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TOWN OF AYER
TOWN CLERK

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Town of Ayer
Community Preservation Committee
Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432
Minutes for 9/6/2023

Location: Remote meeting via Zoom, accessible to the public

Members present: Janet Providakes, Chair (Housing Authority); Julie Murray, Vice-Chair (Planning Board); Barry Schwarzel (Historical Commission); Jason Mayo (Parks & Recreation); Jess Gugino, Clerk (Conservation Commission);

Not present: Beth Suedmeyer (At Large); Colleen Krieser (At Large, Affordable Housing Trust)
APAC taped: Yes

7:01 PM – Open Meeting

• **Confirmation of Agenda**

- **VOTE:** B. Schwarzel moved to confirm the agenda as posted; J. Gugino 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote 5-0.

• **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- **VOTE:** J. Murray moved to accept minutes for 8/2/2023 as corrected; J. Gugino 2nd.
 - Motion approved by Roll Call Vote 4-0, with B. Schwarzel abstaining.

• **Public Hearing, 7:06 PM: Application for \$200,000 CPA Funding, Ayer Affordable Housing Trust**

- Affordable Housing Trustee Shaun Copeland (Ayer Select Board) and Affordable Housing Committee member James Stephen were present via Zoom to support the application for CPA funding.
 - The application was previously discussed in detail at CPC's 8/2/2023 meeting, and has been posted on CPC's website for the last month as well.
- Mr. Copeland summarized the application that was recently amended to include the use of \$3000 for administrative purposes, including a State-required annual independent audit:
 - \$72,000, to go to the Rental Assistance Program to enable the Trust to assist 12 families/individuals for a year;
 - \$125,000, to go into an Affordable Housing Fund, to enable a timely response to potential real estate opportunities that could be purchased to use for affordable housing;
 - \$3000, to be used for administrative purposes, including annual independent audit.
- Having spoken to Stuart Saginor, Executive Director of the Community Preservation Coalition, J. Providakes confirmed that the use of a small percentage of the grant (\$3000) for administrative purposes was a legal use of CPA funding.
- In response to a question from resident Pauline Conley, Mr. Copeland said that next steps to reach out to other fundraising sources are under discussion.



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- J. Providakes had previously noted that currently the only source of revenue for the Trust has been from Ayer CPC grants.
- Mr. Copeland also confirmed for Ms. Conley that, if property for affordable housing is purchased through the Fund, the Trust does not intend for the Town to become a landlord in any way.
 - J. Providakes referred to comments made by Alicia Hersey (Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development) at the 8/2 meeting, that one strategy might be for the Town/Trust to purchase land, but then put out an RFP seeking nonprofits or developers to work with the Town and take such purchases over.
 - Also using the example raised by Ms. Conley, Mr. Copeland said he did not see why an entity such as Habitat for Humanity could not apply to the Trust for affordable housing funding.
- Resident Sara Withee made a general comment to highlight that the Trust, and especially the Rental Assistance Program, have had a positive impact on the Town.
- **VOTE:** B. Schwarzel moved to approve the application for funding to go before Fall Town Meeting voters, on October 23, for their final decision; J. Murray 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously 5-0 by Roll Call Vote.
- **VOTE:** B. Schwarzel moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:19 PM; J. Gugino 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously 5-0 by Roll Call Vote.
- **Correspondence / Invoices**
 - Pleasant Street School Apartments, Washington Street
 - In her capacity as CPC Chair and a member of the Housing Authority, J. Providakes received a letter from a tenant about water damage to a 4th floor apartment and hallway.
 - The Housing Authority will oversee repairs once the source of the leak has been determined by engineers investigating the matter.
 - Pirone Park Kiddie Junction Playground Remediation and Restoration (\$750,000, STM 2023)
 - BETA, the consultant working with the Parks Department, submitted an invoice for \$8586.25, for the development of plans and specs, June-July 2023, which J. Providakes then approved for payment.
- **Public Participation**
 - None received.

OLD BUSINESS



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- Sandy Pond Schoolhouse Association (SPSA) Phase II Restoration and Preservation Work, Grant (FTM 2020, \$187,340)
 - Irv Rockwood, President of SPSA, gave an update via Zoom
 - The project is making progress, however it has been more slowly than anticipated due to delays caused by the Covid pandemic shutdown and subsequent related shortages in supplies and labor, compounded as well by rising costs.
 - Since fall 2022:
 - The new roof – cedar shingles and copper flashing – was completed in October 2022.
 - Its cost was initially estimated at \$45,000, but given the pandemic impacts to the economy, it wound up costing \$67,000.
 - The schoolhouse now has a fully ADA accessible washroom, with new flooring, hot & cold water and hand rails.
 - Two new exterior doors have now been installed.
 - The windows have also now all been fully restored.
 - They were taken out in batches so that the glazing could be removed and paint stripped by hand.
 - Only 3 or 4 panes of glass wound up having to be replaced, but a spare window enabled them to replace these without the need to purchase new glass.
 - In addition, the ratchet system has been restored, allowing the windows to be raised and held open safely.
 - The big remaining task for which Mr. Rockwood said they think they have enough remaining grant funds, is construction of an ADA accessible walkway and ramp to the building, on its north side, as well as two ADA parking spots.
 - SPSA had hoped to have the building ready for public use this fall, but now are planning for a Grand Opening in spring 2024.
 - SPSA is also working closely with the Page-Hilltop Elementary School in developing a regular program for students to visit the historic schoolhouse.
 - That will be ready to move forward once all ADA accessibility work has been completed.
 - Some minor work to clean the interior up, remove construction debris, and rehang pictures and documents, are all that remains inside.
 - When finished, the building will be fully functional and available to the public to use for special events as well.
 - A number of inquiries for use of the building for community purposes have already come in.
 - Regarding J. Providakes' question re a larger parking area, Mr. Rockwood said this is a work in progress, with discussion ongoing with Town Manager Robert Pontbriand.



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- Mr. Pontbriand and Town Counsel concluded that the portion of the parcel not currently owned by SPSA – about a third of it – belongs to the Town.
 - SPSA therefore only has to deal with the Town where there is encroachment onto the Town-owned portion – which may include the ADA parking spaces.
 - It should be an easy matter to get temporary authorization from the Select Board upon presentation of a finished plan.
 - SPSA is awaiting the final plan's completion.
 - For the additional parking, they are hoping for assistance from the Ayer Department of Public Works (DPW) in terms of what could be done with the rest of the parcel.
 - The DPW has estimated that the maximum capacity for additional parking would be 26 spaces, which Mr. Rockwood said was more than they would probably want.
 - SPSA lost out on its Mass. Preservation Grant because of the title problem that had arisen (in legally transferring ownership from the initial group of trustees who purchased the building in 1906 to the more formal entity of the 'Association'); that is now resolved.
 - B. Schwarzel asked about the status of the partial 'street' behind the building, and Mr. Rockwood said its disposition is still up in the air and that Mr. Pontbriand and Town Counsel are working on it.
- **COMMITTEE UPDATES**
 - Housing Authority (J. Providakes)
 - A public forum/information session on the future of housing in Ayer will be held at 5:30 p.m., on October 19 – with free pizza – at Town Hall, sponsored by the Affordable Housing Committee.
 - Historical Commission (B. Schwarzel)
 - The Commission will be participating in the third annual Newton Street Folk & Arts Festival on Saturday, October 7.
 - They hope to also stir interest in the formation of an Ayer Historical Society.
 - Conservation Commission (J. Gugino)
 - ConCom will also have an information table up at the Oct. 7 Festival.
 - Parks & Recreation (J. Mayo)
 - Final design plans have been received from BETA, and the playground equipment has been ordered.
 - They are also repurposing some of the tree trunks taken down during the remediation process.



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- The trunks are stored at an Ayer resident's saw mill where they can be milled for use in the future 'adventure' play area.
- While they hope to break ground soon for the playground's reconstruction, J. Mayo wanted to address some of the misconceptions that have sprung up in resident Facebook discussions.
 - While it may seem to some that they are behind schedule, the initial plan was to rebuild in 2 or 3 phases over several years.
 - That changed when funding was successfully sought at Spring Town Meeting (2023) to accomplish the rebuilding in one single phase.
 - They are still therefore in good shape to complete Kiddie Junction within the original timeframe of the multi-phased project.
- J. Mayo also said a copy of the final plans will not only be posted to the Parks webpage, but also to the Ayer Community Facebook page where more people seem to look for information.
- Planning Board (J. Murray)
 - A West Main Street apartment development is currently undergoing Site Plan Review.
- **7:53 P.M. Adjourn Meeting**
 - CPC's next meeting: Wednesday, October 4, 2023, 7 p.m.
 - **VOTE:** J. Gugino moved to adjourn; B. Schwarzel 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously 5-0.

Minutes Recorded and Submitted by Jessica G. Gugino, Clerk

Date / Signature Indicating CPC Approval: 10/4/2023

