



COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE August 17, 2023 Meeting

Members Present: Wendy Reed, Graham Bacheller, Jack Haley, Tim Cronin, Bob Janes, Gary Bill.

Others Present: Vanessa Johnson Hall – Essex County Greenbelt Association
Barbara Gard – CPC Administrator

1. Eligibility Application for 114 Ash Street (Evergreen Farm), Essex County Greenbelt Association (Greenbelt) and West Newbury Open Space Committee (OSC)

Vanessa Johnson Hall from Greenbelt was present to discuss the application. The request is for the Town to contribute towards the acquisition of a Conservation Restriction (CR) on a portion of the property. The purchase of the property is being coordinated by Greenbelt with one half being purchased by Mass Department of Fish and Game and the other by a conservation buyer. The conservation buyer will retain ownership and control of approximately 4 acres which contains the existing house and will sell a conservation restriction to the ECGA and the Town on the remaining land. Greenbelt is estimating the cost of the CR will be \$400,000 and is requesting \$175,000 from the CPA and Town. The appraisal for the CR has not been completed and may not be available until just before Town Meeting. The language of the warrant article will be dependent on receipt of the appraisal and is being drafted with input from Town Counsel.

The OSC recommended expenditure of up to \$175,000 for the CR. Janes noted that the prior owner of the property received a grant to establish habitat for Blandings turtles on the property. It is a highly desirable parcel for connectivity of habitat with existing Mass Fish and Game parcels. There are currently no plans for establishing public access or trails to this parcel. Mass Fish and Game land is already open to the public.

Bill moved to approve the Eligibility Application for this project. Cronin seconded the motion. Motion passed (6,0).

2. Review of CPC Questionnaire

Reed summarized the discussion of the Questionnaire during a recent Select Board meeting. She noted that there was a substantive discussion on the role of the CPC in terms of their recommendation of projects to Town Meeting. The question of whether the CPC's role is administrative in nature, primarily to make sure applications meet all the requirements for consideration and voting, was raised at the meeting. Following discussion, the consensus at the SB meeting was that the role was more of a recommendation and that by virtue of approving the Funding Application, the CPC was



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recommending it's approval by Town Meeting. Reed requested feedback from the CPC on how they viewed the role.

CPC members present were in agreement that the role of the committee is to review and make sure the applications are complete, but also to decide if the project is consistent with the CP Plan and/or known priorities of the Town. The CPC must also determine if the appropriate management of the project is in place so that cost and schedule will be adhered to. Accordingly, the CPC should begin playing a more active in monitoring approved projects to make sure that implementation is in line with the proposed project. This could be a function of the CPC Administrator and should be added to the CPC Administrator's job description if so.

3. Voting of Secretary

Gard noted that election of a Secretary is a requirement of the CPA bylaw, although it does not define what the responsibilities of the position are. Reed moved that Bacheller be the Secretary for the CPC. Bill seconded the motion and it passed (6,0).

4. Minutes of July 20, 2023 Meeting

Revisions to the minutes were suggested, and it was decided to table approval to the following meeting. Gard will work with Reed to revise the discussion of the CP Plan amendments.

5. Project Review

Gard provided the most recent accounting ledger showing account balances and provided an update on each project. A discussion about sunset dates and whether funds could continue to be spent after the sunset date followed. Reed said that her understanding was that as long as contracts were in place by the sunset date, work and payment could extend past it. Others thought that once the sunset date passed, no further funds should be expended. Reed will get clarification for the next meeting on this topic.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for September 21, 2023. It will depend on whether Greenbelt's offer is accepted and the Funding Application for Evergreen Farms is received.

Having completed the business before it, the Committee adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at approximately 7:05 p.m.