

Town of Ayer
Community Preservation Committee
Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432
Minutes for 11/3/2021

Location: Remote Meeting via Zoom, accessible to public, due to ongoing pandemic

Members present: Janet Providakes (JP) [Housing Authority]- Chair, Julie Murray (JUM) [Planning Board] – Vice-Chair, Beth Suedmeyer (BAS) [At Large], Barry Schwarzel (BES) [Historical Commission], Jason Mayo (JAM) [Parks & Recreation], Jess Gugino (JG) [Conservation Commission]- Clerk, Colleen Krieser (CK)[At Large]
APAC taped: NO

7:02 PM – Open Meeting

- **Approval of Agenda**

- BES moved to accept the agenda as amended; JUM 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote 7-0.

- **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- BAS moved to accept the minutes for 10/6/2021 as written; CK 2nd.
 - Motion approved by Roll Call Vote 6-0, with BES abstaining.

- **Correspondence**

- Update on Sandy Pond Schoolhouse Phase II Restoration and Preservation Work Grant (FTM 2020, \$187,340)
 - JP received an update from Irv Rockwood, President of the Sandy Pond School Association (SPSA).
 - The \$50,000 grant received from the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) is temporarily on hold while the SPSA seeks the title transfer paperwork documenting the 1956 reorganization of the SPSA from a volunteer group into a corporation (SPSA, Inc.).
 - Not being able to locate a hard copy, the SPSA will have to go to Land Court to file for the document, which is necessary for MPPF's grant requirements.
 - JP spoke to Town Manager Robert Pontbriand who said that the project can still move forward in terms of using the CPA grant funding.
- Watertown query
 - JP received an inquiry from the Watertown CPC asking about the Historical Resources Inventory Project grant (\$20,000, STM 2020) being funded through the CPA Historical Preservation category.
 - Per the Dept. of Revenue Guideline IGR 2019-14, Watertown was curious because they had been shot down for doing something similar through that category rather than, say, an administrative expense.



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- JP forwarded the email to Town Manager Pontbriand to see if this is something Town Counsel should look at re Ayer CPC's grant.
- BAS said her opinion was that the inventory should be paid through this category as such inventories serve as planning tools for historical preservation purposes.

CURRENT BUSINESS

- **Ayer Shirley Regional School District (ASRSD) Athletic Field Project (\$300,000, FTM 2021)**
 - This article passed successfully at Fall Town Meeting, October 25, 2021.
 - JP has now submitted a draft of a Memo of Understanding (MOU) to Town Manager Pontbriand for review by Town Counsel.
 - The MOU needs to specify in writing the agreement that town residents will be able to use the new track – which the CPA grant will contribute to funding – when it is not in use by the school district.
 - A good draft of the MOU should be circulating before CPA funds are expended for this project, but as construction work is not anticipated to start before April 2022, there should be plenty of time.
 - CK noted that the current sign at the existing track specifies it can only be used with permission of ASRSD and is not very friendly.
 - JUM said that sign may reflect more the state of disrepair and fragility of the existing track.
 - JP will work with the Town Manager and the School Committee to ensure that a new sign strikes a friendlier tone while providing up-to-date guidelines for resident use.
 - BAS said the sign should also indicate that CPA funds were used in the construction of the new track when it is completed.
- **Community Preservation Plan (CPP) Update (\$21,000, FTM 2021)**
 - This article, to fund updating the CPP from its previous 2009-2014 version) also successfully passed at FTM in October.
 - JP asked for a motion to approve her contacting J. M. Goldson to confirm that the project is now funded and she may proceed according to the terms of her contract.
 - BAS so moved; CK 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote 7-0.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Pre-Application: Digitization of *The Public Spirit*, Ayer Library**
 - Samantha Benoit participated via Zoom and presented the pre-application on behalf of the Ayer Library.



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- The application seeks funding for the digitization of *The Public Spirit*, now *The Nashoba Valley Voice*, from 1869 to the present.
 - The Ayer Library is the official archive for *The Public Spirit* and is the only place which has complete records of this important resource.
 - This project will better preserve past issues by transferring them from microfilm to digital format.
 - The majority of film reels are now scratched, cracked and falling apart.
 - At the completion of the project, Ayer will have its own website of these records in the form of a keyword searchable database.
 - The Library will be using Advantage Preservation to do this work, which has provided a superior product to other towns in the area doing this as well.
 - Written permission from the newspaper has been secured, with the understanding that digitization of past issues can be done up to, but not including, the current year, whatever that is.
 - Once the database is complete, the Library anticipates it would be able to hand the ongoing digitization of the most recent year once that condition has been met.
- The pre-application as submitted sought \$4195 in funding for the first year of the project, which is expected to take 5 years.
 - However, CPC members were in agreement that the application should seek funding for the entirety of the project rather than coming back for each year's funding.
 - To cover price increases or contingencies, it was therefore suggested that the application should apply for \$25,000 in funding for a 5-year project.
- BAS made a motion to move the project to the application phase, to be revised to seek \$25,000 for a 5 year project to digitize *The Public Spirit* from 1869 on, to be funded through the CPA historical preservation category; JG 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote 7-0.
- In terms of a timeline to have the project ready to be presented to Spring Town Meeting (April 2022) for a vote, the application will need to be reviewed by CPC ideally in January, so that a Public Hearing can be held in February or March.
- **Kiddie Junction / Pirone Park, Ayer Parks & Recreation**
 - JAM began a preliminary discussion of the application process to seek CPA funding for remediation and replacement of the Pirone Park playground next year.
 - Funding for this project would be sought at Spring Town Meeting, April 2022, both from capital planning and from CPA funds.



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- Prior to putting the project out to bid, however, a study needs to be done first – and this part of the project is already funded.
 - The Parks Department had previously received \$20,000 from Town Meeting to fund a study for this project, and they were just authorized by the Select Board (on 11/2) to redirect unused UDAG funds for the new Parks building toward this study as well, bringing the funds available up to the needed \$34,000.
 - Parks Department had previously put the study out to bid several times, but, with pandemic-related delays and stresses elsewhere, it was only on the 3rd attempt that they received any bid responses.
 - Of the two they received, only one is viable, from a company known as “BETA.”
- Completion of the study will have 3 phases:
 - 1) Remediation design and cost estimate, including testing and sampling for pollution;
 - 2) Conceptual playground design and cost estimate;
 - This will involve putting together a working group, including representatives from the Parks Commission, the Department of Public Works, and members of the public, to prepare 3 design proposals.
 - The 3 proposals will be brought to a Public Meeting for input, after which the Parks Commission will pick the final design.
 - 3) Final plans and specifications.
 - This will include preparation of an RFP going out to bid for contractors.
- Given the time frames for capital planning for the FY2023 budget to be approved at Spring Town Meeting next year, as well as CPC’s application review and Public Hearing needs before STM, preparation for budgeting needs to begin now.
 - DPW Director Dan Van Schalkwyk suggested a number as a best estimate – \$587,000 – for the cost of remediation and replacement of the playground.
- Since a budget number will be needed very soon for the Capital Planning Committee, JAM asked what sort of grant request for CPA funds would be suitable to ask for, for this project.
 - This will enable them to calculate the funding amount to be requested from Capital Planning.
- JP thought CPC could be asked for at least the same funding (\$300,000) as just approved for the ASRSD Athletic Fields Project, if not more.

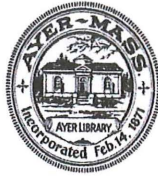


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- BAS said the playground project would be a perfect opportunity to seek State grants for which CPA funding could be used as a matching grant.
 - The Town could potentially be eligible for up to \$400,000 in State grants, but the deadline for grant applications like that would be July 2022, after STM.
 - However, there is no guarantee the Town would be successful in securing such grants.
- JAM agreed with matching being an optimal use of CPA funding but said that timing is an issue.
 - Parks & Rec want to bring funding requests (CPC, Capital Planning) before STM next April, and initiate contracts to start the work in July 2022, in the upcoming new fiscal year.
 - Because of delays due to the pandemic, and receiving no responses at all the first two times they put the study portion of the project out to bid, there are serious concerns about liability if the project were to be put off another year, given how the existing playground continues to deteriorate.
- JG suggested considering a playground project with two tiers, the first being what would be needed for basic remediation and replacement, and the second encompassing more ambitious improvements.
 - Then the project could seek the Capital Planning and CPA funding at STM in April 2022, still apply for State grants using the CPA funding for matching purposes, and if successful, State funds could then be used for the second tier.
- The timeline for proceeding with an application to CPC was discussed – basically, a pre-application by the January meeting, formal application in February, and Public Hearing in March.
 - More to come.
- **Committee Updates**
 - Historical Commission (BES)
 - Phase I of the inventory resource survey should be complete by 11/18.
 - Once approved by the Historical Commission, they will then seek approval from Mass. Historic before beginning Phase II.
 - Housing Authority (JP)
 - They are looking for a resident to serve as a temporary member to fill in until the next election, following the passing in September of member Kathleen O'Sullivan.



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- Affordable Housing Committee (CK)
 - They are working on developing guidelines for a rental assistance program, and anticipate submitting another application to CPC for additional funds to the Housing Trust.
 - CK is aware of the timeframe needed if an STM vote was sought.
- Parks & Recreation (JAM)
 - See above discussion of Pirone Park.
- Conservation Commission (JG)
 - FTM in October passed the Fertilizer Use Bylaw, which now goes to the Attorney General's office for approval.
- Planning Board (JUM)
 - They have begun site plan review of the ASRSD Athletic Field Project, and are also currently reviewing a proposal for a propane facility at 99 Fitchburg Road.
- Nashua River Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council (BAS)
 - A new round of community grants, for 2022, will be opened up in the coming months.
- **8:26 PM – Adjourn Meeting**
 - CPC's Next Meeting: **December 1, 6 p.m.**
 - (***Note, this meeting will begin at 6 p.m. rather than 7 p.m.**)
 - JM moved to adjourn; RD 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.

Minutes Recorded and Submitted by Jessica G. Gugino, Clerk

Date / Signature Indicating Approval: _____

12/1/2021 