



City of Westfield

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2021

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020, Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the City of Westfield CPC was conducted via remote participation. Specific information was provided on the City of Westfield website at www.cityofwestfield.org. For this meeting, members of the public who wished to listen to the meeting were advised to do so by tuning into Channel 15 or online at westfieldtv.org. No in-person attendance of members of the public was possible.

Members attending:
Members absent:

Staff attending:

Thomas Sharp
Richard Salois
Cynthia Gaylord
Daniel Kelly
Joe Muto
William Porter
Michael Tirrell
John Bowen (Alt)

Jay Vinskey
Christine Fedora

Chairman Sharp called the meeting to order at 6:30 and asked the members to introduce themselves.

Thomas Sharp, member of the Conservation Commission
Cynthia Gaylord, Chair of the Historic Commission
Daniel Kelly, Westfield Housing Authority
William Porter, Representing Citizens of Westfield
Michael Tirrell, Chair Park and Recreation
Richard Salois, representing the Planning Board.
There being a quorum Chair Sharp began the meeting.

1. Public Participation

Chair Sharp asked if there was anyone who would like to comment during the public participation of the meeting regarding items not on the agenda. There being no one heard Chair Sharp proceeded to the next item on the agenda.

2. Review and Approval of 10-8-20, 1-20-21 Minutes

Chair Sharp noted he would like to discuss the minutes one by one and asked if the Committee had a chance to review the minutes of October 8, 2020.

Member Tirrell MOTIONED, seconded by Member Salois to approve the minutes of October 8, 2020.

By Roll Call vote:

Tom Sharp	-	yes
Cynthia Gaylord	-	yes
Dan Kelly	-	yes
Bill Porter	-	abstained
Mike Tirrell	-	yes
Rich Salois	-	yes

Chair Sharp declared the MOTION as being carried.

Chair Sharp asked if there was a motion for the January 20, 2021 minutes.

Member Gaylord MOTIONED, seconded by Member Kelly to approve the January 20, 2021 minutes.

Chair Sharp asked there was any discussion, comments or corrections?

There being no discussion a roll call vote was held.

Tom Sharp	-	yes
Cynthia Gaylord	-	yes
Dan Kelly	-	yes
Bill Porter	-	yes
Mike Tirrell	-	yes
Rich Salois	-	yes

Chair Sharp thanked staff for obliging the committee the way they did in getting the minutes out promptly.

3. Review of Budget/Funds

Planner Vinskey addressed the Commission, noting the auditing department has not received their final numbers but they believe the numbers as presented are accurate.

Planner Vinskey further noted he felt the only real change from last time would be the \$62K for the Boys & Girls Club that funding came out of the undesignated funds for recreation.

Chair Sharp asked if there was anything else the committee needed to be aware of? Planner Vinskey stated there currently is nothing left in the dedicated historic funding. Anything that would be approved as a historic project would have to come from the undesignated account. Chair Sharp inquired as to when the funding would be refreshed? July 1 for the new fiscal year and whatever is

left in this year's budget will go back into the banked funds; state match usually comes in November.

Chair Sharp also noted the FY2022 budget was presented to the Board for their review, it is only an informational review, the CPC budget is small and simple. Planner Vinskey asked if the CPC wanted to consider some funding for promotional materials. If that were the case the administrative line items would have to be increased. Chair Sharp felt that could be a future discussion.

4. Review of New/Pending Applications

- Various City Monuments & Gravestones (Historic) - \$89,000
- Pine Hill Cemetery Monuments & Gravestones (Historic) - \$39,500

Gene Theroux introduced himself to the Committee and gave them some background regarding his experience with this type of work. He started working in cemeteries approximately 4 years ago, that is when he met Cindy, adding they share the same type of passion. He has inventoried memorials and monuments throughout the city and also had someone take a look at the monuments. In the inventorying of the cemeteries they noticed there is a significant amount of plagues and monuments that are significantly in disrepair and decay in the city.

Mr. Theroux stated there were multiple quotes submitted for the work, he further stated he's done research on the companies that submitted quotes and recommended the Committee go with Pondsford as a consultant, adding they have done work all over the country including Arlington National Cemetery.

Chair Sharp thanked Mr. Theroux for his dedication regarding this project but voiced concerns in that maintenance is not allowed to be funded. Planner Vinskey felt this application goes beyond typical maintenance it is more of a restoration project judging from the work that needs to be done it is more of a preservation category. Planner Vinskey further added the Historical Commission has to determine the monuments are of historical significance before being eligible for funds. Member Gaylord felt the Historical Commission is in favor of this project and they will vote at their next meeting, April 19. It was noted though at this point they are not eligible.

Planner Vinskey also added the applications are on the agenda separately because city property has to follow the city's procurement laws as well as the park and recreation department would need to sign off on those as well. Pine Hill Cemetery will be somewhat easier because the procurement process is not a requirement when it is private property.

Following a discussion the Committee felt it would be best to continue until after the Historical Commission held their meeting and determined these to be of historical significance. Following that, the Committee could hold a special meeting to vote.

Prior to voting Chair Sharp inquired about what's involved in the city property projects. Planner Vinskey felt the first hurdle that needs to be resolved is the historical significance determination. The second hurdle would be the procurement aspect for the city property projects, but that is not a concern of this committee, it may be handled by the Purchasing Department.

The Commission discussed and felt they would be comfortable holding a special meeting. Member Gaylord MOTIONED, seconded by Member Salois to hold a special meeting following the Historical Commission's Monday meeting.

By Roll Call vote:

Cindy Gaylord	-	yes
Dan Kelly	-	yes
Bill Porter	-	yes
Mike Tirrell	-	yes
Rich Salois	-	yes
Tom Sharp	-	yes

Motion carries.

- Hampden/Hampshire Canal Study – Westfield portion (Historic) - \$18,000

Member Gaylord addressed the Committee. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission has spearheaded this project for well over a year now. Employees from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission attending the Zoom meeting were: Eric Weiss and Shannon Walsh.

Mr. Weiss and Ms. Walsh explained the Canal Study. Hampden/Hampshire County's portion consist of 6 municipalities those being Southwick, Westfield, Russell, Easthampton, Southampton and Northampton. Their hope is to get the Massachusetts portion of the Canal on the National Register.

Mr. Weiss stated he's been working on a regional effort for the canal by getting towns to work together. They are currently at the point of hiring a consultant through the RFP, he further noted he has quotes from the state, and he is hoping to get another year of funding from the DLT grant to get the RFP out. He further noted they do not have enough money for the study itself and are asking each town to come up with their portion of the money, anywhere between \$15 – 18,000. He is hoping Westfield will find a way to fund their portion of it, he realizes there are rules that have to be followed. Member Gaylord noted there is information attached to the application which explains how CPA funding can be used to fund survey for this.

Chair Sharp inquired if Westfield is the first city to be asked? Ms. Walsh stated that Northampton, Southampton have talked to their CPC and Southwick was talked to in 2017 they have a mitigation fund that can be used for canal operation.

Planner Vinsky noted the canal, having been determined by the Historical Commission as significant, is eligible for CPA funding but questions as to whether the study fits in to one of the 4 CPA categories – acquire, create, preserve, or restore- and the project does not seem to be precursor to a future physical project or acquisition. He felt it would need to fall under the definition of preserve- to protect property from injury, harm or destruction. He noted the Coalition website suggested contacting the municipal attorney for advice on these questions. He further noted for the School House project the school department funded the study and then they came to the CPC for funding the work itself.

Chair Sharp felt the Committee should hold off on this to see if they can get further guidance on this as to whether this meets the rules and regulations as well as seeing if other communities have funded this, he felt the Law Department should be contacted to see if they feel it qualifies. The Committee concurred. Vinsky confirmed other communities have funded similar studies; he just felt it was a stretch from his interpretation of the CPA language.

Ms. Walsh felt preservation has to begin with documentation, how can something be preserved if it's not documented. They were not looking for a commitment tonight. Chair Sharp thanked them for coming to the Committee.

- Yellow Stonehouse Farm APR contribution (Open Space) – \$69,000

Constance Adams the applicant addressed the Board; also present for the project were Emily Boss of Franklin Land Trust and Barbara Hopson of the MDAR.

Barbara Hopson gave a brief summary of an agricultural preservation restriction, it is similar to a conservation restriction. An agricultural preservation restriction protects land from being developed and will continue as an agricultural use. Chair Sharp inquired what would happen if they were to sell the land? It would have to be maintained as a farm, the purpose is to keep the land as agricultural. It also keeps the land affordable for farmers one of the biggest problems is to have to compete to buy land for farming at a commercial price which makes land no longer affordable, in an agricultural preservation it keeps the land affordable to stay agricultural. Chair Sharp asked what guarantee does the city have down road? Ms. Adams stated there is a permanent agricultural easement which gives up any future rights to use by anything else but agriculture. It was also noted with a conservation restriction they can do basically whatever they want to do but with an agricultural preservation it is more focused on high quality soils, long history of farming. This type of restriction has affirmative covenants, requiring that it be farmed in the future.

Chair Sharp liked the idea it will be affordable to future farmers when you decide to sell it. A brief discussion regarding fair market value and how they came about the amount. The Commission and the applicant further discussed the aspects of the fair market value and how this amount was decided on.

Member Salois felt this is a good piece of land, good for farming and wished there was more land in Westfield like this. Member Gaylord agreed and was impressed with the work Connie had done on this, she has been very diligent and committed to this land.

Member Porter inquired as to the benefit to the public, he understands it protects the land from future development. Connie informed him the farm feeds over 200 families with fresh produce, hundreds of children come to the farm and learn where food comes from, and it's an educational tool as well. Families can come and pick their own vegetables. She further noted they also donate to food pantries. Member Porter further stated he has a difficult time getting past the fact they grow the food and sell it, how is this different from any commercial operation? He felt he should bring this up because other folks might have these same questions in their minds. Emily this land is irreplaceable if it were lost it would take a very long period of time to come back, this is a

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conservation investment, to look at the landscape, this land encompasses the best soils, wild life habitat it not only creates community it also benefits the vulnerable people in community, this is a very threatened commodity. Vinsky also noted the Committee has funded private projects, like historic buildings used commercially.

Member Porter thought he heard under an APR land has to be used for farming what happens next owner does not farm? Barbara the APR restriction document states it has to be farmed. If going to sell APR has option to purchase agricultural value similar to right of personal future. The landowner would have to offer it to the Commonwealth first; the bottom line is it has to be sold for farming, to ensure it remains in agriculture.

Member Tirrell felt this would not be funding a commercial enterprise he supports it as an open space this will stay as a farm land, agree with Member Salois's statement about wishing there was more land in town to do this to, this is a big benefit to the city.

Member Kelly MOTIONED, seconded by member Tirrell to approve the funding of \$69,000. Discussion? No further discussion.

By Roll call vote:

Cindy Gaylord	-	yes
Dan Kelly	-	yes
Bill Porter	-	yes
Mike Tirrell	-	yes
Rich Salois	-	yes
Tom Sharp	-	yes

5. Status of Recommended/Funded Projects

Planner Vinsky briefly reviewed the list of open projects. On the Old burying ground, Member Gaylord stated the balance has been spent, will be cancelled out.

6. Discussion of potential projects -none

7. Other Business/Future Agenda Item

Member Gaylord updated members as to their virtual tours they have been doing each costs about 500.00. Chair Sharp suggested doing one of the projects the CPC has funded and possible run it on Channel 15 to let some of the people know what the CPC funding is used for.

Planner Vinsky reiterated that if the Commission wishes to have money budgeted into the account for administrative or promotional projects, this it should be put in the current budget that is being worked on now.

Meeting schedule -Special meeting scheduled for April 21, 2021 @ 5:00 p.m.
Next regular meeting scheduled for July 8, 2021.

Member Gaylord MOTIONED, seconded by Member Kelly to adjourn at 8:20. All were recorded in favor.