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 Kraczkiewicz
Allen Gallagher
Maria Rose
Susan Steele

Draft Minutes: Thursday, February 27, 2020, Third Floor Conference Room, Town Hall 7:00 - 9:00 PM.

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

Others Present: Lanae Handy, Avery Wolfe, Leo Martin, Councilor Lisa Feltner

1. **Call to Order**

   Elodia Thomas, committee chair, called the meeting of the Community Preservation Committee to order at 7:00 p.m.

   - **Informational report by JM Goldson Community Preservation + Planning**

     Avery Wolfe presented Public Forum #1 findings including a summary of Watertown needs and project ideas. Elodia asked for this presentation to be uploaded to the community engagement website, Bang the Table.

     Avery requested feedback on forum, including what worked and what didn't work. First, Allen noted he heard comments about handicapped accessibility, although there was a handicapped entrance available. Then, Maria commented that the open space resource profile described Whitney Hill as being as being permanently protected. While it is protected under Article 97 it is indeed not protected locally—in other words, in the care and custody of Conservation Commission.

     Jon and Bob gave high marks to Jenn Goldson's presentation. Jon thought the meeting style was not conducive to deeper interaction between attendees. Mark wasn't sure there was enough opportunity for interchange between people staffing stations and attendees either. Bob is keen on generating interest and another good turnout for forum #2.

     Elodia lauded the setting, presentation, and interactive tables. She heard some complaint that Jenn did not repeat questions from audience members who were off microphone.

   - Preliminary results on survey and website - Avery stated there were 235 responses to the survey to date. The challenge is to get more responses from single family households, lower income to middle income, and younger people. She also, presented participants' priorities by CPA category, as well as key themes and ideas. She will give more detail when the survey is closed.

Elodia and Lisa asked Avery to look into comment, "Acquire land assets (town-owned), especially if undeveloped".

Avery stated there have been 265 unique visitors (unduplicated visits) and 689 site visits to the engagement website, with only 23 registered participants. Avery will work with Bang the Table technical support to find ways to improve registration and determine what tactics can be used to encourage people to register. Avery was asked if the registration requirement could be removed unless comments became inappropriate.

Mark remarked it was difficult to support someone else's idea on the website and to place a pin using the mapping tool. Avery noted it's important to have a critical mass and asked committee members to post two ideas to increase activity. Elodia mentioned people wished they could use a marker-like feature to map a route for bike path or other types of routes.

Preparation for focus groups – Avery described the size of groups and that there would be an overview as well as some remarks on project eligibility. Participants would discuss project ideas, and guiding principles/values to inform project selection criteria. She also stated that in the focus groups, it is important for potential applicants to generate project ideas and have them vetted somewhat in the group discussion. Jon asked for Lanae to send focus group list to the committee.

- Next Forum - JM Goldson will use the open house format again with a similar layout, featuring a welcome table, pom pom jar, project idea prioritization, and an opportunity for participants to weigh in on guiding principles/values, which would inform project selection criteria. Goldson uses project ideas because the public may more easily grasp concrete examples as opposed to abstract concepts.

  Elodia posed that the process needs more public education about the cost of land in town and cost of square foot to build housing so that the community's priorities are based in reality.

  Elodia stressed findings are critical to establish priorities in application process. Councilor Feltner also inquired whether the goal of project prioritization was to develop the goals of the preservation plan.

  Jason noted that people don't understand that project ideas are not possibilities if they are infeasible due to costs. Elodia remarked that while CPA funds may be used to repay bonds issued by the town, it's critical that the next forum provides a reality check. Goldson will communicate about what they plan to say on this topic ahead of the next forum.

  Avery asked for committee members to commit to doing at least one outreach activity and to send ideas for values in evaluating projects to Lanae by next Friday, 3/6/20.

2. **Acceptance of Minutes:**

   ➢ Maria made a motion to approve January 16, 2020 minutes. It was seconded and all were in favor of accepting the minutes.

3. **Chair Update**:

Elodia has been discussing issues surrounding the public forum and engagement website with Avery and Lanae, making adjustments and additions as needed. Lanae and Elodia reached out to focus group stakeholders from each CPA category and Elodia gave a sampling of those confirmed.

In order to market next forum, Bob obtained information on sandwich boards with regard to numbers available, display locations, sizes, and costs of signage.

- Dennis moved to purchase banners for large signs, amounting to $450 and to purchase the materials needed for Maria to print and laminate posters fitting the small sandwich boards. Allen seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

4. **CPC Chair Election**

- Allen nominated Elodia to be chairperson for an additional year, Dennis seconded, and Maria third. Jon called for other nominations and there were none. Dennis moved to close nominations; Jon seconded. Allen called for a vote. All were in favor.

Allen asked if Elodia would accept. Elodia stated that given what she is getting back from members, she believes that the committee would be happier with someone else as chair. She finds it untenable to continue as chair given the circumstances to date.

A candid discussion ensued, and thoughts were offered about getting future tasks done more equitably with a more even distribution of work, possibly through subcommittees.

Some members expressed their concerns about Elodia's standards being unrealistically high. There was also concern about living up to responsibilities as a committee going forward. Some suggested tools that could be used, such as sending out reminders of deadlines and other procedures that would hold committee members accountable. A number of members declared how much they respected Elodia's work thus far and/or admitted they had not done enough and could do more as committee members.

Jon proposed tabling this agenda item until the next meeting. Bob suggested to Elodia that she give acceptance some thought and revisit this item at the next meeting.

5. **Adjournment**

- Dennis Duff made a motion to table conversation on the election of a chair and to adjourn. Maria seconded the motion and all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 PM.