



Community Preservation Committee

January 8, 2020
7:00pm

Present: Larry Lindner, Chair of the Community Preservation Committee; Dan White; Vice Chair; Robert Mosher, Vicki Donlan, Kirsten Moore, Kevin Burke, Bill Harrington & Judy Sneath

Call to order: 7:04pm

Mr. Larry Lindner

Larry welcomed everyone to the first of two nights of final presentations for this year's applicants for CPC funding that will be applicable for FY2021. He thanked the public for accepting the CPC tax surcharge, which makes the funding of these projects possible. He made an announcement that changed the agenda for this night's meeting. He stated that the Executive Director of the Community Preservation Coalition, the body that procedurally informs and guides all the municipalities in Massachusetts, has said that the Benjamin Lincoln Statue project is ineligible for CPC funding. He said that the problem is that the project was submitted as a recreational project, but, by law, a recreational project must be situated on dedicated park land. He stated that he was advised that the spot chosen for the project does not fit that designation. He stated that there was communication from the Executive Director of the Community Preservation Coalition in the Committee members' packets explaining why his office feels that this project is ineligible. He stated that he felt that he had no choice but not to move ahead with considering that project. He said that he was told that if the Town chose to move ahead with funding that project, the Town could be at risk of losing their CPC funding match from the State. He apologized for the late notice of this and said that he was surprised to hear the news. He added that he would like to allow comments regarding the eligibility of the project. There were some concerns and comments from the Committee objecting to removing the project from consideration at this time. Some Committee members thought they should proceed with the posted agenda, which included discussion of the Benjamin Lincoln Statue project. Larry said he was waiting to get legal advice from Town counsel regarding the eligibility of the project. The ultimate decision of the Committee was to allow the presentations that were posted on the agenda in accordance with the open meeting law.

He asked if anyone had any other questions and comments. There were none.

Larry stated that this year the CPC has a total of \$1,693,000 to recommend, of which \$489,000 is reserved for debt service. (\$356,000 for the Lehner Land and \$133,000 for the Historical Society's Heritage Museum), leaving the CPC with a total of \$1,204,000. He added that a minimum of \$169,300 (10% of the total available funds) must be allotted to the Hingham Affordable Housing Trust.

Applicants' Presentations (televised)

Amount Requested

Lehner Conservation Area Improvements

\$21,754

Loni Fournier of the Conservation Commission presented. She said that, since her last presentation, it has been suggested that she look into alternatives to a fence on the property. She said that she did some research that she wanted to share. She presented the Committee with alternative quotes from a fence company for posts to mark the property boundaries at different intervals. Judy asked if Loni would like to give a brief overview of the property. Loni said that, when the public arrives on the property, there are no clear boundaries to assist the public as to where they should walk. She also suggested that the abutting property owners should stop mowing on Town property, which only further confuses the public as to the property boundaries. She added that the total scope of the project includes surveying for the fence, installing the two informational kiosks and the installation of the fence. She said that if posts are installed 10' apart they would be unable to add rails in the future and the cost would be \$10,961. She said that she is interested in installing posts that could have rails added to them in the future to make it into a fence.

Dan asked if she had spoken with the abutters regarding the Conservation Commission's plan. She said that she had spoken with them and they seemed somewhat relieved to think that there may be an alternative to a fence.

Kevin asked if they had thought of placing the posts at 16 feet apart, allowing for the opportunity to add another post at every 8 feet in the future with the opportunity to add posts. Loni was receptive to this solution.

Vicki asked why there is a survey cost. Loni explained that there was a survey when the property was purchased but that someone had removed the property stakes so it would have to be done again.

Dan asked if there was some sort of Master Plan for the property and if we know how many people a fence would be protecting the homeowners from. Loni said that from talking with the homeowners, she is less worried about the people going on their land because they were not so concerned about that, but more with making the property lines visible.

Benjamin Lincoln House

\$972,000

Deidre Anderson, Executive Director of the Historical Society, and Paula Bagger, Chairman of the Historical Society, presented. Paula said that the purchase of this house was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity but she wanted to focus on the opportunities of the three major stakeholders of this project: The Town of Hingham, the descendants of Benjamin Lincoln and the Historical Society.

The Board of Trustees of the Historical Society has accepted the purchase pursuant to the raising of the \$1 million endowment, which would allow for \$40,000 annually to go towards:

utilities, general maintenance, routine operating costs, and paying for a caretaker for the property.

With the generous participation from the Lincoln descendants, they plan to open the house to the public even before the property changes hands. They plan on offering public tours and programming as soon as possible.

She added that the mission of the Historical Society as it relates to the Benjamin Lincoln House is preserving and interpreting the house and its contents and sharing them with the Town. Paula added that they had more than 2,000 visits to their current properties this year. The society is committed to working closely with the Hingham Public Schools and to making the house available to researchers in related fields as well as appropriate programming. They aim to create a historic campus to link many of the historic properties around the downtown area. She added that they are putting together a study group to meet with the new tourism director of Concord, MA, to see how they have preserved their historic downtown.

Paula urged the CPC to fund the purchase with bonding and she asked for full funding from the CPC.

Vicki commented that it was apparent that they had given a lot of thought to a private/public partnership. She asked where their fundraising is today. Paula said that they had raised a little more than \$500,000 and had made progress since the last meeting.

Dan asked if they had asked the homeowners if they could spread out the payments over time. She didn't feel that the homeowners were in a position to do that.

Larry asked why the endowment for this one structure is \$1 million when the endowment for their two current properties is \$900,000. Paula said that it is because their endowment for those properties was underfunded.

Larry said that he had heard that there had been a possibility of allowing interest-free payments to pay for the house in three years rather than all at once. Paula said that she had no such conversations with the homeowners. She also added that the Historical Society had no interest in going into debt in order to purchase the house.

Larry asked if they felt the need to have the entire endowment to be in place at the time of passing papers or if it could be built up over time. Paula said that often the deal is not accepted if an endowment is not in place at the time of purchase.

Kevin asked that, if the CPC was not able to offer the entire purchase price, did the Society have a plan for their next steps? Paula said that they would continue to raise money.

He also asked if it was a possibility that the Town be the purchaser and have the society act as a caretaker. Paula said that it was suggested that the Town didn't want to purchase property.

She said that this has happened in other towns but that it had never happened in Hingham. Deidre added that they have an understanding with the homeowners that this is time-sensitive and that they agreed to take the house off the market in order for the town to make a decision and raise funds. She added that they are not only asking for the funds to purchase a house, but that they are purchasing a museum.

Dan asked if the endowment that they were raising could be used on other things. Paula said that they would agree in writing that it could not be used for other projects.

Kirsten asked about any adverse issues found in the inspector's report. Paula said that the house was in very good repair for a 400-year-old structure. She said that capital projects are outside the realm of what the endowment covers. She also suggested that there could be state grants for any large capital projects that would need to be done.

Keith Jermyn made some remarks about Major General Benjamin Lincoln as a major historical figure for the town of Hingham. He commented that it would be a local, state and national tragedy to let the house slip into private hands

Benjamin Lincoln Statue

\$100,000

Bill Ramsey, 55 North Street, and Alec Macmillan presented

Bill arrived late, and Larry caught him up on what he had learned from the state — that he was told that the project was not eligible for funding but that the majority of the Committee felt that they should keep going as if it were eligible and that next week they would vote whether they felt it was eligible after further discussion. At that time, if the vote went to eligibility, they would then vote on what, if any funds, would be given. Mr. Ramsey gave an overview of the project and added that they have been working closely with the sculptress and the landowner, who had agreed to contribute funds by way of doing all the brickwork. He added that removing the pedestal and making the statue slimmer have reduced costs to about \$170,000. He noted that they have received \$75,000 from the Historic Commission and they continue to receive some donations from the public. He added that they have now gotten the procedural vote from the Board of Selectmen that they needed to move forward.

Alex said that he liked the large scale of the sidewalk location because it was in line with the idea of creating a pedestrian cultural district. He stated that he really felt that this sidewalk location was in line with the idea of passive recreation on open space. He stated that about a year ago a group of people toured the Downtown area to find a good site for the statue. He said that he liked this site because it was here that the first group of Hingham settlers came on land. The other attraction of the site was the location half-way between downtown and the harbor.

Dan asked what Bill's thoughts were about the late breaking developments regarding the eligibility of the project. He had some concerns that he was learning about these 24 hours

before he expected the project to be voted on. (He was not aware that the votes would be a week hence.)

Bill (Harrington) asked how much money Bill has been able to raise at this time. He said that he has the \$75,000 from the Historic Commission and that he didn't have a definitive number on the personal contributions.

Kevin also asked a few questions about the amount of money raised for the project thus far. At this time, Keith Jermyn, Director of Veterans Services, said that the veterans are prepared to donate \$1,000 toward the project.

Larry said that, in the application, they said they would fundraise \$75,000. He explained that the applicant cannot decide just to raise what the CPC isn't able to give them. Bill Ramsey said that the \$75,000 stated in their application was a fundraising goal rather than a promise. Larry explained that the applicator stated it as a promise, a commitment to the Town.

He also clarified that the Community Preservation Coalition is saying that the Hingham CPC cannot fund a statue in that location because the land is not legally dedicated park land with a conservation restriction. He also said that Hingham would be in jeopardy of losing its state CPC match if they were to not comply the law with respect to this location.

Bill Harrington suggested that they proceed as if the project is eligible and make the final decision the following week. There was some ensuing discussion about what is possible in terms of fundraising. Judy said that she felt that numbers do sometime change in the applications.

Kevin asked Bill Ramsey asked why the CPC should do this now and not wait another year to allow Bill Ramsey to raise more money for the project due to the CPC's limited funds. Mr. Ramsey answered that he didn't know if the location would be available in the future. He also felt that waiting may compromise fundraising efforts.

Gary Tondorf-Dick, 1029 Main Street, commented that he was very intrigued by the idea of a historic district downtown and suggested that they speak to the CPA (state) to see if this site could be designated as open space.

Kevin asked if the applicant could get a legal opinion at his burden that could give an opinion as to whether the CPC could move forward. Mr. Ramsey said that he could do so.

Canterbury Street Cemetery

\$40,000

Andrea Young presented. She shared some additional information on the status of the cemetery and communicated that, due to the to the terrible condition of the cemetery, it could not wait another year to be fixed. She gave a brief history of the project and stated that the Town is supportive of the project. She added that the Selectmen have approved a line item in her budget specifically for cemetery maintenance. She showed some photos of the

deterioration since 2001, which appeared to be very significant. She also showed some pictures of a similar project in an attempt to show what could be done at the Canterbury site. She added that she felt that this is an urgent request at this point. She said that the headstones are made of slate and are easily broken and are being trampled on, which is adding to the breakage.

Judy asked what she meant by “getting them started.” Andrea added that she would need to obtain more grants in order to complete the entire restoration project. Judy asked if more deterioration would continue after the CPC gave them funds. Andrea suggested that more deterioration probably would not happen because the broken pieces will be gathered up and stored. She added that her hope is that once it is cleaned up, respect for the location will be restored.

Mr. Keith Jermyn, 104 Kilby Street, speaking as a neighbor of the cemetery, stated that there are some MA General Laws relating to the care and protection of abandoned burial grounds suggesting that any cemetery that has been abandoned should be restored and read some quotes from MA General Law. He suggested that the repair and upkeep of the cemetery is a moral issue. Andrea added that she did feel a sense of urgency with respect to the project.

Gary Tondorf-Dick made some comments regarding to stewardship of old cemeteries in Town. He celebrated Andrea’s dedication to this project. He also wanted to share that he was the chair of the Liberty Plain Cemetery. He added that, from his experience, he feels that when people know that there is an active caretaker present, people are more likely to respect the area. He felt that, if people knew that a restoration was taking place, then they would step up and help. He felt that the restoration of the cemetery couldn’t wait.

Painting of Tree & Park Barn

\$45,000

Andrea Young presented. She stated that it is one of the iconic buildings in our Town and is in desperate need of being painted. She said that at the last meeting there was a discussion of why the Town wasn’t keeping up the property. She said that the Town is doing some upkeep and that the tenant, Dick Orr, has been doing his best to repair what he can and that the Town has been able to restore the windows.

Kirsten said that she agreed that the barn is in rough shape and asked the last time it was painted. She also asked if any care or maintenance had been done to any of the spots that were peeling. Andrea stated that the building had been last painted in 2013 and that there had not been any maintenance done by the Town that she knew of.

Vicki made a motion to adjourn. Dan seconded. All were in favor 8-0.
Meeting adjourned: 9:10PM.