure of funds from CPC so if a preservation restriction for example is made on the building, it may be eligible for CPC funds. He believes there is a restriction against using CPC funds for interior work in the Church.

This resident then mentioned that the Church's Guild Hall, was built as a community center in 1910 and could be considered a public benefit. Additionally, the diocese is now considering adding some affordable housing on the back of that building. Gard then asked if you could have a blend of historic preservation and housing as an application to the CPC.

Jennings replied, yes and it would come in as one project requesting funds from two different buckets. Jennings additionally stated that even though the Committee is updating the Plan, with Needs and Goals, it is important to remember that the Committee cannot initiate projects. It is important that the Plan reflects the needs and interests of the community, but not the desires of the Committee members. It is important to get the word out to town organizations what the recommendations of the public are that went into setting the goals of the Plan.

Reed asked Reeser to comment on the Open Space section of the Plan, observing there are a lot of Open Space Resources in Town. Reeser said she forwarded some updates to Gard to bring the existing data up to date, and that the goals as stated in the 2018 Open Space Plan could be added right into the CPC Plan update. Reed added that the goal for recreation is that there be more recreational resources for all ages. Additionally, that trails for all person access could be included in the Recreation portion.

Gard felt that addressing the use of the athletic fields and playgrounds need some attention in addressing how the Town wants to use them. Reed agreed that there are definitely Resources available, naming some of them. She then asked Willis to comment.

Willis stated that a big issue for use of the recreational resources is a need for better parking areas and said they will be requesting CPA funds to do parking studies focusing on the Pipestave area.

Reed then brought up the Farmers' Market idea on the recent Parks & Recreation meeting agenda. That it would be a great way to incorporate the agricultural activities that are a part of West Newbury's character. Willis agreed that it is a very exciting idea, a big priority. Reed said this could be listed as a Goal in our CPC Plan. Willis added they are also looking at bringing food vendors and sports memorabilia sales to the Pipestave recreation area is for bystanders to sports events.

There is also an effort to creating Pickleball courts for seniors and other things, so that Recreation won't just be about sports.

Reed asked for further comments on Open Space/Recreation and Gard mentioned how it might be useful to have access points or descriptions of each parcel, so that others from neighboring communities could share in the abundance. Reeser responded that having a link to the Open Space Plan on the Town's website could be used as it has excellent maps, photographs and directions on how to find these parcels.

Reed explained that the applications for CPC funding will also be revamped so that folks can more easily access them and complete them online. The group discussed the earlier requirement for the submittal of 8 paper copies and then agreed that 8 copies will no longer be required. Electronic applications will be fine in the future, with perhaps just one paper copy to be submitted to the CPC Administrator; Jennings added that if there are documents that should be printed, for instance, large or colored plans, those paper copies should be submitted as paper files.

Jennings noted that the MVPC (Merrimack Valley Planning Commission) is planning on updating the region's Housing Production Plan, which will be coming up for renewal around June 2022, and that they will be seeking funding to cover all the 15 communities' who were part of the last update, so that does not look like it will be a cost to the CPC next year.

Reed then moved to close the Public Hearing, seconded by Bill, vote was unanimous.

She then explained that the Select Board is now recruiting town residents to apply for membership on the Bylaw Committee for the recently approved Affordable Housing Trust, The timeline is short, from December 6th to April 30, to complete the draft Bylaw. The information is on the Town's website. Gard asked if the Trustees will be appointed by the Select Board. Reed replied yes, and the terms will be two years alternating. Reed said the reason this item is on the Agenda is that going forward the Committee will be considering making direct fund transfers from CPA funds to the Affordable Housing Trust. To a question from Leigh Stoecker, Jennings responded that the housing fund right now may be just the 10% allocation for the coming year from the fund, as funds were expended on the recent Kitchen and Bath renovations in the existing affordable units. He added that there is an additional \$200,000 in a separate fund for inclusionary housing available. Further discussion about current CPA funds available, Jennings added that \$1,455,000 was the amount listed in the May Fin Com booklet for Town Meeting.

Next on the Agenda was discussion of the Historic Preservation Match Grants program availability for 2022-2023 for preservation of exteriors of buildings and anyone is asked to submit a letter of interest by December 1st. This is not part of the CPA funds, but a separate grant.

Minutes were approved by the Committee with Reeser abstaining. Reed added that she and Gard will work on a draft of the Plan; will share it with the Committee before the next meeting in December with the goal of completing the Plan by December 31.

Having completed the business before it, the Committee adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at approximately 9:00 p.m. Next meeting will be December 16, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gard, CPC Administrator