

**Town of Hamilton
Community Preservation Committee
December 8, 2011 Minutes**

Attendees

The meeting was held in the Memorial Room of Town Hall with the following Committee members in attendance: Ed Howard, Jeff Hubbard, Leigh Keyser, Jay Butler, Ray Whipple, Keith Glidden, and Peter Britton. Christine Berry as CPC Coordinator was also present. With a quorum of CPC members present the meeting was called to order at 7:36pm

Vote an Acting Chair for Tonight's Meeting

Jay Butler made a motion that Ed Howard act as Chairman for tonight's meeting. Ray Whipple seconded. The vote was unanimous. Ed Howard was voted in as acting Chairman of the CPC for tonight's meeting.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes from October 13th CPC Meeting

The minutes from the October 13th CPC meeting were accepted.

CPA Historic Preservation Proposals

- **Downtown Bench Restoration**
- **Downtown Lantern Restoration**
- **Downtown Tree Restoration**

Jeff Hubbard was present to discuss these proposals. Christine reminded the Committee that the projects were briefly discussed at the last CPC meeting, but that Jeff was not present to explain them in fuller detail. Jeff had understood that there were concerns about the historical relevance of the proposals. Christine said that she had done some research on similar proposals elsewhere and found that the CPC would need to rely heavily on the Historic District Commission (HDC) to determine that all of these projects were significant to interpreting the history of downtown Hamilton. There was some discussion about the Meals Tax perhaps being a more appropriate funding source. Christine and Ed clarified the difference between the Historical Society and the HDC. For the CPC to fund certain historic projects, the HDC would have to designate the project historically significant to the community. Ray thought the Historical Society more archival and social in nature. Jeff reported that he has met with the Historical Society several times. Jeff shared his proposals with them, and they felt the projects were significant to the history of the town. The Historical Society felt each of the proposals were a critical part of the downtown history and that people would come into Town and meet and talk on the benches, particularly at the old paper store. The gas lanterns were lit by hand every night, and one of them is still in storage. The Historical Society thought the lanterns were historically significant. They also thought the trees were significant to the historical integrity of the Town.

Jeff explained that the Meals Tax revenue collected so far as been spent on booklets, maps, and banners.

Ed noted that he had seen some photos that Butch Crosbie had showing the lights and benches. Jeff has researched the costs of both gas and electric lights.

Jeff added that he wishes to include another improvement to his proposal. He noted that there is still one of the arches Fredric Winthrop donated in memory of his wife in storage. They were originally placed in front of the old high school. There is still one at the Library. Jeff suggested we fund the restoration of the second one and place it in the railroad crosswalk next to the parking lot near Talbots to bring a better connection between downtown and the railroad station.

Ray expressed concern that there has been no broader downtown plan. He used the example of the liquor store that was developed in the vacant lot across from Talbots and the newly renovated dentist building on Railroad Avenue. Ray questioned whether the CPC should be involved in beautifying the downtown. Jeff said we need a thriving downtown, and the businesses are suffering. Ray said the lack of parking is an issue.

Ed noted the Planning Board turned down the dentist building renovations, but the ZBA overruled it. He said that we cannot do much with downtown without resolving the parking and sewage issues. Ed thought that what Jeff was suggesting was an incremental benefit to downtown. Ed suggested that it would be easier for the CPC if Jeff was to have a letter from the HDC seeking a favorable opinion. Both Ed and Tom Catalano sit on the HDC.

Keith noted that it would be helpful to show how the improvement would connect with what was historically accurate. Hamilton is one of the few towns in the North Shore where the train station is right in the center of the downtown.

Leigh asked whether the merchants would back this financially. Jeff thought it would be difficult to ask them, and felt they are hurting too much fiscally right now.

Ed wondered how we could get some professional input on the design. Jeff thought we could probably find someone. Ray said they need to have a plan, and not just the smaller pieces. And commented that we have to be careful because an artist's rendition is not always accurate of what is there or what will be there.

Jeff said that this plan is consistent with the downtown charrette that was held. Jeff said that we have to take initiative so that things will change and improve. Ed suggested that Jeff needs to get support from the appropriate groups.

Ray asked whether these items were permissible under the CPA guidelines. Christine said that for the projects to be eligible the HDC would need to determine them to be significant to the history of the Town since they are not listed or eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places.

New Business

Jeff and Ed were at an Essex County Trails Association (ECTA) meeting recently and reported that the Town needed to have an ownership interest in the trail

easement to be acquired as part of ECTA's Discover Hamilton Trail CPA project. Christine reminded the CPC that we had discussed this during ECTA's project proposal. CPA requires the Town to have ownership if a real estate interest is being acquired with CPA funds. Christine is working with Alex on language that would give the Town that co-ownership with ECTA, but leave control, management, etc. with ECTA. Alex is concerned that the property owners will be concerned over the Town's ownership. The language would neutralize that concern.

Jeff brought up the donation that ECTA had pledged to the Donovan acquisition. Christine summarized that we ECTA pledged \$10,000, Essex County Greenbelt Association pledged \$10,000, the Hamilton-Wenham Open Land Trust pledged \$5,000 and the Youth Sports leagues pledged \$60,000 over 3 years. Jeff was surprised at these donations having to come in through volunteers. Christine said that Alex inquired about waiving the donation. Christine passed on the request to Tom Catalano, Michael Lombardo and Deborah Mena. No one was supportive of waiving their pledge. Town Meeting approved this project knowing these donations were coming. There was concern over the precedent of only waiving ECTA's donation. The Youth Sports Leagues also provide in-kind work, similarly to ECTA. Michael advised that if ECTA wanted to pursue this further, they should send a letter to the Board of Selectmen.

Ray noted that it has always been to our advantage to "assist" groups with the project funding, but not to take on the entire financial cost. He felt it brings ownership of the whole project and is an important selling point at Town Meeting.

Acceptance of Donovan Acquisition Donation – Essex County Greenbelt Association and Essex County Trails Association

Christine reported that we received the \$10,000 gifts from Greenbelt and ECTA along with the gift acceptance form stating that they be used to pay for the Donovan acquisition. The gift forms need to be signed by the Chair. The CPC voted to accept the gifts, and the forms were signed by Ed Howard, acting Chair of the CPC.

Discussion of Essex Street/Sidewalk Trail Proposal

Rudi prepared a new application which Christine has distributed. Jay would like to see a map showing the owners names along Essex Street. He is concerned about encroachments, trees, and fences. He would like to know the Woodbury Street costs to be able to compare the two projects. Jay suspects the costs will be more than Rudi has estimated. We also need to confirm whether the right of way is held by the Town or the State.

Peter Britton reported that he just came from a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (MAHT) meeting and felt that a lot of projects come before the CPC that are displacing funding that should go to open space and community housing projects. Peter expects that the MAHT will ask for additional CPA funding this year.

Ed noted that the Bike and Pedestrian study referenced in Rudi's application is outdated. Jay thought the project is not without merit and that there are some very dangerous sections of Essex Street. Keith noted that the discussion seems to be

focused on public safety, not historic significance. He added that there are sections of 1A as it gets closer to Ipswich might be more appropriate as it leads to more connections than this proposal would, and is more used by bikers and walkers. Essex Street is not a prime recreation spot.

The proponent is now asking nearly \$800,000, and the timeframe is very unrealistic.

Peter noted that we need to prioritize the type of projects we should be doing. If we're funding unnecessary projects than the CPA could come under the microscope at Town Meeting.

Ray noted that we have turned down sidewalk proposals in the past; Chebacco Road, and Asbury Street for example. Ed noted that this project would duplicate other ways to get to downtown.

Meeting Adjournment

At approximately 9:00pm, the CPC voted to adjourn.