



Town of Ayer
Community Preservation Committee
Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432
Minutes for 11/1/2023

Location: Remote Meeting via Zoom, accessible to the public

Members present: Janet Providakes, Chair (Housing Authority, Affordable Housing Committee); Beth Suedmeyer (At Large); Barry Schwarzel (Historical Commission); Jess Gugino, Clerk (Conservation Commission); Jason Mayo (Parks & Recreation); Colleen Krieser (At Large/Affordable Housing Trust)

Not present: Julie Murray, Vice-Chair (Planning Board)

APAC taped: Yes

7:00 PM – Open Meeting

• **In Memoriam**

- J. Providakes opened the meeting with a moment of silence for the passing on 10/28 of resident Carole Tillis, one of the early members of CPC when it was first formed.
 - A memorial service is to be held on Saturday, November 11, at 10 a.m., at First Church Unitarian on Foster Street in Littleton.
 - Carole will be missed by many.

• **Confirmation of Agenda**

- **VOTE:** B. Suedmeyer moved to confirm the agenda as posted; C. Krieser 2nd.
 - Motion approved by Roll Call Vote 5-0, with J. Mayo not responding.

• **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- **VOTE:** B. Schwarzel moved to accept the minutes for 10/4/2023 as amended; C. Krieser 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote 6-0.

• **Correspondence / Invoices**

- Sandy Pond Schoolhouse Association (SPSA) Phase II Restoration and Preservation Work, Grant (FTM 2020, \$187,340)
 - An invoice for \$11,700, involving change of order work, has been approved for payment to contractor Gerard O'Doherty.
- Ayer Public Library Digitization of *The Public Spirit/Nashoba Valley Voice*, 1869-2021 (\$25,000, STM 2022)
 - An invoice for the digitization of *The Public Spirit* for the period from 1992-2005, for \$4920, has been paid to Advantage Archives LLC.

• **Public Participation**

- None received.



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CURRENT BUSINESS

- **Ayer Affordable Housing Trust Grant (\$200,000, FTM 2023)**
 - Fall Town Meeting voters approved the Article for funding the Trust with a \$200,000 grant to be allocated:
 - \$72,000 – Rental Assistance Program (RAP)
 - \$3,000 – Administrative expenses (including annually required external audit)
 - \$125,000 – Trust Fund (for housing property purchases)
 - Given the greater complexity of this grant, J. Providakes used the Community Preservation Coalition’s template for CPA grant agreements.
 - The draft was reviewed with a couple minor edits, including changing the ‘progress report to CPC’ requirement from 6 months to 1 year.
 - B. Suedmeyer asked if use of the Trust for property purchases would be a publicly transparent process.
 - J. Providakes said some sort of Public Hearing or Forum would be required by the Affordable Housing Committee before the Committee made any final decisions.
 - **VOTE:** B. Suedmeyer moved to forward the draft Grant Agreement for the Ayer Affordable Housing Trust to Town Counsel for their review; B. Schwarzel 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote 6-0.
 - J. Providakes said, going forward, that she would be using the Coalition’s template for future grant agreements.
- **Other CPC Grant Agreements**
 - J. Providakes has received comments back from Town Manager Robert Pontbriand and will soon be providing the Grant Agreements for several previously-approved projects for CPC final review:
 - Pirone Park Playground Remediation and Restoration, Phase II, 0 Bligh Street. Ayer Parks Department (\$750,000, STM 2023)
 - Ayer Public Library Digitization of *The Public Spirit/Nashoba Valley Voice*, 1869-2021 (\$25,000, STM 2022)
 - Flannagan Pond Public Access Feasibility Study (\$25,000, STM 2022)
 - Ayer Affordable Housing Trust Grant (\$60,000, STM 2022)

NEW BUSINESS

- **Executive Session Possibility**
 - As a heads-up, J Providakes said there might be a need for CPC members to hold a special Executive Session meeting in the next few weeks to discuss the results of some property appraisals that were received completed.



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• **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- Housing Authority, Affordable Housing Committee (J. Providakes)
 - The Housing Authority is reviewing its current budgets.
 - The Affordable Housing Committee held a Public Forum on the future of housing in Ayer on Thursday, 10/19.
 - There were over 30 attendees who provided valuable feedback on the need for affordable housing, especially for people who work in Ayer (e.g. work force, fire fighters), given the increasingly rising costs in the housing market as Massachusetts residents continue to move west of Boston.
 - The forum was recorded by APAC (Ayer Public Access Corporation).
 - Other issues, such as the Town's and the environment's "carrying capacity" were raised during the forum.
 - J. Providakes said DPW Director Dan Van Schalkwyk had been present at the forum and had told those present that the DPW was in the process of exploring for a new well field for municipal water, as well as addressing the current reduction in water output from the treatment plant brought about by the installation of filters for PFAS contaminants.
 - Later, during the course of the CPC meeting, Information Technology consultant Cindy Knox confirmed to CPC that she had just posted the "2023 Public Forum" link on the Affordable Housing Committee's Town website page.
 - The link takes the viewer to APAC's YouTube channel recording of the forum.
 - B. Schwarzel said the video recording should also be available on APAC's website as well.
- Affordable Housing Trust (C. Krieser)
 - The Trust met last week and expressed their appreciation for the passage of the Fall Town Meeting Article.
 - They are now getting ready to begin review of the next round of applications for rental assistance, and considering whether the median affordable income numbers need to be updated.
- Conservation Commission (J. Gugino)
 - The Ayer Solar II project off Washington Street is now substantially complete but has received a one-year extension of its Order of Conditions that will allow adjustments to be made to the two wetland mitigation areas



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on site next year, based on monitoring results for the success of the second growing season.

- The Commission is also reviewing a Notice of Intent filing for 71 Sandy Pond Road (diagonally across from the Town Beach), where the new owner proposes to subdivide the 2.2+ acre parcel into two residential lots, and to construct a duplex on each lot.
 - One lot would have frontage on Sandy Pond Road and the other on Snake Hill Road.
 - One positive result would be the net reduction in impervious surface, given most of the area fronting the two roads is currently paved over, with an existing building that will also be demolished.
 - This project is also going before the Planning Board for subdividing the parcel into the two lots, and before the Zoning Board of Appeals for a Special Permit to build duplexes in the A-2 residential zone.
- Historical Commission (B. Schwarzel)
 - A grant application for a sign to be posted on the Rail Trail (showing a map of the trail in Ayer as well as noting historical sites in Ayer) has now been submitted to the Massachusetts Cultural Council.
 - Maggie Durand is gathering details for the Oral History project: what waivers are needed, how to solicit interviewees, what questions to ask them.
- Parks & Recreation (J. Mayo)
 - The Parks Department is about to sign a contract with Cella Construction for the Pirone Park Playground rebuild.
 - Six bids were received.
 - It is hoped that a preconstruction meeting will take place in the next week or so.
 - The contractor can probably start on land preparation before winter weather and snow set in, but it will be too cold to pour concrete until next year.
 - About \$700,000 has been spent on ordering the equipment for the new playground.
 - Another approximately \$300,000 has been paid to a local company, Brad Spinney's Lighthouse Treeworks, to mill the trees downed as part of the clean-up/mitigation work.
 - J. Mayo said it is pretty amazing both how much and what Mr. Spinney has been able to produce (benches, platforms, etc.) for use in creating a separate nature play area.



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- Volunteers from the High School helped with weather-sealing the wood products; they are expected to last 15 years or so.
 - J. Mayo said Parks was confident it was still on track to meet its projected timeline for completion next year, and is still on budget as well.
- Open Space Update/Nashua River Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council (B. Suedmeyer)
 - The Grand Opening for the Nashua River Trail and adjacent Pollinator Meadow took place recently.
 - The trail, located off MacPherson Road, near the junction of Macpherson and Bishop roads, includes interpretive signage.
 - Both the trail and the meadow were funded through a community grant from the Nashua River Stewardship Council
 - This and other local initiatives, such as “Friends of Woodlands and Waters,” shows how successful the collaboration between towns such as Devens and Ayer, and organizations such as Oxbow, can be.
 - The Nashua River Stewardship Council will soon be opening up its next round of community grant applications.
 - Ayer has already benefitted as the recipient of several grants from this annual program.
- Planning Board (J. Murray)
 - No report.
- **7:52 PM – Adjourn Meeting**
 - CPC’s Next Meeting: December 6, 2023, 7 p.m.
 - J. Providakes cannot make the next meeting but will check with Vice Chair Julie Murray to see if she wants to run it.
 - If CPC winds up having a special Executive Session in the next few weeks, it may not be necessary to have a December meeting at all.
 - **VOTE:** B. Suedmeyer moved to adjourn; B. Schwarzel 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously 6-0.

Minutes Recorded and Submitted by Jessica G. Gugino, Clerk

Date / Signature Indicating Approval: 1/3/2024 