



Town of Watertown Community Preservation Committee

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Elodia Thomas, Chair
Jonathan Bockian
Jason Cohen
Bob DiRico
Dennis J. Duff
Mark Krackiewicz
Allen Gallagher
Maria Rose
Susan Steele

Community Preservation Coordinator Interviews

Minutes: Thursday, October 24, 2019, 3rd Floor Conference Room, Town Council Chamber, 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Elodia Thomas, Chair, Jonathan Bockian, Bob DiRico, Dennis J. Duff, Susan Steele. **Absent:** Jason Cohen, Allen Gallagher, Mark Krackiewicz, Maria Rose.

Others Present: Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner, Leo Martin, Chair, Con Com

1. Call to order

Elodia Thomas, Chair, called the special interim meeting of the Community Preservation Committee to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. Candidates for the Community Preservation Coordinator Position

First Interview - Deb Perry

Susan Steele prefaced her question by saying that the CPC would like a robust monitoring program, an inclusive process, and good outreach. She then asked Deb to give two examples of being able to monitor and see around corners. Deb responded that the CPC has an excellent, very experienced consultant, and that there should be a multi-faceted approach that includes a community committee to get the word out, a living plan to keep people interested, and a living process/continuous inclusive process that includes a yearly review. She gave a real project example (energy efficiency upgrades to federal buildings) of monitoring and communication, and noted that real-life construction doesn't always meet timelines, and that her biggest challenge was working with big federal money.

Bob DiRico asked why Deb was interested in the position. Deb said that she is interested in improving communities. She had stepped away from an intense job due to having a small child, took a break, and started looking at opportunities that were a downshift -- part-time, close to home, community-based. The fact that this is a plan that has funding to improve the community is very attractive to her.

Jon Bockian asked what she viewed as the key tasks in the coming year. Deb said that being a managing consultant and the point of contact for the CPC, keeping the process on time,

supporting the CPC, making sure the CPC has resources, being a conduit for communication, and being a public face in the community, as well as getting to know town processes would all be key tasks.

Elodia Thomas asked about the highlights and/or lowlights of working with a variety of constituents. Deb replied that different things work in different towns. It would be important to know what currently works in Watertown and to have a strategy for communication, priority identification, and inclusion.

Jon Bockian asked about Deb's experience with outreach and writing skills. Deb said that she has been told that she is a strong writer and that she has written grants and marketing pieces. She has also written a lot of fact sheets and that she has been successful in breaking things down for the general public, avoiding the heavy use of technical jargon. She has written short pieces for websites, as well as one-page handouts, and a lot of case studies. She would give herself a fairly good grade on those materials.

Elodia Thomas asked how Deb's background ties to the various funding categories of the CPA. Deb answered that affordable housing is where she has the most to learn. She has worked with HUD to provide tech support and capacity building to Sustainable Communities Grantees around energy efficiencies. She has never worked for an affordable housing agency and that she has some learning to do here. She also said that she is not an expert on historical preservation, but likes to restore old homes as a hobby, and has funded several archeological studies, and has been involved with the rehab of an old opera house regarding energy efficiency. Regarding open space and recreation, she has worked on parks, community facilities, and playgrounds.

Susan Steele asked Deb how she deals with angry people and conflict. She stated that while she never had to deal with an angry public, she has dealt with a disappointed public. Deb gave an example of dealing with a well-organized oppositional group and a series of trainings she ran on how to deal with this group. If encountering community anger, she suggested focusing on small group settings, or face-to-face meetings to hear everybody's opinions, but control the delivery and crowd size.

Bob DiRico asked about Deb's social media skills. She explained that her previous projects had social media presence, but she had social media staff, so she didn't manage the accounts. She added that she helped with the messaging that was going out, but she wasn't the one posting information.

Elodia Thomas asked Deb if she had any questions for the CPC. Deb asked about big things happening in town that will intersect with CPC. Elodia Thomas discussed the three elementary school and high school building projects, major street construction projects, the press of business/housing development, transportation and traffic issues. In summary, she said the town has been coping with a lot change which leaves some residents feeling both psychologically and physically displaced. A key task for the CPC will be to get through the noise of what's going on in town.

Dennis Duff mentioned potential sale of the Athena Health property. Gideon Schreiber added some info about the Historic District. Jon Bockian mentioned that all the development puts more pressure on housing affordability. Susan Steele added that Watertown is a very diverse community, but both long-time residents and newer residents don't necessarily feel connected to the town. Bob DiRico added that there are big park projects scheduled, like Victory Field

Phase II, Arsenal Park, and Filippello Park. Dennis Duff said traffic is a huge issue, as well as airplane noise.

After Deb finished asking her questions, Elodia Thomas asked about her proficiency with software. Deb answered that she had run mini-grant programs, in which she used tracking software. She has also used custom built databases.

Second Interview - Lanae Handy

Susan Steele asked about Lanae's management of process, particularly grant management, making sure things are moving along, monitoring construction projects, process of engaging community, making sure it's robust, making sure everyone feels involved. Lanae responded that she has guided people through the proposal experience and answered questions both with regard to the rehab of housing and open space preservation. Susan Steele followed up by asking Lanae to speak about effective ways to keep outreach going in a very diverse community. Lanae explained that people who are involved always have an idea of what's going on. People who are harder to reach by age, ethnic group, or special communities can be reached through social media, church groups, and affiliation groups, social events.

Dennis Duff asked Lanae to talk about her work with the Department of Capital Planning and Operations (DCPO). Lanae answered that it was a start-up under Governor Weld; Charlie Baker was also involved. It was a lease purchase program with the Department of Developmental Disabilities moving inpatients to small group homes. She worked on the process from beginning to end -- proposals, technical assistance, construction monitoring, and shepherding paperwork. She said it was very bureaucratic - dealing with the comptroller, legal counsel, qualifying builders and suppliers - to make sure everything was done properly.

Elodia Thomas asked how Lanae would tie her background to the various CPA funding categories. Lanae said that most of her experience has been in open space preservation, but also with soliciting proposals for group homes (housing) and community development assistance corporation for HUD (housing in expiring use phase). Her work for the South End Lower Roxbury Open Space Land Trust brought her in contact with many community groups including the South End Historic District.

Bob DiRico asked why she was interested in the position. Lanae answered that she had recently been a dirty planner (nonprofits, writing proposals, fundraising, donor management), and she was looking for more pure planning which had real funding attached to it for open space preservation, housing, and historic preservation and being part of a coalition supporting the CPA.

Jon Bockian asked what she thought her key tasks would be in her first year. Lanae said it would depend on which route you take -- the core programs or the core program plus pilot programs route. Community outreach piece and getting quality proposals is most important.

Susan Steele asked how the CPC would do that. Lanae explained that balancing municipal projects, nonprofits, and encouraging partnerships are ways to ensure good proposals and applications.

Elodia Thomas asked how Lanae would juggle the diverse group of stakeholders. Lanae said her style is to be respectful and listen, and it has served her pretty well. Everybody's opinions, thoughts, and ideas are valid, and if you treat them that way, it works out pretty well. Solicit

input from as many people as possible. If people don't feel they've had a chance to contribute, they don't buy in.

Susan Steele asked what Lanae would need from the CPC, what she would want to see happen, what she would want to organize during her first couple of weeks on the job. Lanae answered that she has the Goldson timeline and scope of work, so that's helpful. Initially, it would be some of the technical things about space, resources, where I would be setting up work. Then, it's important to know the philosophy of the CPC, what they are interested in getting through the process. Is there interest in a mix of projects from different categories, municipal projects, big groups, small groups, nonprofits? What are you looking to gain when you select a project?

Jon Bockian asked Lanae if she could think of a work situation where she disagreed with her supervisor or elected officials and how she handled it. Lanae said that when she worked for the state, she would butt heads with the head of her department because she felt that the mission was to build the homes and move clients into group homes, not bureaucracy. Within the limits of bureaucracy, she tried to speed up the process.

Bob DiRico asked which role is she proudest of. Lanae answered the Woodlands campaign for Franklin Park. She explained that residents noticed species were dying, etc., and she came on to develop and implement a plan. She engaged volunteers, brought people into space via public education and events. She let people see the treasure they had, and got residents involved in stewardship. She said that she loves to visit the park and see the trees that were planted. Susan Steele followed up by asking if Lanae worked with schools on that project. Lanae said she worked with everybody - neighbors, schools, and community groups.

Dennis Duff asked what her greatest challenge has been when working with community groups. Lanae said that she likes people and gets along well with people. In addition, she has been able to work with difficult people, enjoys dealing with all different kinds of people, and believes you can learn from everyone. She believes in listening to people and getting to know them.

Elodia Thomas asked how Lanae's planning background from MIT ties into what she does now. Lanae said that, through research she is able to take on tasks that she had no real knowledge about before. She's undaunted because she knows how to do the research and interview people. She started with housing and didn't get into environmental work until her third job, even though that was her educational focus. She feels she has the ability to work in any area because of her education, and that specifics and tech information can be learned on the job.

Jon Bockian asked about her writing experience. Lanae responded that she has a lot of experience writing grant proposals and reports. Specifically, regarding the Woodlands Management Plan, she authored reports and webpage copy detailing and highlighting the project.

Susan Steele again asked about the best ways to promote ongoing communication with the community, and some of the best ways to get/stay in touch with people. Lanae said that it depends. Modes of communication, even with social media, change. There are a lot of platforms for communicating, more of a two-way dialog. A survey of community organizations and groups - a community outreach toolkit - is also useful. Elodia Thomas asked if she believes any particular tools to be most useful. Lanae responded that there are various project management tools. One she has used recently is AirTable, which she found really helpful to

track projects because it allows you to design your own scheme, put in deadlines, descriptions, and is very flexible.

Elodia Thomas asked if Lanae had any questions for the CPC. Lanae asked whether the CPC had made a decision about core services and the additional pilot program. Elodia Thomas said they are presently focusing on core services and community outreach planning.

Lanae Handy asked the CPC how much of a role they play in being ambassadors in their everyday lives. Susan Steele said there's already a lot of interest from the historical society, historical district, and historical commission. Elodia Thomas added that Maria Rose, who is on the Conservation Commission, is committed to ensuring the CPC has good community outreach so big entities do not overshadow small community groups. Lanae commented that the CPC might give some weight to projects that are smaller and provide for expressed community needs.

Elodia Thomas asked the CPC if they had any other questions for Lanae. Susan Steele asked about pitfalls in dealing with community groups that are a part of this kind of process. Lanae answered that a Boston church renovation project caused controversy. Some felt funds shouldn't go toward that type of project, so you have to consider reaction to projects you select. Susan Steele then asked, what drives you nuts? Lanae stated that she is a very incremental person, so waiting till the last-minute drives me nuts. I like to do things more incrementally. Susan said, you like to have a plan. Lanae answered that she is a planner.

Lanae said that she would like to get to know people individually and learn what their interests and strengths are. She mentioned being on the board of Tent City and doing a lot of volunteer work which gives her a true appreciation and understanding of people who want to make their community better.

Susan Steele asked how she would you deal with someone who gave you a moderately unrealistic schedule. Lanae said she would explain how long it takes to do the tasks and explain that it's unrealistic, and we could shoot for the stars, but it might be a little out of reach.

3. Discussion and Vote

Elodia Thomas initiated the discussion of the two candidates by sharing their references.

Deb Perry's references:

- Steve Nicholas, VP Institute of Sustainable Communities, Vermont - Deb is a superstar - a strategic thinker, who is analytical, with a very high level of performance regarding both projects and budgets. The best planner he's worked with. She moved up quickly from program officer to senior program officer to director. Clearly a rising star. She ran large multimillion dollar/multi-year projects (ISC \$4.5M in projects). Deb had ongoing relationships with HUD for sustainable urban planning grants across 150 communities, 15 regions at about \$5M each. Excellent capacity builder for this huge, high profile program re: training, technical assistance, networking under Obama administration.
- Catherine Dimitruk, Northwest Regional Planning Commission - Deb has excellent attention to detail yet never loses sight of the big picture. Develops RFP, conceives

programs, wins grant, and executes. She has excellent communication skills, she is comfortable with everyone - the public, vendors, the professional experts. She gets the job done, adheres to deadlines, requires little supervision, never misses a beat, has a very high level of performance and is creative with programming.

- Nathaly Agosto Filion, Chief Sustainability Officer - Deb handled a variety of initiatives regarding climate work. Highly competent with complexity. Excellent project coordinator-balances tasks, timeline, engages stakeholders, vendor event planning, works with state actors, understands grant streams

Lanae Handy's references:

- Christine Poff, Director, Boston Community Preservation Committee. Christine worked closely with Lanae for 10 years at the Franklin Park Coalition. Lanae is easy and delightful to work with, creative, great ideas, real smart, get things done, amazing follow-up, gets things quickly, a little reserved but very warm in her community interactions, works well with all ages, and does a great job of engaging community groups, kids, and college students. In addition, she redid the website, is excellent with budgets, marketing, graphics, is a really good writer, super organized, respectful to all, is good with fundraising systems, and is a non-threatening personality. Great evaluator of parks and landscape projects. We tag teamed really well, very respectful to all i.e. city departments, politicians, community.
- Peter Brown, Board member for South End Lower Roxbury Open Space Board, called her a lovely person who gets community, trained as a planner, has lived all areas of CPA, bright academic, thoughtful as a planner, excellent in community outreach with board, bureaucrats, and community, doesn't burn bridges, and has great people skills.
- Juliet Stone, of the South End Open Space Land Trust, described Lanae as even tempered, good with people, steady, hard-working, and strategic in working with 16 community gardens and pocket parks.
- Jacqui Parker, Our Place Theater Project, called Lanae instrumental in any organization, writes great proposals, organizes community events, high level of integrity, refreshing person to work with, team player, calming voice, and great follow-up. She "walks the walk" and makes a difference in promoting in healthier and better community.

CPC members shared their impressions of the candidates. All members stated both applicants had incredible credentials, that there could not have been two more distinctly different interviews or two more solid candidates, and it could be a "coin flip" as to whom to hire.

As noted by various committee members, both applicants had strong skill sets, bring a lot of talent, and a fair amount of planning and administrative experience working with agencies and community groups in different venues. Deb's most recent experience has been at the national government level securing multi-million-dollar grants and then providing planning services, grants and technical assistance at the regional and local government level. Lanae's experience has been at the grassroots level. She has worked with non-profits, local community coalitions and volunteers, and government officials at the local/state level. Her personal style came across as very calm and thoughtful. As one

member noted, this process is going to require a lot of feather stroking given municipal stakeholders and Watertown's community groups. Group consensus was that Lanae seems to possess both the planning skills and the experience needed for outreach to the Watertown community.

- Dennis Duff made a motion that the CPC (through Elodia Thomas and Gayle Shattuck, Personnel Director) offer Lanae Handy the position in the advertised price range. Susan Steele seconded the motion. All CPC members present were in favor.
- Dennis Duff made a motion that, should Lanae Handy decline the CPC offer, the same offer would be made to Deb Perry. Bob DiRico seconded the motion. All CPC members present were in favor.
- Jon Bockian made a motion for a job review after approximately six months, during which the position, description, salary, hours, and performance could all be reviewed. Dennis Duff seconded the motion. All CPC members present were in favor.

4. New Business and Community Comments

Elodia Thomas announced that the CPC kickoff meeting with JM Goldson would take place on November 4, 2019, at the Commander's mansion. She also mentioned that meeting space availability is very tight in town given everything that is going on.

Elodia Thomas stated that Marcia Ciro, a local graphic designer and branding professional for Tufts Medical Center, would be willing to help with the CPC interim branding for outreach materials.

- Bob DiRico made a motion to accept Marcia Ciro's assistance. Susan Steele seconded the motion. Permission was given by quorum.

5. Adjournment

Dennis Duff made a motion to adjourn. Susan Steele seconded the motion. All CPC members present were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:01 p.m.