

Canton Community Preservation Committee

Minutes of meeting – January 9, 2023

In Attendance: John McSweeney, Shaun Chu, Kendall O’Halloran, George Comeau, and John Leonetti

Absent: Melissa Mayer, Stacey Gorman, Kathy McCormack, Lisa Lopez

Armando Center Meeting Room

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chairman Shaun Chu at 7:01pm.

1) Public Comments: There were no public comments.

2) Minutes – November 7th, 2022: George Comeau made a motion to accept the minutes of the meeting on November 7th, 2022 as written; the motion was seconded by Co-Chairman John McSweeney. Motion passed 5-0.

3) Minutes – December 5th, 2022: Co-Chairman John McSweeney made a motion to accept the minutes of the meeting on December 5th, 2022 as written; the motion was seconded by Mr. Comeau. Motion passed 5-0.

4) Kennedy Fields Restrooms Project Extension: Chairman Chu summarized the portion of the December 5, 2022 meeting at which Michael Rota and Patrick Murphy attended, gave updates on, and answered questions about the Kennedy School Restrooms Project (funded FY19). The outstanding question from that meeting was whether it was legally acceptable for the new restrooms to be labeled “mens” and “womens” as opposed to being gender-neutral. The project contacts confirmed they have checked with local regulations and the contractor and the separate “mens” and “womens” labels are allowable. Co-Chairman McSweeney expressed that the committee should track how well the project is progressing compared to the schedule given at the December meeting, and encourage them to stay on-schedule if possible. Mr. Comeau volunteered to track their progress with the BRC (Building Renovation Committee), as he sits on that committee, and report back to the CCPC. John Leonetti confirmed with the Chairmen that the project is ready to move forward and should have no need to request further funding from the CCPC.

Co-Chairman McSweeney made a motion to approve an extension of the Kennedy Fields Restroom Project until December of 2023. The motion was seconded by Mr. Comeau and passed 5-0.

5) Conservation Trust Transfer: The administrator confirmed that the transfer of \$25,000 to the Conservation Commission (funded in FY2022) has been completed. Mr Comeau made a motion to close this project, which was seconded by Kendall O’Halloran. The motion passed 5-0.

6) Financial Report: Due to Stacy Gorman’s absence the financial report has been deferred to the next meeting.

7) Rules of Procedure edits: Mr. Comeau introduced the “tweaks” made to the Rules of Procedure based on comments made at previous meetings regarding committee function when there is no administrator. There were 3 changes to the Rules of Procedure as it currently stands (see attached):

- A. To address the issue of being able to complete necessary administrative tasks in the absence of an administrator a line was added to the end of section 2.2 (Chair: Powers and Duties) allowing the Chair(s) the power to assign administrative duties:

“The Chair shall preside at meetings, establish agendas, call special meetings, provide an orientation of the Committee’s functions to new members, represent the Committee in certain matters, and have the power to appoint Committee members to standing and special sub committees of the Committee, including assigning any administrative duties in the absence of an administrator.”

- B) To address the issue of whether the committee could hire temporary support staff in the absence of an administrator a line was added to the first sentence of section 6.4 (Committee Staff):

The Committee may employ staff if it wishes to, including administrative support. Staffing costs are paid out of the Committee’s administrative budget. Staffing agreements must be voted on by the Committee. Staff report to the Chair of the Committee under the terms of any staffing agreement.

- C) At the November 2022 meeting Mr. Comeau suggested the addition of a new section to the Rules of Procedure to list out some of the main duties of the administrator and proposed a new section: section 2.7 (Administrator Duties). Other committee members felt the new section was missing some key points, namely that the administrator position was not just secretarial but intended to facilitate the running of the CPA program, that the paragraph was not a complete encompassing list of all administrator duties, and that the development of the Community Preservation Plan is an important part of the administrator’s job and should be included. Mr. Comeau presented this paragraph again with the additions (in yellow) intended to address the committee members’ concerns.

Working at the direction of the Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary, the CCPC Administrator shall facilitate the CPA program and provide administrative support to further the work of the Community Preservation Committee. The Administrator shall assist the Committee in processing pre-applications and applications for grant rounds. The Administrator shall respond to general inquiries and requests, support outreach efforts, and where applicable, follow through with the filing of preservation restrictions. The Administrator shall support and report on the financial activities of any approved projects and provide administrative support for public meetings, including the recording of minutes, reserving space, and following up on correspondence. The Administrator shall propose draft updates and changes to the Community Preservation Plan, while working with various community stakeholders. A full list of responsibilities shall be enumerated in the position description on file with the Town of Canton, Office of Human Resources.

Mr. Comeau shared that he wasn’t sure these changes would completely cover all the issues brought up in past meetings, but that the language was broad enough to hopefully cover the majority of situations. Mr. Leonetti expressed that he was one of the committee members with concerns about making sure there were contingencies in place in case of another administrative gap in the future and ensuring that the lessons learned in 2022 while looking for a new administrator would be passed on to future committee members; he felt that the additions being proposed did mostly cover those issues. Both gentlemen agreed that more work could be done, possibly addressing these specific sections further in an appendix. Co-Chairman Chu asked for clarification on what would be in this appendix and Mr. Leonetti replied that it would focus on lessons learned, what was done to try and move the CPA forward in Canton without an administrator, what could have been done/done better, and other information that would be useful for future iterations of the committee.

Mr. Comeau reminded everyone that the Rules of Procedure are not by-laws; these rules are self-governance for the committee and not mandated. He suggested that the Rules of Procedure and the By-Laws should both be on the CCPC website and listed separately and clearly. All revisions made to these documents will be tracked and noted at the end to show the legislative history.

Co-Chairman Chu brought up the confusion the committee faced in 2022 surrounding whether a temporary worker could be hired to perform some administrative duties in the absence of a CCPC administrator. Mr. Comeau pointed out that the Rules of Procedure grant this ability (further strengthened by the addition made to section 6.4) and that the policies which govern the committee also grant this ability. Mr. Leonetti and Mr. Comeau relayed a conversation with the town's finance director about the ability to hire a temporary worker. The consensus was that the committee is allowed to hire a temporary worker, but procurement would go through the finance department and may face challenges there depending on the situation.

Co-Chairman Chu added that the CPA program in Canton (and therefore the administrative duties) continue to evolve and grow, and he was concerned about whether there was enough flexibility in the list of administrator duties to cover future changes and program growth. Mr. Comeau stated that the end of the new proposed section "a full list of responsibilities shall be enumerated in the position description on file with the Town of Canton, Office of Human Resources" does allow for flexibility, as the list in section 2.7 is not meant to be all-encompassing, but Human Resources should have an updated list of duties in the job description. Additionally, the committee should look back at (and update) these rule semi-regularly. Co-Chairman Chu suggested adding verbiage like that found in many other job descriptions to increase flexibility. Mr. Comeau suggested adding "and any other duties as assigned" to section 2.7 at the end of the list of duties. Other committee members agreed and this change was made before bringing these changes to vote.

Mr. Leonetti suggested picking a point in the future (possibly 6 months out) to interview the current administrator regarding how well the posted job description and the list of duties in the Rules of Procedure match up with her experience in the job so far and how the onboarding process went.

Co-Chairman McSweeney made a motion to approve the proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure. Ms. O'Halloran seconded the motion and it passed 5-0.

8) Community Preservation Plan: Co-Chairman Chu expressed his enthusiasm for beginning the process of updating the Community Preservation Plan. He stated that the first step to updating the CPP is to review the information from the 3 sources of data collected by JM Goldson in April of 2022; the focus groups, town hall-style forums, and survey. He'd like a two-phase approach: firstly, review that data and come up with a list of key takeaways and focus on what are the community preferences and what are the potential disconnects between what the community wants and what the current CPP says. Second, the CCPC will look at specific edits and changes needed for the document itself.

Administrator Allison Neff shared a summary of the community outreach information (see attached). This summary was a combination of the key findings and summaries written by JM Goldson, and data/information about the results of all outreach (but especially the survey responses) written by Administrator Neff.

Administrator Neff shared that her review of the information showed a significant need for community education about the CPA. Many survey responses suggested CPA funding go to projects which would not be eligible for CPA funds, and there were also a significant number of responses suggesting that no funding or all funding should go to one specific category, which shows a need for education about the CPA requirements for at least 10% of funds each year going to each of the different categories.

Administrator Neff went on to share her findings regarding comments gathered as part of the survey, tallying the count of specific answers to show patterns and what topics/issues were brought up more often. She agreed with JM Goldson that the subject of recreation was of greater interest to the survey takers in general than the other categories with far more comments and ideas. It was noted that at least one of the commonly requested projects (the Mutch Skating Rink) is something that CPA funds have now gone to, showing that the

CCPC is following the community's preferences even before the new Community Preservation Plan is published.

Administrator Neff noted, while reading the section about the survey results regarding housing, that a large percentage of those who left comments said that no CPA funding should go to low/moderate income housing and/or that housing support should not be publicly funded at all. She included the notation that 92% of survey takers were homeowners as opposed to renters, which would significantly skew the opinions. Mr. Leonetti pointed out that it should also be noted that a majority of CPA funds comes from homeowners and that should be considered.

Administrator Neff noted that some topics, like the Paul Revere Heritage Site, were mentioned specifically under multiple categories, which supports the need for community education as the community in general does not know what category these projects fall under. She then made special note of the enthusiastic desire of some survey takers to use CPA funds to purchase any available undeveloped land for preservation purposes.

Mr. Comeau asked about the number of survey takers. Administrator Neff explained that just over 1,000 people took the survey, but that the comments portion was not mandatory and the number of comments does not reflect the number of survey takers. Mr. Comeau pointed out that this should be taken into account – when there are 10 people saying something it is still only 10 out of over 1,000. Mr. Leonetti reminded the committee and those watching the meeting that this survey was commissioned last year after the CCPC had gone many years without a significant source of community feedback. There is a great deal of information in the report(s) from JM Goldson and he proposes that the community would be well-served by seeing the data. He suggests that the survey data be posted on the website. Co-Chair Chu agreed that there was a significant amount of data and ultimate goal is to reflect this data in the changes to the CPP. He supports providing as much information as possible to the public, but is concerned about some survey responses which contain personally identifiable data. Mr. Comeau agreed that the information should be shared and this is a public document, but also noted that this information should not be regarded as a “bible” and should be looked at contextually – it is 1,000 answers from a community of 24,000+. It is a good cross section and should be worked into the new CPP but the committee should be aware of how they weight the data, and community education is needed. He suggests scrubbing the document of any personal data and posting it. Administrator Neff reminded the committee that there are actually 4 separate documents: the data and summarized results from the focus groups, the data and summarized results from the forum, the data and summarized results of the survey, and the summary documents gathering the results of all 3 forms of community engagement.

A discussion ensued regarding making the documents available and wanting to be transparent with the public, but being cautious regarding the raw data (particularly from the survey) which may contain identifiable information, as the survey takers may not have agreed to share that publicly. Mr. Leonetti suggested checking with JM Goldson regarding whether the survey takers were promised privacy for their responses.

The discussion moved into some suggesting that it is not a completely comprehensive view of community desires and that the public does have the opportunity to speak their opinions at CCPC meetings and at the Annual Town Hall meeting. Others stated that this community feedback must be looked at carefully and made public, especially when it comes to seeing how many more citizens responded to some topics as opposed to others. Administrator Neff expressed that the document currently being viewed will be attached to the minutes of this meeting and include the information about survey comment break-down and show how many people commented on one topic vs another.

Co-Chairman Chu suggested proceeding by posting this summary along with JM Goldson's overall summary, while checking with JM Goldson before posting the documents that may involve personal data. Mr. Leonetti asked about the committee's position when a specific committee member is asked for the data/results by an individual citizen. Co-Chairman Chu replied that, in general, most questions can be answered by the summaries which will be posted publicly and can be shared. In terms of a request for the raw data with all individual comments, steps need to be taken to mitigate any legal risk of sharing information from survey takers who may have been promised privacy.

Administrator Neff moved on to showing 2 sets of pie charts of the percentage of CPA funds used for each category, 1 including the debt service paid each year for the Paul Revere Heritage Site (which is under the category of open space/recreation), and 1 without the debt service (see attached). She explained that the results and data from JM Goldson treated "open space" and "recreation" as two different categories, but when it comes to the CPA categories they are combined. These charts only include FY20-FY23, but there is data going back to the beginning of the CPCC. It was requested that a chart be created showing this data's trend over the history of the CPA in Canton, and with open space/recreation treated as two separate categories.

Co-Chairman Chu requested that all committee members acquaint themselves with all the documents provided by JM Goldson and read the summaries to prepare for a conversation at the next meeting regarding the current plan and changes that need to be focused on. Mr. Leonetti asked that Administrator Neff re-send the documents to all committee members. Mr. Comeau brought up the topic of interacting with the other town committees and groups that the CCPC has historically worked with when developing the CPP, and it was agreed that this is an important element. Co-Chairman Chu requested that the committee start with the public data and, once there is a working draft of the updated Plan, proceed to "socialize" it with these other committees and boards.

Co-Chairman Chu repeated the need for committee members to review the documents, data and the current CPP and prepare for a discussion at the next meeting geared toward making a list of key points and take-aways needed to develop the new Plan.

Mr. Leonetti volunteered to reach out to JM Goldson regarding whether there was any promise of anonymity to the survey takers.

9) There were no other topics brought up.

The next meeting will be on Monday, February 13th at 7pm in the Armando Center meeting room.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 8:24pm by Co-Chairman McSweeney, seconded by Mr. Comeau, and passed 5-0.

Rules & Procedures Edits

Section 2.2 – Chair: Powers and Duties:

The Chair shall preside at meetings, establish agendas, call special meetings, provide an orientation of the Committee's functions to new members, represent the Committee in certain matters, and have the power to appoint Committee members to standing and special sub committees of the Committee, including assigning any administrative duties in the absence of an administrator.

Section 6.4 – Committee Staff:

The Committee may employ staff if it wishes to, including administrative support. Staffing costs are paid out of the Committee's administrative budget. Staffing agreements must be voted on by the Committee. Staff report to the Chair of the Committee under the terms of any staffing agreement.

New Section to be added (highlighted sections reflect changes made from verbiage proposed by George on 11/7/22):

Sec 2.7 Administrator Duties:

Working at the direction of the Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary, the CCPC Administrator shall facilitate the CPA program and provide administrative support to further the work of the Community Preservation Committee. The Administrator shall assist the Committee in processing pre-applications and applications for grant rounds. The Administrator shall respond to general inquiries and requests, support outreach efforts, and where applicable, follow through with the filing of preservation restrictions. The Administrator shall support and report on the financial activities of any approved projects and provide administrative support for public meetings, including the recording of minutes, reserving space, following up on correspondence, and any other duties as assigned. The Administrator shall propose draft updates and changes to the Community Preservation Plan, while working with various community stakeholders. A full list of responsibilities shall be enumerated in the position description on file with the Town of Canton, Office of Human Resources.

Updated Community Preservation Plan

Summary of results of survey, focus groups, and forum

Combined Key Findings (Forum, Focus Groups, and Surveys):

from JM Goldson

Outdoor Recreation Goals

Based on the community engagement results, the consultant recommends considering the following CPA goals pertaining to outdoor recreation:

1. Rehabilitate existing outdoor recreation facilities including at the public schools.
2. Create a new bike trail.
3. Install new lighting and seating at existing outdoor recreation fields and courts.

Open Space Goals

Based on the community engagement results, the consultant recommends considering the following CPA goals pertaining to open space:

4. Acquire and protect undeveloped land for the purpose of mitigating the impacts of climate change and for open space conservation that provides public access
2. Improve accessibility to open space areas.
3. Create connections between open spaces, historic sites, and downtown Canton through walking, hiking, and bike paths.
4. Acquire open space downtown to be used as a town green.
5. Fund the creation of a community garden.

Historic Preservation Goals

Based on the community engagement results, the consultant recommends considering the following CPA goals pertaining to historic preservation:

4. Continue to support projects and activities at the Paul Revere Heritage Site, such as the museum.
2. Acquire and preserve artifacts and resources related to the rich Native American history in Canton of the Ponkapoag Tribe.
3. Acquire and restore historic textiles like the Civil War Uniform and custom dresses.
4. Develop a cohesive approach to, and plan for historic preservation in Canton.

Community Housing Goals

Based on the community engagement results, the consultant recommends considering the following CPA goals pertaining to community housing:

4. Create and preserve community housing, including affordable housing, that will address documented housing needs including, but not limited to housing for low- and middle-income households, seniors, and starter housing opportunities and to maintain the Town's compliance with the state's 10 percent goal per c. 40B.
2. Be strategic about the location of new housing developments to support the community's vision as articulated in the Canton Master Plan.
3. Support the creation of a local down payment assistance program for first time homebuyers.
4. Preserve existing community housing units, such as the developments at Hagan and Rubin Court and support development additional public housing units

Focus Groups Key Findings:

from JM Goldson

- Housing affordability is a challenge faced by many Canton residents, backed up by several specific anecdotes in the focus group. However, participants identified opportunities for CPA funding that can help create more affordable options in the community.
- Residents feel that active recreation in Canton is a well-supported and widely appreciated element of the town. Further support and coordination of active recreation opportunities would be something that would benefit the community and its many families.
- Participants identified many historic and natural resources that are present in Canton. Protecting these resources will help Canton maintain and further its appeal.
- There are many historic resources that can be utilized in the community, but it will take more funding and volunteer effort to take on some of the more large-scale projects identified by the Historical Society and others.
- Open space resources are widely used in Canton, and participants identified several options for increasing accessibility of some of these resources to meet increasing demand.

Forum Key Findings:

from JM Goldson

- There is a need for both upgrades to existing community housing and new units.
- Beyond preserving historic items and buildings, participants want to identify how historic preservation projects will be used and shared by the community.
- There is a need for maintenance of new and existing open spaces, as well as a need for more wooded areas in Canton
- There is a need for more facilities for adults, more availability at existing fields and courts, and a bike path
- Participants at this forum prioritize Open Space and Active Recreation over Community Housing and Historic Preservation.

Survey Key Findings:

from JM Goldson

- Survey respondents were more likely to be female and had higher incomes than the town's population overall, but were similar in age breakdown to the town's population.
- Respondents were moderate users of park, playgrounds, or athletic fields in Canton.
- When asked which types of outdoor recreation projects in Canton are the most important, two categories of projects scored the most highly – projects related to walking and biking, including creating new trails, and improvements and updates to existing parks, playgrounds, and athletic fields.
- When asked about their main concerns about housing issues in Canton, most respondents showed concern that existing residents and adult children raised in Canton will not be able to buy a home due to rising prices.
- The most pressing housing issues for respondents were housing affordability for seniors and veterans, affordable housing for low and middle income households, and maintenance and upgrades to existing housing in Canton.
- When asked what types of historic preservation projects are the most important, protecting historic resources threatened by new development scored the most highly.

- When asked about specific project ideas, a number of residents specifically noted that they would like to see more done at the Paul Revere Heritage Site, such as a museum. In addition to this, many respondents expressed a desire to find a project that honors the area's Native American history.
- About 40 percent of respondents indicated that they visit protected natural areas 1-2 times a month, and about 26 percent never visit them.
- Priorities for open space in Canton include acquisition or protection of undeveloped land for the purpose of mitigating the impacts of climate change and for open space conservation that provides public access, according to respondents.
- In order of priority, respondents would like to see CPA funding spent on Active Recreation, Open Space & Passive Recreation, Historic Preservation, and Community Housing.

Community education about the CPA is needed!

There were a lot of survey answers that suggested uses of funds that would not be CPA eligible.

The main topics that people were often mistaken on:

- Indoor recreation facilities
- Artificial turf for fields
- General projects usually funded by tax-payers (new/updated schools and municipal buildings, fixing roads/bridges, etc.)
- Community-use facilities and projects (cafes, snack bars, town pool, community garden, festivals and events, classes/education for children and adults, etc.)

Survey answers with multiple proponents:

The question: are there any specific active recreation projects that you would like to see considered for CPA funding in the upcoming years?

- Music/performance space – 2
- Skatepark – 3
- Frisbee golf course – 4
- Developments at Pequitside – 5
- Development at Paul Revere Heritage Site – 7
- Conservation Land – 7
- Replacing porta potties with real bathroom facilities – 11
- Lighting installation/improvements at various fields, parks, and courts – 15
- Water access (boat rental, fishing, swimming) – 18
- Improvements to/addition of parks – 19
- Pickleball – 20
- Mutch Skating Rink – 25
- Dog Park – 25
- Improvements to/addition of playgrounds – 28
- Improvements to athletic fields/courts – 28
- Walking Paths/Trails – 41
- Additional fields/courts – 41
- Bike Paths/Trails – 47
- Non-CPA eligible ideas – 51

Notes:

Often repeated themes:

- Field Acquisition: requests for lacrosse and tennis fields/courts
- Field Improvements: fix drainage problems
- Many requests for handicap accessible improvements/additions to playgrounds, parks, and walking paths

The question: Are there any specific community housing projects/programs that you would like to see considered for CPA funding in the upcoming years?

- Additional housing for handicapped/disabled – 2
- Additional housing for veterans – 3
- Acquire more affordable housing – 12
- Update/Improve existing affordable housing – 14
- Non-CPA eligible projects – 14
- Additional housing for seniors/elderly – 17
- No CPA funds for housing – 41

Notes: A large number of survey takers were not in support of funding for affordable housing. Many felt that affordable housing should not be funded by taxpayers or through the town. 92% of survey takers were homeowners, and only 5.5% were renters.

The question: Are there any specific historic preservation projects that you would like to see considered for CPA funding in the upcoming years?

- Cemeteries – 3
- Native American History – 4
- Tilden House – 6
- Gridley School – 6
- Non-CPA eligible projects – 10
- Canton/CPA should not put money into Historical Preservation – 10
- Paul Revere Heritage Site – 12
- Non-specific support for Historical Preservation in Canton – 13

Comments against putting more funds into specific projects:

- Paul Revere Heritage Site – 4
- Tilden House – 8

The question: Are there any specific open space or passive recreation projects that you would like to see considered for CPA funding in the upcoming years?

- Bike Trails – 4
- More green space/trees in downtown/housing developments/require for new developments – 4
- Paul Revere Heritage Site – 4
- Canton has enough open space, don't fund more – 4
- Non-CPA eligible projects – 4
- Pequitside – 5
- Access to water (ponds, reservoir, boating, etc.) – 9
- Walking Paths – 10
- Purchase available land to prevent more/over development – 16

CPA Fund Expenditure By Category:

