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TOWN OF AYER

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Town of Ayer
Community Preservation Committee

Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432

Minutes for 5/3/2017 - Approved 6/7/2017

Location: Town Hall, 1st Floor until 6:45 (APAC taped); 2nd Floor 6:45 – 8:38 (Not taped)

Members present: Janet Providakes (JP) [Housing Authority]- Chair, Beth Suedmeyer (BAS) [At Large], Barry Schwarzel (BES) [Historical Commission], Richard Durand (RD) [Parks & Recreation], Jess Gugino (JG) [Conservation Commission]- Clerk, Julie Murray (JM) [At Large]

Not present: Mark Fermanian (MF) [Planning Board],

APAC taped: YES (for Public Hearing from 6-6:45 p.m.)

6:05 PM – Open Meeting

- **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- JM moved to accept minutes for 4/5/2017 with a slight format adjustment; RD 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.

- **Correspondence / Bills**

- Public Hearing notices

- Nashoba Valley Voice: \$420.64, for ads running twice each, for Pleasant Street School Generator and for Pirone Park Perimeter Path.
- RD moved to approve payment of \$420.64; JM 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.

- Sandy Pond School Association (SPSA) Conditions Assessment Project

- Spencer & Vogt Group: \$1447.50, treatment recommendations for cyclical maintenance plan and final report.
 - Irv Rockwood, Vice President of SPSA, has told JP that this is the next-to-last invoice for this project.
 - JP has a copy of the Conditions Assessment which runs to 80 pages, not including photographs and appendices.
 - BES moved to approve payment of \$1447.50; RD 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.
- JP said that Mr. Rockwood also reported that SPSA is working on putting together grant/funding proposals for next spring to three funding sources:
 - Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)
 - Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts
 - CPC
- The Phase I funding sought next spring will be for emergency repairs, as indicated by the Conditions Assessment, and is currently estimated to cost \$110,886.
 - As detailed by Mr. Rockwood at CPC's 4/5 meeting, these priority repairs would be for the 1) foundation; 2) masonry; 3) ceiling repair; and 4) roof replacement.



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- In addition, JP read SPSA's announcement that they will be holding an Open House on Saturday, May 13, from noon to 4 p.m.
- **Public Hearing: Ayer Community Dog Park, Request for \$20,000 CPA Funding**
 - Mark Wetzel, Superintendent of the Ayer Department of Public Works (DPW), presented the formal funding application, as previously discussed in detail at CPC's 4/5 meeting.
 - The ADA-compliant dog park is a joint effort by DPW and Ayer Parks Commission.
 - Location: Snake Hill Road, between B & M railroad tracks and Fox Run Drive.
 - (Assessor's Map 36, Lots 214 and 218, aka 'Parcel H-1'.)
 - This is a Town-owned property contributed by Crabtree Development as part of the Planning Board's subdivision agreement for Pingry Hill about 10 years ago.
 - The parcel was originally intended to be used for soccer fields but Parks & Recreation did not wish to pursue this use.
 - The Town has received a grant from the Stanton Foundation which has a dog park funding program.
 - The grant has already covered design costs, will cover 90% of construction costs, and will also provide an additional 5% for future improvements.
 - Mr. Wetzel said the construction costs are estimated to be \$200,000, leading to a CPA funding request of \$20,000 to fulfill the Stanton Foundation's requirement of 10% of these costs provided locally.
 - The CPA category this application applies under is "Recreation."
 - In addition, Mr. Wetzel said that Crabtree Development, to fulfill the original agreement for soccer fields, will be contributing work on clearing, grading, drainage structures, parking area construction, and some plantings.
 - The dog park will feature two fenced-in dog play areas (big dog/small dog); parking for 15 vehicles, including handicapped parking; 5-ft. high fencing; double-gated entrances; concrete walkways to the park gate; 4-inch deep rice stone in dog play areas; dog park appurtenances (benches, water fountain, shade structure, bag stations, refuse containers, lighting in parking area).
 - Maintenance for the dog park will be done by the DPW, although a Friends of Ayer Dog Park group will provide day-to-day monitoring and oversight.
 - It will be open dawn to dusk; rules of use will be posted.
 - The dog park creates an exercise and socialization area for Ayer's 600+ registered dogs; promotes responsible dog ownership; and creates the opportunity for social interactions between dog owners.



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- The project has received endorsements from the Town Administrator, Parks Commission, Conservation Commission, Community & Economic Development, and the Friends of Ayer Dogs.
- BAS said she would like to see a breakdown of the construction costs at some point.
- BES moved to forward the funding request for \$20,000 to Spring Town Meeting (5/8/17) for a final vote; RD 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.
 - A Warrant Article already exists for this proposal, which was pending CPC approval following the Public Hearing, now given.
- RD moved to close the Public Hearing; JM 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.

[Brief recess following the Public Hearing while CPC moved from the first floor to the second floor to make room for a Board of Selectmen meeting.]

- **Discussion: Ayer Central Fire Station, Washington Street**
 - Alan Manoian, Director of Community & Economic Development, discussed the latest developments.
 - He previously discussed this building in detail at CPC's 2/1/2017 meeting.
 - The fire station was built in 1934, designed by George Ernest Robinson, known in his time as the "father of modern fire station design."
 - The building is therefore historically significant.
 - It does not, however, qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places because of the addition of two side wings in 1970 and 1996.
 - The Town has been trying to save and re-purpose this building for over ten years.
 - When Mr. Manoian was hired a year ago, both the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen directed him to continue the effort to find a way to restore and preserve the historic building.
 - A second RFP issued in February resulted in 3 proposals to purchase, indicating greater market interest in the historic structure.
 - A review group rated the proposals.
 - The highest scoring one was submitted by Conrad and Kelsey Donell, of C. Donell Homes, Inc., in Shirley.
 - Mr. Donell has been an Ayer resident and his daughter Kelsey is a graduate of Ayer High School, so their local interest runs high.
 - The Donell's propose to restore the building and its historical facade, and convert its use for 7 residential units.



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- To this end, the Town is submitting a grant application to DHCD (the Mass. Dept. of Housing & Community Development) for \$500,000.
 - DHCD provides \$125,000 per unit for low and moderate income units, provided that 51% of the units in a building complex are designated for low/moderate income housing.
 - The Donell's are planning for 4 of the 7 units to be low/moderate income.
 - The other 3 units would be market rate and not covered by a DHCD grant.
- Unlike the other two proposals received, the Donell's want to restore the building.
 - While they would keep the two wing additions, they would want to redo them with arched bay doors consistent with 1930s architectural vernacular.
- If the Town's application for the DHCD grant is successful, Mr. Manoian said that an application for \$30,000 or so in CPA funding would likely follow.
 - This funding, if approved, would be earmarked for urgently needed restoration work on the cupola, stepped gables, and slate roof.
 - That this restoration work would meet the U. S. Dept. of Interior Standards would be a written stipulation in the contractual agreement between the Town and the Donell's.
- The Town is currently at the stage of working on a draft Purchase & Sale Agreement with the Donell's, contingent on receiving the DHCD grant.
 - BAS suggested that CPC might consider a larger funding amount if restrictions were put into the contract requiring that all of the work on the building envelope meet the Interior Standards as far as possible.
 - Mr. Manoian plans to encourage that a Preservation Restriction (PR) be part of the Purchase & Sale agreement.
- If the DHCD grant is received, the Town would be the recipient and would be responsible for inspecting work performed before approving payments.
 - This provides the Town with good control over the restoration process.
- The timetable for the DHCD grant requires the pre-application to be submitted within the next 3 weeks.
 - Mr. Manoian said they expect to know by late August or early September.
- In the meantime, Mr. Manoian asked whether CPC would be willing to write a letter to the DHCD, accompanying the application, expressing CPC's preliminary support.
 - CPC can't give an official vote of support until after an application has been made to CPC and a Public Hearing held, but a preliminary expression would help to provide a competitive edge to the DHCD application.



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- The letter would express CPC's support for the opportunity to help enable the preservation and restoration of significant architectural elements of the historic building.
- The letter should mention that restoration of the fire station has been an interest of the Town's for many years.
 - It was specifically mentioned, for example, in CPC's "Community Preservation Plan 2010-2014" (pages 22 and 27) under the "Profile of Ayer's Historic Resources."
- BAS moved to have CPC submit a letter supporting the grant application to DHCD for future work to support the preservation and restoration of the historic Ayer Central Fire Station; BES 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.
- JP reviewed the time table from CPC's perspective.
 - Mr. Manoian indicated that if the DHCD grant is awarded to Ayer in late summer, work would begin immediately to restore the building.
 - The cupola and stepped gables are in such poor shape that it is doubtful the building could go through another winter without significantly more degradation.
 - To have a CPA funding request ready for a vote at Fall Town Meeting, CPC would need to see the application process begin over the summer, prior to the probable time at which the DHCD grant would be awarded.
 - CPC would need to have the full application for its August meeting so that it could hold a Public Hearing in September at the latest.
 - Fall Town Meeting takes place in October.
- **Discussion: Open Space Opportunities and Land Trust Information**
 - Laurie Nehring was present to address CPC.
 - Emily's Way (undeveloped land between Groton-Harvard Road and Highland Avenue) Assessor's Map 27/parcels 1 & 2
 - 4.5 acres have been offered to the Town for \$225000.
 - The Board of Selectmen has authorized funding an independent appraisal.
 - Ms. Nehring said that the Groton Conservation Trust might be willing to hold a "Conservation Restriction" (CR) on the parcel if acquired by Ayer.
 - Groton Conservation Trust already owns land in Ayer adjacent to James Brook.
 - BAS also noted that efforts to get Ayer back into the North County Land Trust have been made as well.
 - Regarding Emily's Way, Ms. Nehring spoke of the adjacency of this parcel to the 5.5 acre Huidlin property, which in turn is adjacent to a 3 acre parcel



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already owned by the Town, as well as to some undeveloped parcels that the Sifakis family has expressed an interest in keeping as open space.

- JP deferred further discussion until after the Town's independent appraisal comes back.

○ Ayer Solar II

- Assessor's Map 4/parcel 39, Map 12/parcel 1, and Map 13/parcel 1 & 2
- JP cited the 4/14/17 email from Town Administrator Robert Pontbriand stating that the official "Notice of Intent to Convert to Solar Energy Facility Use" had been received by the Town for parcel 39 (Assessor's Map 4).
 - This parcel has been under Ch. 61 tax protection; notice of intent to convert is a legal requirement and gives the Town 30 days to conduct an appraisal if it wishes to act on its right of first refusal to purchase.
 - Ayer's Town Counsel has confirmed that the notice is legally sufficient, meaning that the 30-day clock started on 4/14.
- JP said that the Board of Selectmen has not heard any interest in acquiring the property except from abutting resident Ken Diskin, of 180 Washington Street.
 - Mr. Diskin, present for CPC's meeting, said his understanding was that the BOS started the appraisal process automatically but JP corrected that misperception as no appraisal has yet been authorized.
- Parcel 39 is the land-locked parcel on which the solar array would be located.
- JG outlined information learned at the Conservation Commission's first Public Hearing on this project, on 4/27/17.
 - Access to the parcel would be from Groton-Harvard Road, constructing a long driveway, across two adjoining parcels owned by the Wilder family.
 - The developer is working out a Purchase-and-Sale agreement to acquire these two parcels for construction of a lengthy access driveway to the array site (Parcels 1-12; 1 & 2-13)
 - This area is within the Petapawag ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern) and contains significant wetlands.
 - The driveway would require filling approximately 4300 sq. ft. of wetland.
 - This is under the 5000 sq. ft. limit allowed for filling in an ACEC if a project is designated a "Limited Project."
 - The application before ConCom claims Limited Project status.
 - Because of the complexity of the project, its claimed status as a Limited Project, and environmental concerns, ConCom has asked for review of the project by a 3rd party consultant.
 - This will extend the application process.



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- Mr. Diskin described the area and why the Town should consider exercising its right of first refusal option for this parcel.
 - An abandoned Town road (a 'paper' road) along the northern edge of the parcels is used as an active walking path for hikers and bikers.
 - This path runs from Groton-Harvard Road and eventually connects to a larger trail before reaching the Rail Trail.
 - The 3 parcels for the solar array project as a whole (noting that only parcel 4-39 would be available under Ch. 61 provisions) are forest and wetland, completely undeveloped.
- After discussion, JG moved to have JP contact Town Administrator Pontbriand to express CPC's interest in having an appraisal done; RD 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.
- It was hoped that with the 3rd party consultant process being invoked by the Conservation Commission, Calvin Moore, who owns parcel 4-39, might be willing to grant an extension to the 30-day appraisal deadline for the property coming out of Ch. 61.
- 26 Oak Ridge Drive
 - Per CPC's discussion on 4/5, JP reached out to the DPW and Parks & Rec.
 - The DPW cannot do anything with this lot; Jeff Thomas, of Parks & Rec, also recommended against trying to purchase the quarter-acre parcel.
- Keystone Project Training
 - Anyone can apply for acceptance into this program, running every spring.
 - It is a 4-day training session, taking place in the Harvard Forest, in Petersham, MA.
 - It focuses on forest ecology and management, wildlife management, and land conservation.
 - Ms. Nehring will forward information about this training opportunity to JP.
- **8:38 PM – Adjourn Meeting**
 - CPC's Next Meeting: June 7, 2017, 6 p.m.
 - RD moved to adjourn; JM 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.

Minutes Recorded and Submitted by Jessica G. Gugino, Clerk
Date Minutes Approved by Community Preservation Committee:

6/7/2017 Jessica G. Gugino, Clerk