



CITY OF WATERTOWN

Community Preservation Committee

Mark Krackiewicz, Chair
Jon Bockian, Vice Chair
Bob DiRico
Dennis J. Duff
Allen Gallagher
Abigail Hammett
Jamie O'Connell
Elodia Thomas
Matthew Walter

Minutes of CPC Meeting Thursday, February 1, 2024, at 7:00PM, held remotely via Zoom.

Committee Members Present: Mark Krackiewicz, Chair; Jon Bockian, Vice Chair; Bob DiRico; Allen Gallagher; Dennis J. Duff; Elodia Thomas; Jamie O'Connell; and Matt Walter.

Absent: Abigail Hammett

Others Present: Lanae Handy, Community Preservation Coordinator; Andrew Gambardella, Mt. Auburn Cemetery; Gus Fraser, Mt. Auburn Cemetery; Bethe Brown Mt. Auburn Cemetery; Katherine Pomplum, Historic New England; Jodi Black, Historic New England; Michael Albano, Department of Public Works; Joyce Kelly, Historical Society of Watertown; Leo Martin, Conservation Commission; Margie Wayne; and Jason Cohen, Planning Board.

1. Call to Order

Mark Krackiewicz called the meeting to order at 7:02PM noting the Governor's executive order to extend the suspension of certain open meeting law provisions.

2. CPA Project Application Presentations

A. Browne House Project Application

Katherine Pomplum presented Historic New England (HNE) was applying for \$7,250 for an engineering study for the Browne House constructed circa 1698. The house was distinguished by its unique framing where beams were not tied to posts or a chimney wall. She displayed the damage and stop-gap measures currently being taken. A crack monitor was installed to measure the movement. Additionally, posts and jacks were installed for support.

Katherine pointed out the Browne House doesn't have an endowment for preservation work and the property needs \$455,000 in work. The outcome of the project would be 100% construction documents for the best engineering solution. She also noted the house will have public access 12 days a year and admission is free for Watertown residents. HNE shared information through Wicked Local and Watertown Public Library.

Questions/Comments	Responses
Dennis J. Duff 1. How much does Historic New England have available for this project? 2. Is there any thought to opening more days? 3. Why are so few funds available for the house if it's so significant?	Katherine 1. Historic New England will contribute 50% of the \$14,500 total project budget. Historic New England has \$120 million tied up in restricted endowments for the care of individual properties and specific program uses. 2. They were previously only open 5 days per year, so it has grown. 3. They only draw 4.9% from their endowment to prevent overdrawn when times are good and to weather down times.
Jon Bockian The building is not very visible from the street due to overgrowth. To what degree will plantings be handled?	Jodi Black The property has historic plantings and HNE will manage overgrowth to make the property visible from the street.
Bob DiRico Where will the \$455,000 come from?	Katherine Massachusetts Historical Commission, family foundations, and individual donors.
Elodia Thomas 1. There are two different buildings on the property classified differently by the assessor than what is there. 2. Why are the maintenance costs \$55,000? 3. Concerned that HNE will come back to CPC for implementation and question finances and public access. 4. Why didn't HNE just pay \$14,500 for the study? 5. How do you fund implementation?	Katherine 1. Not sure why there are inconsistencies. One building is a barn previously used as a storage facility and the other is a house museum with a section for a tenant. 2. That amount is for operations and maintenance including staffing for open days, site visits as well as snow removal, landscaping, and insurance. 3. The assessment determined what was happening now construction documents are needed for the best option. The study will provide construction documents with an engineer's stamp. 4. Fundraising. Past funders include MHC and some other opportunities.
Mark Krackiewicz 1. If nothing were done, what would happen? 2. What is the dimension of the beam? 3. Is there a way to cooperate with WPS to bring students in for visits?	Jodi 1. The walls would continue to rotate and pull out collapsing the roof. 2. 22 inches square Katherine 3. There are accessibility issues though offsite lectures are possible.

Jamie stated concerns about future projects should be saved for when that project comes before the CPC and that this project should be evaluated for its merits. She emphasized there is no compulsion for the CPC to recommend funding for future projects. Jamie agreed that the concern about public access is valid, though this project establishes the right path for protecting the oldest house in Watertown.

Matt agreed with Jamie's assessment and looked at the project in terms of how important it was to have the property fixed, the capacity of the organization to manage the project, and the public benefit.

Leo Martin agreed the house is an asset and that the public should be able to access it more regularly. He noted the engineering firm was top notch and the budget was reasonable.

B. Scots Charitable Society Fence Project Application

Andrew Gambardella, Grants and Communications, Manager of Mt. Auburn Cemetery, presented the team that included Beth Brown, VP of Institutional Advancement and Gus Fraser, VP of Preservation and Facilities. Andrew described the history of the plot funded by the Scots Charitable Society for working class Scottish immigrants without means. They are seeking \$300,000 for the restoration of the fence which memorializes over 200 buried in the plot with no markers or headstones. The fence is one of a few remaining iron fences and one of only a few community plots.

Gus Fraser said they received a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to perform the assessment as well as a matching grant from the Scots Charitable Society. He further described the work to be performed and how it would be done. Gus stated the total construction amounted to \$694,000 and the total budget was \$782,000 with the contingency.

The team went over the CPC's questions and their written answers to the CPC, which are attached to these minutes. Beth addressed the question about the relationship between the Friends of Mt. Auburn Cemetery and the cemetery. She also recognized they could do more in the way of community outreach and programming. Beth mentioned the cemetery is building new pedestrian entrances and plans to re-engage with the Watertown Public Schools. She also pointed out most cemeteries are filling up or falling apart where Mt. Auburn would be accepting burials for another 100 years. Beth added a new donor pledged \$25,000 to the project on Monday.

Gus said the timeline is fixed; however, the start date would be determined by fundraising. Beth stated they were determined to raise 60% of the funding needed and CPA is included in the 60% needed to start construction and is viewed as an important part of that total.

Questions/Comments	Answers
Bob 1. How long will fundraising continue? 2. How long are the bids good for? 3. Will drip irrigation be used?	Beth 1. They hope to raise funds as quickly as possible. Their fiscal year begins April 1. Gus 2. The bids are good for 90 days with an inflation escalation and are approaching expiration. 3. Will use micro-emitter irrigation
Jamie 1. Do we need a letter from Mt. Auburn permitting the project. 2. There was not a letter of commitment from the Scots Charitable Society (SCS), just a mention of the challenge grant in a fundraising letter. 3. If fundraising efforts exceed 60%, would you reduce your request? 4. If the request is for \$300,000 and there is \$75,000 committed? How does CPC funding fit into the picture?	Lanae 1. The purpose of the letter of permission from the property owner or consent form from the city is to ensure the CPC doesn't recommend funding to groups or individuals on private or municipal property without the permission and involvement of the property owner. Mt. Auburn is clearly involved and committed to the project, so a letter is not needed. Beth 2. We will have a commitment letter from Rob Young of SCS next week. 3. No, the funds that exceed the 60% goal would be put towards project implementation. 4. Mt. Auburn won't begin the project until 60% is raised and any excess raised beyond the 60% will lessen Mt. Auburn's contribution.
Mark 1. Watertown is home to many biotech companies. Would it be possible to reach out to them?	Beth 1. Yes, it is good to promote partners and acknowledge them. It would be a benefit.
Elodia 1. How much do you have in hand? 2. Bids are stale.	Beth 1. Just over \$100,000 in pledges and challenge grants.

Questions/Comments	Responses
Jon How would Mt. Auburn view the CPC conditioning an award on having sufficient funds for the whole project budget?	Beth It would be okay, and fundraising would continue with status reports of fundraising results to the CPC.
Lanae Given the Community Preservation Plan prioritized municipal property for historic preservation and there are two municipal historic preservation projects completing study phases, what is the public benefit of funding this particular project at this time? Make your best case to the residents and taxpayers of Watertown.	Andrew Due to the historic lore of the cemetery in the heart of where historic residents are buried. This adds another area of interest on the grounds. Mt. Auburn also has a few new staff committed to community outreach and interpretation projects.
Leo Martin Mt. Auburn has an \$8 million operating budget and the request of \$300,000 is a small percentage (2-3%) of that budget. You sold 3 parcels in Watertown recently. Do you set aside a portion of those sales?	Gus There is no separate endowment for preservation. There is one for operating and capital improvements. They draw down 4.2% annually with 3.2% going to operating and 1% to significant restoration or capital projects.

Dennis was disappointed that funds in excess of 60% would not be returned to the CPC.

Elodia reiterated that most of the cemetery is in Watertown, yet it has a Cambridge address. She thought the project was premature.

Mark thanked the project team for their presentation and called for a motion to adjourn.

Dennis asked if going back to in-person meetings could be placed on the next agenda?

3. Adjournment

Motion: Allen Gallagher moved to adjourn, and Jon Bockian seconded the motion.

Vote: Elodia Thomas, Allen Gallagher, Jon Bockian, Jamie O'Connell, Bob DiRico, Mark Krackiewicz, and Matt Walter voted in favor. Dennis J. Duff voted against it.

Adjournment: 9:10PM

Attachments:

1. [Browne House Presentation](#)
2. [Scots Charitable Society Fence Presentation](#)
3. [Responses to CPC – Browne House](#)
4. [Responses to CPC – Scots Charitable Society Fence](#)