



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
Susan Steele

Meeting Minutes: Thursday, February 18, 2021, Remote Zoom Meeting, starting at 6:30 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Elodia Thomas, Chair; Jason Cohen; Jon Bockian; Mark Krackiewicz; Dennis J. Duff; Allen Gallagher; Bob DiRico, and Susan Steele.

Others Present: Lanae Handy, CPC Coordinator; John Gannon, Town Councilor; Tony Palomba, Town Councilor; Leo Martin, Conservation Commission Chair; Jamie O'Connell, Conservation Commission; Patrick Fairbairn, Conservation Committee; Maria Rose, Conservation Commission; Susan Falkoff, Deborah Peterson, and Janet Jameson.

1. Call to Order

Elodia Thomas called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

She read the Governor's announcement about the suspension of certain provisions of Open Meeting Laws, allowing remote meetings.

Elodia introduced Jamie O'Connell as the new member of the CPC representing the Conservation Commission and noted she would join the committee once she was officially sworn in by the Town.

Lanae called the roll. Jon Bockian, Jason Cohen, Bob Dirico, Dennis Duff, Allen Gallagher, Mark Krackiewicz, Susan Steele, and Elodia Thomas reported they were present.

2. Acceptance of 1-28-21 Meeting Minutes

Elodia called for a motion to accept the 1-28-21 CPC Meeting Minutes.

Motion: Jon moved to accept the minutes as presented. Dennis seconded and there was no discussion.

Vote: Jon Bockian, Jason Cohen, Bob Dirico, Dennis Duff, Allen Gallagher, Mark Krackiewicz, Susan Steele and Elodia Thomas voted to accept the minutes.

3. Approval of CP Coordinator Cost of Living Adjustments for FY20 and FY21

Motion: Dennis moved to award Lanae Handy a Cost of Living Adjustment in line with that of Town employees for FY20 and FY21. Mark seconded.

Vote: Jon Bockian, Jason Cohen, Bob DiRico, Dennis Duff, Allen Gallagher, Mark Krackiewicz, Susan Steele, and Elodia Thomas voted in favor.

4. Election of CPC Chair

Elodia reported she was stepping down as Chair as her term ended 2/1/21. She opened a discussion. Allen asked if the term of the new Chair would become effective at the March meeting and she affirmed it would.

Nomination: Allen nominated Mark as CPC Chair. Dennis seconded.

Mark accepted the nomination and noted it would be hard to fill Elodia's shoes given how she worked through the difficulty with the consultant and the pandemic.

Discussion: Elodia asked for discussion before the vote was taken. Jason recorded his appreciation for everything Elodia did to get the committee so far over the past two years. Bob seconded that sentiment.

Vote: Jon Bockian, Jason Cohen, Bob Dirico, Dennis Duff, Allen Gallagher, Mark Krackiewicz, Susan Steele and Elodia Thomas voted in favor of electing Mark CPC Chair.

The issue was raised about a vice chair and Elodia asked Mark for his thoughts regarding that. He was in favor of having a vice chair and asked for approval to have a one as the CPA ordinance allowed it.

Motion: Dennis made a motion to nominate Jason Cohen as Vice Chair.

Jon thought the committee needed to vote to establish the position. Elodia wasn't sure about that and read the language from the ordinance, which read the CPC elects a Chair and other officers. Jon thought there wouldn't be any harm in voting to establish the office.

Motion: Allen made a motion to create the position of Vice Chair for a term of one year. Dennis seconded.

Vote: Jon Bockian, Jason Cohen, Bob Dirico, Dennis Duff, Allen Gallagher, Mark Krackiewicz, Susan Steele and Elodia Thomas all voted in favor.

Elodia asked for a motion to nominate Jason as Vice Chair. Dennis reminded the committee he had a motion on the floor to do so.

Nomination: A motion was on the floor to nominate Jason as Vice Chair and Elodia seconded.

Vote: Jon Bockian, Jason Cohen, Bob Dirico, Dennis Duff, Allen Gallagher, Mark Krackiewicz, Susan Steele and Elodia Thomas voted in favor.

5. Review of Drafts of CP Plan Sections - Open Space and Recreation, Housing, and Historic Preservation

Elodia proceeded to go over the drafts of plan sections. She stated that she and Lanae has made the minor edits from the Committee and presented the revised documents. The documents were displayed through sharing Jason's screen.

Open Space and Outdoor Recreation

Dennis thought the term open space should be defined as green space because he had seen cases where parking lots were considered open space.

Jon had an issue with the language used stating projects involving acquisition of real property require the municipality to own the property. He thought the language was overly restrictive and there may be other ways to phrase this. He looked at acquisition projects on the Community Preservation Coalition website and spoke with Jennifer Van Campen about her experience with CPA funding as a non-profit developer. According to Jennifer she uses CPA funding for acquisition aspects of Metrowest projects. Jon assumed that project was not illegal. He advocated for alternative wording so that applicants are not dissuaded. Elodia thought the CPC should not create language when the statute and MHP have clear language. Jon proposed deleting the draft paraphrasing of the statute and simply putting in a reference to the law or quoting the law.

Susan asked what would be an example of closing off opportunities or what wouldn't be available if the language found in the document was used? Jon didn't want to give the impression that a project couldn't be funded if a non-profit developer took title.

Jason made a motion to put the language to a vote and Jon made a motion to refer the language to the Town attorney. Elodia proposed including the language from statute section 12 a and b. Jon obliged and would be happy with just quoting excerpts of language from section 12 a and b. There was no objection.

Mark had a question about the introductory section to open space and recreation being different from the other sections. Lanae noted that open space and outdoor recreation were formerly separated in the plan and were now combined. Due to this combination, there needs to be a way to join the two and speak about conservation restrictions without repeating it in both Open Space and Outdoor Recreation. Elodia stated she would consider a way to address Mark's issue. Mark also proposed adding a graphic to emphasize the open space deficiency described. Elodia suggested that Marcia may be able to create one.

Jon thought if projects were identified as community suggestions, those who suggested the projects should be named. Jason proposed adding a parenthetical reference, noting the project ideas were shared through community engagement efforts. Elodia reminded CPC members that all the information can be found in the community outreach documents.

Jason thought that the CPC should not give the impression that the CPC presupposes preference for certain projects. Dennis stated adding the word

community removes the CPC from appearing to endorse projects. Susan and Allen proposed adding a sentence that clarified the project ideas were gathered from the community outreach. Leo further noted that the suggestions in the Open Space section have been in the Open Space Plan for the last 20 years.

Jon was uncomfortable with calling the project ideas community suggestions and thought it was disingenuous. Elodia directed Jon to the references at the end of each section.

Jason proposed adding “As brought forth in various outreach efforts” to all four categories.

In addressing another comment from Mark about landscaping and passive recreation, Elodia wasn't sure if Mark's paragraph would fit into the Outdoor Recreation section. She read Mark's proposed language to the Committee. Dennis wondered if it was too specific. Dennis remarked design work is site specific. Dennis gave an example to support the need for emphasizing passive recreation. He noted Arsenal Park was intended to be a passive park and that concept was not put into practice. He reiterated the importance of adding the words passive recreation, remembering when softball leagues were rampant and it was difficult to use the park for passive recreation. Jon liked the gist of Mark's suggested language and thought it could be shortened. Mark supposed more should be said about landscaping and also include hardscape, or “street furniture” as Bob informed was the correct terminology.

Bob doesn't see a problem with the first bullet point on outdoor recreation initiatives. Elodia asked Bob about the maintenance issues and viewed the long paragraph as a little too detailed, while she agreed with the one bullet point in Mark's email.

Jason questioned whether the suggestion to buy and upgrade Cannalonga Park was too prescriptive and specific. Elodia replied the park is owned by DCR and it was mentioned many times during the community outreach process.

Community Housing

Elodia remarked that she, Mark, and Lanae had gone through the housing section and made minor edits suggested by Larry Field and the Committee. The same language mentioned from the CPA statute section 12 a and b, regarding acquisition projects will be added to this section.

In addition, Elodia recommended changing affordable housing to community housing because the CPA funds community housing. Mark was concerned that inclusionary zoning tends to help those at the 80% more than those at lower income levels. Elodia observed that it helps to have units at different price points to provide adequate funds for maintenance of a building. She further stated that “we are not the Housing Partnership, we are the CPC”. She wanted to stick with the language of the CPA that included community housing. Jason agreed that the CPA law should guide the parameters in the plan.

Historic Preservation

There were minor edits made to the Historic Preservation section. Elodia asked about Jon's suggestion to add "visual and physical" before the word access for clarification. Mark proposed adding "and/or" and Dennis agreed.

Susan asked for four bullet points on page one after "preservation of". She also wanted to change the color of the map on building age and move the Goldson credit. Susan thought Gideon could easily do that.

Elodia asked for the committee's opinion on the title of the history timeline and asked for ideas. Susan asked if there was room to add a Watertown High School photo to the timeline. Jason suggested shortening "Historic Gems from the Distant and Not So Distant Past" to "Historic Gems through the Ages".

Jason reminded that we should make sure the links work before the document goes live online.

Next Steps

Mark wanted to talk a little about what should happen at the next meetings. Would the CPC do a webinar before the public hearing? He suggested reporting to Town Council that there is a plan and walking them through it. He wanted the Committee to think about that.

Jason cited the importance of publicizing the public hearing more than one month in advance and as soon as the material is ready get it out for public comment. Elodia noted the CPC needs to review the plan after it is designed to find out if there is anything major to address. She stated that Marcia will need to see the whole document and the CPC needs to get an estimate of when she'll be done before scheduling the public hearing. Dennis agreed it is better to present it to the CPC again to ensure nothing major needs to be addressed.

Lanae will let the committee know when to expect to have the plan from Marcia for their review. Ideally the CPC would want to have it before the next meeting in March.

Susan thanked Elodia for leading the committee for two years and Allen added his thanks.

6. Adjournment

Motion: Dennis moved to adjourn and Allen seconded.

Vote: Jon Bockian, Jason Cohen, Bob Dirico, Dennis Duff, Allen Gallagher, Mark Krackiewicz, Susan Steele and Elodia Thomas voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm.