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TOWN OF AYER
TOWN CLERK



Town of Ayer
Community Preservation Committee
Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432
Minutes for 1/5/2022

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: YES

7:02 PM – Open Meeting

- **Approval of Agenda**

- BES moved to approve the agenda as posted; CK 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote 7-0.

- **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- CK moved to accept the minutes for 12/1/2021 as written; JUM 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote 7-0.

- **Correspondence / Bills**

- Historical Resources Inventory Project (\$20,000, STM 2020)
 - An invoice for \$3750, to Ms. Stacy Spies, Historic Preservation Consultant, was approved for payment.
- Sandy Pond School Association Restoration Projects
 - Phase I (\$108,000, STM 2018)
 - Phase II (\$187,340, FTM 2020)
 - JP received an update from Irv Rockwood, President of SPSA.
 - Approximately \$13,000 in funds remain unspent from Phase I, and have been confirmed as available for use to pay for Phase II expenses.

CURRENT BUSINESS

- **Community Preservation Plan (CPP) Update (\$21,000, FTM 2021)**

- Jenn Goldson, of JM Goldson, was present via Zoom.
 - Ms. Goldson was awarded the contract to update the 5-year plan; she had also done the most recent CPP plan, 2009-2014.
- A draft proposed project timeline was reviewed and adjusted, and highlights include:
 - preparation of draft Ayer CPC profiles and mapping for review with CPC at first meeting in March, including literature review, update of funded



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projects, CPA in Ayer ‘fast facts’ including 2-3 page summaries per CPA category;

- these summaries would be made public;
 - make list of ‘stakeholders’, those with potential interests in local CPA projects (town, businesses, organizations, etc.);
 - mapping of locations of Ayer CPA projects, per category (eg. open space, historical preservation, housing, recreation);
 - identification of Ayer’s needs;
 - scheduling of virtual public forum focus groups per each CPA category with town officials and stakeholders;
 - invite committee and board members to participate in these forums rather than try to get on each relevant board’s agenda, given full agendas and availability issues;
 - preparation and review of draft survey as part of public outreach, survey to be launched in March;
 - virtual general public forum to be held in April;
 - flyers to be sent out in advance – in water bill? tax bill? – to get word out advertising coming outreach opportunities (forums, survey);
 - compilation of results from survey and forums, creation of summaries of key findings, preparation of draft outline of CPA goals and priorities in Ayer;
 - further meetings with CPC to review forum results and draft outline, then preparation of updated draft CPP for CPC review.
- Following comments from BAS and resident Sara Withee, Ms. Goldson said it might be feasible to create virtual “breakout rooms” during forums for smaller discussions between participants, to be able to ‘cross-pollinate’ ideas and solicit better feedback.
- Ms. Goldson will have to see if doing this would create problems via Open Meeting Law.
 - If this was feasible, she would want facilitators for each breakout room, i.e. from CPC as well as appropriate boards or committees.
- Ms. Goldson then turned to asking each CPC member for feedback on their hopes for this project, what they were most curious to learn during the process, and what were the greatest opportunities or challenges in the Ayer community that it was hoped the project would address.
- Among points made:
 - finding out what kind of job people in Ayer think its CPC is doing? is it attentive to Ayer’s needs? could it communicate better?;



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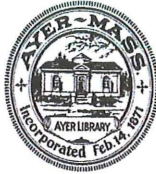
- the challenges of engaging community members more broadly, by volunteering or other forms of participation;
 - the recent success of the 'Hometown Festival' over the summer was noted;
- with the new 3% surcharge enabling CPC to do much more, learning how public interests and priorities have changed as the town has grown in recent years;
- trying to ensure CPC displays model accountability, so that residents can feel the CPA funds are being used well and wisely, that money is going to fund projects that the town wants/needs.
- While the project was ideally envisioned to take 6 months, looking at CPC's upcoming meeting schedule, some realistic adjustments were made that will mean the completed CPP won't be ready until later in the summer.
 - CPC's regularly-scheduled March meeting (3/2) will have the committee meet with Ms. Goldson again.
 - CPC will have to schedule an additional meeting later in March as it will need to hold several Public Hearings for project applications that will come before Spring Town Meeting for vote in April.
- More to come.
- **Pirone Park Remediation, Removal and Reconstruction Project**
 - JAM provided an update on this forthcoming CPC application.
 - Since CPC last met, the Parks department had to close the "Kiddie Junction" playground in Pirone Park, per order of MassDEP and EPA, due to the arsenic contamination.
 - New testing was also done and it looks possible that only 6 inches of soil, rather than 12 inches, might have to be removed for remediation of the contamination.
 - If that winds up being the case, it might not be necessary to take down trees.
 - Among the things still to be worked out are details about the demolition and removal of material.
 - The project will be put out to bid to include all three phases: remediation, removal and reconstruction.
 - Alan Manoian, Director of the Office of Community & Economic Development (OCED), spoke via telephone.
 - OCED is pursuing grant opportunities for this project.
 - His goal is to have the entire Ayer community involved as much as possible, via a model community engagement process, in all aspects of the project, including design, via public forums and on-site design sessions.



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- The newly established Disability Commission will have input as well, along with Environmental Justice groups.
 - Outreach is also planned to the High School athletic department, the Council on Aging, and more.
 - Mr. Manoian envisions this as a great landmark project for Ayer to design a park that will serve all of the next generations – children, parents, grandparents, the disabled.
- **Digitization of *The Public Spirit*, Ayer Public Library**
 - JP heard from Samantha Benoit, who will have an application presentation ready for CPC's February meeting.
 - The library application will seek \$25,000 in CPA funding.
 - A strong letter of support has already been received from *The Lowell Sun*.
 - Mr. Manoian said OCED will be sending its own letter of strong support as well.
 - He said this was an outstanding project and noted the extensive use of Ayer's historic newspaper archives that his own department makes.
- **NEW BUSINESS**
 - **Open space research**
 - JP has been going through tax title properties in town, some large, most small, the majority of which are undevelopable.
 - She also attended a recent Conservation Commission meeting to discuss open space possibilities such as the Hudlin property (alas, already under agreement between the seller and a developer).
 - She noted the need for all town entities (including also the Planning Board and Land Use Group) to be on the look-out for open space opportunities as they arise.
 - **Flannagan Pond Public Access**
 - JG said ConCom representatives have been talking to Town Manager Robert Pontbriand and DPW Director Dan Van Schalkwyk about this long-term need.
 - Mr. Van Schalkwyk has suggested having a feasibility study done professionally to evaluate the pros and cons of several possible locations for public access, including canoe and kayak, to this pond.
 - JG will be assisting him in preparing a pre-application and application for this project, hopefully to be ready for CPC's February meeting.



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- **Committee Updates**

- Historical Commission (BES)
- Housing Authority (JP)
- Affordable Housing Committee (CK)
- Parks & Recreation (JAM)
 - See discussion above of Pirone Park.
- Conservation Commission (JG)
 - Unfortunately ConCom received the resignation of Jo-Anne Crystoff from its Conservation Administrator position in December, and will be looking for a replacement soon.
- Planning Board (JUM)
- Nashua River Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council (BAS)
 - BAS said the Stewardship Council's 2022 grant program will be launched in February.
 - JG gave her an update on ConCom's receipt of one of the 2021 grants to create informative signage at a number of key waterways sites in town.
 - Despite the resignation of Ms Crystoff, the Commission is still moving forward on this project.
 - BAS was also excited to have learned that Heidi Cowley, a teacher in Ayer schools, is working to develop a 3rd grade curriculum that will include use of the historic Sandy Pond Schoolhouse in the future.

- **8:44 PM – Adjourn Meeting**

- CPC's Next Meeting: February 2, 2022, 7 p.m.
- BAS moved to adjourn; BES 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.

Minutes Recorded and Submitted by Jessica G. Gugino, Clerk

Date / Signature Indicating Approval:

2/2/2022 *Jessica G. Gugino*