

Town of Canton, Massachusetts
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of April 21, 2020

The April 21, 2020 meeting of the Canton Community Preservation Committee was held remotely (on Zoom platform) consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. The meeting was posted on the Town's website along with directions detailing how the public could participate and was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Committee members in attendance: Stacey Gorman, Thomas Theodore, Bob Panico, George Comeau, David McCarthy, Lisa Lopez, Nichola Gallager, John McSweeney, Josh Cohen

Other Guests: Michael Loughran, Mark Porter, Laura Smead, Regen Milani

EARL NEWHOUSE WATERFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT – DISCUSSION

S. Gorman reminded the Committee that they had voted to recommend \$239K in CPA funding for 50% of the cost of the Newhouse Waterfront Improvement Project. The recommendation was contingent upon the Board of Selectmen successfully raising the remaining 50% funding, and was predicated on the understanding that any outside grant funding received by the project proponents would be reimbursed to the CPA Fund. She explained that there is now a question as to whether the project could move forward with potential grant funding going to the Town's general fund, and whether the CCPC would need to take any action in order to move forward under that approach.

Selectman Mark Porter and Town Planner Laura Smead were present to discuss the proposed change. M. Porter stated that given the budget outlook in the coming months, the Board of Selectmen have been looking to reduce one-time capital spending. In all of the scenarios under consideration, BOS funding of the Newhouse project was on the "cut list". In light of the potential for grant funding of 50% of the full project cost, the BOS decided that they would only move forward with the project if (1) the grant funds that the Town applied for were received, and (2) that those grant funds would be reimbursed to the general fund.

L. Lopez asked for further information about the structure of the grant and whether there were any alternatives under which the project could move forward without BOS funding. L. Smead stated that the Land & Water Conservation Fund grant was a 50% reimbursement grant and the Town would receive \$239K if successful (not a lesser amount). Without the BOS appropriation, the project would no longer be eligible for this grant. She added that there were other federal grants (for smaller amounts) that could be pursued, that a scaled-down version of the plan could be considered, or that the project could be presented in a future year. S. Gorman asked when the Town might hear about the outcome of the grant application. T. Theodore replied that he reached out to Senator Timilty's office about status of grant program, and was informed that LWCF grants would be awarded by the end of June.

Discussion about encumbering funds (in both free cash and CPA) and the circumstances under which the CCPC voted to recommend this project followed. B. Panico recalled that his vote was premised on grant funds being returned to CPA. N. Gallagher questioned whether the project would require funding beyond the dollar amounts recommended. D. McCarthy expressed his support for the project, but recalled that the CCPC had voted to make their support contingent on grant funds coming back to the CPA Fund. He indicated that he would be open changing that stance in order to move the project forward. G. Comeau and J. McSweeney agreed that grant funds were a benefit, but they supported the project regardless of the recipient of grant funding. J. Cohen expressed concerns about moving forward with the project under the current circumstances and suggested that it be delayed. B. Panico expressed concern with encumbering \$239K in both CPA and free cash which would not go back into Town coffers until following year. N. Gallagher inquired about the Town's odds of getting the grant. L. Smead stated that the administrators of the grant program were enthusiastic about the project and that the application hit a lot of the metrics prioritized in the grant application. L. Lopez stated that her vote was influenced by grant, but she could be persuaded to direct grant funds back to free cash. She asked whether there would be any impacts to the maintenance budget following site improvements and whether there would be adequate staffing given budget constraints. M. Porter noted that most budget scenarios under consideration do not reduce staffing headcount. R. Milani added that site is maintained by the DPW and she doesn't see any major changes to the current maintenance requirements. While there were requests to staff the property and oversee the proposed boat washing station, these changes currently are not being contemplated. S. Gorman asked if CPA funding could be quickly revoked and made available for the FY 22 grant round if the grant did not come through. K. Phelps expects that would be possible based on recent project close-out procedures; however, she would want to check with accounting to confirm.

M. Porter stated that he is comfortable dedicating free cash in the short term (this year) to undertake the Newhouse project, but would be less inclined to do so in coming years given the anticipated budget shortfalls. While the BOS did not take a vote on the matter, M. Porter's sense was that the board supported this approach. R. Milani reminded attendees that the Town had made a significant financial commitment to get the project to this point. L. Lopez acknowledged the changed economic environment, but feels comfortable recommending the project with the modified provisions so long as the entire project is postponed if the grant does not materialize. S. Gorman stated that the CCPC motion is dependent on approval of the BOS article. B. Panico added his support to this approach noting the likely increase in demand for outdoor recreational opportunities and the expectation that the costs of implementing the project will increase over time.

Upon a motion by G. Comeau, seconded by N. Gallagher, the Committee was polled and voted 8-1-0 to support advising Annual Town Meeting that the Earl Newhouse Waterfront Improvement Project should proceed with any grant funds received going to the Town's General Fund.

**G. Comeau – Aye
T. Theodore – Aye
J. McSweeney – Aye**

**D. McCarthy – Aye
L. Lopez – Aye
J. Cohen – No**

**Bob Panico – Aye
N. Gallagher – Aye
S. Gorman - Aye**

T. Theodore clarified that the vote just taken was to direct any grants received back to the general fund, which led to questions as to whether the CCPC article needed to be revised to ensure that any money appropriated from CPA for the Newhouse Improvement project would not be spent if the fully-funded proposal did not move forward. G. Comeau felt that while the CCPC article would authorize spending, it would not obligate the Town to spend the funds. Project proponents were asked whether they intended to push forward with a partial project using only CPA funds if the conditional BOS funding failed. CCPC members debated the logistics and trade-offs of a partial approach. L. Lopez stated that her preference would be for a clear warrant article specifying that the project would only move forward with full funding. T. Theodore asked why the project couldn't get started with just the CPA funds and G. Comeau stated that he did not want to take any potential grant funding off the table. J. Cohen reiterated his concerns with funding this project given the economic situation. Further discussion about funding scenarios and whether to modify the Newhouse motion followed.

Upon a motion by G. Comeau, seconded by J. McSweeney, the Committee was polled and voted 8-0-1 to withdraw the former motion on the Earl Newhouse Waterfront Improvement Project.

**G. Comeau – Aye
T. Theodore – Aye
J. McSweeney – Aye**

**D. McCarthy – Aye
L. Lopez – Aye
J. Cohen – Abstain**

**Bob Panico – Aye
N. Gallagher – Aye
S. Gorman - Aye**

Upon a motion by G. Comeau, seconded by N. Gallagher, the Committee was polled and voted 8-0-1 to support the Earl Newhouse Waterfront Project with the stipulations that (1) any grant funds received from the Land and Water Conservation Fund shall be reimbursed to the general fund, and (2) in the absence of receipt of any matching funds, the project will not move forward as submitted.

**G. Comeau – Aye
T. Theodore – Aye
J. McSweeney – Aye**

**D. McCarthy – Aye
L. Lopez – Aye
J. Cohen – Abstain**

**Bob Panico – Aye
N. Gallagher – Aye
S. Gorman - Aye**

MINUTES

Motion to approve minutes of October 7, 2019 by N. Gallagher, seconded by L. Lopez. Unanimously approved 9-0-0 by roll call vote.

Approval of minutes of December 2, 2019 and December 16, 2109 was postponed to a future meeting in order to incorporate edits.

OTHER BUSINESS

G. Comeau asked whether there was any new information on stalled CPA projects such as the Luce School slide or restroom/storage facility at the Kennedy School. N. Gallagher reported that the School Committee has been focused on other priorities, and while no bids were received on the first RFP for the slide project, it has been less than a year since the funds were awarded. J. Cohen addressed that status of the restroom project, noting that meetings with supporters and the

architect are ongoing and that project proponents have been meeting with BOS to come up with alternative strategies to complete the proposed work. S. Gorman gave an update on playground projects, confirming that work is mostly complete, but some payments are being withheld while punchlist items are addressed by the contractor.

Motion to adjourn at 8:33 p.m. by J. Cohen, seconded N. Gallagher. Unanimously approved 9-0-0 by roll call vote.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Kristen Phelps

**Kristen Phelps
CCPC Administrator**