

**Town of Hamilton  
Community Preservation Committee  
March 8, 2012 Minutes**

**Attendees**

The meeting was held in the Memorial Room of Town Hall with the following Committee members in attendance: Tom Catalano, Ed Howard, Jeff Hubbard, Jay Butler, Ray Whipple, and Nepo Trapanier. Christine Berry as CPC Coordinator was also present. Michael Lombardo, Town Manager, Deborah Mena, Finance Director, Jennifer Scuteri, Chair of the Board of Selectmen, and Marc Johnson, Board of Selectmen were also present. With a quorum of CPC members present the meeting was called to order at 7:35pm

**Acceptance of Meeting Minutes from January 12<sup>th</sup> CPC Meeting**

The minutes from the January 12<sup>th</sup> meeting were accepted by the CPC.

**Town Hall Needs Update**

Michael Lombardo provided an update on the Town Hall Needs Study. He reported that students from the Boston Architectural College (BAC) and Wentworth College were hired to complete an efficiency study to help understand how we utilize the building, and how well we are geared to serve the public. Michael reviewed the slides that were prepared by BAC. The slides indicated that the offices are too spread out and that there was much inefficiency. Two teams each created a design. One team stayed within the building's existing footprint, and the other team included a bump out on the rear of the building. An elevator was included in both proposals. Michael reported that there are elements of both plans that are desirable.

Michael reported that the next step would be to hire a professional architect to finalize the plan and develop an RFP. He estimated that cost to be \$165,000. There are also existing Town Hall CPA projects (Space Needs Study and Dome Ceiling Repair) that can be closed out and allocated to this project.

Tom noted that he was unhappy that both designs desecrated the only original room in the building; the second floor with the dome ceiling.

Jennifer asked Michael to summarize the problems at Town Hall. Michael reported a general inefficiency of space; staff are too far away from like departments, the layout is not friendly to the public, the files are a mess, bathroom accessibility, lack of meeting space, and structural issues from the weight of the files.

Michael thought that hiring an architect to help us with the planning and preparation of bid documents would be a good next step. Tom suggested that it would be best if you could hire one architect to help with both the planning and bid documents; that the project description could be written so that you don't

need to do the planning separately, instead going straight to design with one contract and one firm. The design would have a planning component. Deborah suggested a small working group to prepare the RFP.

Michael thinks the renovation could go as high as \$3 million. Based on that number, \$165,000 would not be enough to cover the design and bid preparation. Tom suggested someone look at the cost of Weston's Town Hall renovation which was similar and completed about 7 years ago. Tom also said that the Massachusetts Designer Selection Bureau could provide some good estimates.

Ray asked whether this project projects out future use of the building. Michael said, yes, staff would be able to live in this building for at least the next 50 years. It would be a long-term fix.

Michael and Deborah reported that the new heat system and windows have been working great.

Tom noted that the cheapest option would be to add on as much as possible even if it means creating space we don't need now. He also thought it would be the only way to install an elevator and still preserve the dome. He said the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board will scrutinize this project very carefully for handicap accessibility and ensuring that ADA access is not secondary.

Michael also added that parking is an issue. He said it is not always easy to find a space. He would like to institute some changes to the DPW yard in the back of the building. Michael said they would tweak the proposal and come back with updated numbers. Tom said he thinks the Committee felt an overall plan was better than the piecemeal approach we've been taking over the last several years.

Ray inquired whether we can use CPA money to put an elevator into a historic building. Christine reported that the CPA legislation specifically allows funding for ADA compliance of historic buildings.

Jennifer asked whether we could pay for the whole renovation through CPA. Tom said yes, that we could bond it as Wenham did with their Town Hall. Deborah added that interest rates are so low right now that the timing is good.

Ray asked whether there is a limit as to how much we can bond. Deborah said she would look at our bond scheduling to see what fits into our cash stream. Deborah said there are three CPA projects that could be closed out and returned to the historic preservation reserve account. Deborah reported that the CPC has approximately \$1.3 million in unreserved, some of which is in laddered investments, community housing has approximately \$70,000, and open space has approximately \$48,000. There is an additional \$233,000 tied up in appropriations.

Michael inquired whether CPA could fund a new pool at Patton Park. A new pool facility would be well used. Tom said no, not with the existing legislation. Jennifer noted that we can only make recreational improvements to land acquired after the CPA was enacted. The Newton case was not helpful with this. It encourages totally new parks rather than renovation or improvement of existing parks.

Nepo noted that there are water issues near Winthrop School that may extend over to Patton Park, and that those should be kept in mind when developing a plan for a new pool. Michael noted we would also expect Wenham to contribute funding to this project. Private fundraising could also help with funding this project.

Michael said they will work to refine the numbers and come back to the CPC for a vote at their next meeting.

### **Patton Estate Land Donation Committee**

Marc provided an update of the Patton Advisory Committee. The Committee has broken into three pieces (house, open space and recreation, and development). Michael has drafted a gift agreement between the Town and the Patton family. Patton does not want the property to be a financial burden to the Town. The family has two primary objectives; that the property eventually support itself because there is no endowment, and that the property be used and enjoyed by the public as much as possible.

Marc noted that the Committee does not know what the future uses will be, but that gift needs to go to Annual Town Meeting to accept the property. The Committee is evaluating uses. There will probably be at least two fields developed and access to the Ipswich River created. Currently, there is no public access to the river in Hamilton.

Marc would like for there to be an adjustment to the gift agreement so that CPA can play a role in the development of the property. The historic elements of the property are significant and would have to be evaluated for possible uses; bed and breakfast, wedding facilities, restaurant, etc.

Marc reported that by the time Town Meeting comes, the Committee will be ready to recommend use of the property, but that it will come in three phases. While waiting for the development uses to be finalized, the Town will need a caretaker for the property while we look at the economics. Marc asked the CPC if they would be willing to cover the carrying costs of the property while the Committee finalizes the uses. The carrying costs do not include improvements. A request for improvements would come in the future.

Tom noted that it would be helpful to work out the capital budget for the property in time for Town Meeting. Michael noted that the Town is evaluating the abandonment of the well that is on the abutting property.

Ray expressed concern about the property coming off the tax roles and what the impact would be. It was reported that the property currently generates \$36,000 in property taxes a year.

Ed noted that he is not opposed to the project but expressed concern about profitability, particularly when governments are involved.

Jay noted that we cannot use CPA funds for items that are associated with a business, and that we cannot pay for a caretaker. He said we should line up the request with what we can legally fund by law. He asked whether we can split up the gift so that we can fund what we clearly support.

Tom said that we could acquire the property and issue a lease to a tenant. Christine agreed and said that as long as we kept ownership we would be all right.

Marc said that the danger would be that if we acquire it under the provisions of CPA and if we would need to unwind if the property did not prove economic. Tom asked if we could structure the agreement so the unwind is not an all or nothing.

Marc noted that the Patton family is fairly broad on what the allowable uses would be. He said the estate caretaker could come out of the agreement. Tom asked whether the caretaker could be given board in exchange for taking care of the property.

Marc will work to review the budget. Christine noted that the warrant closes soon. The CPC's detailed budget will appear in the Appendix, which doesn't get finalized until later in April. The CPC will need to vote this amount at their April 12<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Marc will re-run the numbers. Hamilton Gardens could possibly take care of the lawn maintenance, so the budget could get smaller. It was noted that mowing could fall under maintenance, and CPA cannot fund maintenance. Tom noted that he would reach out to Stuart for guidance on this topic. Marc said that we need to figure out what type of interest we need. Tom said we need some interest even if it's just a preservation restriction.

Jennifer said we also need to review the draft language for the warrant. She also noted that the Patton Family will retain a right of first refusal. Tom noted that the building will be a long lead time, but that the recreation component could happen

almost immediately. Jay noted that \$500,000 could go into field creation, and then how would we be able to get that back.

Tom said we should look to see if we can break the acquisition into two pieces. Marc expressed concern that the subdivision couldn't happen in time. Christine asked whether for CPA purposes if it could be divided into two pieces.

### **Downtown Proposals**

Jeff noted that he is working to align the CPA with this project. His proposal supports the findings of the Master Plan and the downtown charrette. Jeff said that we have an issue with high property taxes. Realtors noted that buyers are shocked by the tax rate in Hamilton. The items he is requesting funding for did exist; we have the photos. Jeff noted that the Meals Tax is paying for maps, brochures, etc. He noted that the EDC is paying for a new website for Town.

Jeff said that we are missing opportunities. We need to make downtown an asset to our community and create more commercial opportunities. The trees, lights and benches are going to make the downtown more enjoyable and vibrant.

Jeff noted that the rough cost of the proposal is \$100,000 for improvements along Bay Road and Railroad Avenue. If the number seems too big, the project can be scaled back.

Nepo asked whether this project qualifies for Town Meeting. Tom said that the Historic District Commission (HDC) is meeting to discuss this project on the 21<sup>st</sup> and will determine whether it is significant to the history of the Town. Tom noted that he is uncomfortable with the project because we are re-creating artifacts. Jeff said that remodeling and reconstruction are allowable uses under CPA. He added that these three items are the part of the whole dynamic of Hamilton 100 years ago.

Tom asked what other steps can we take to improve the recent development and design of the downtown buildings. Jay noted that the matrix that we use to determine eligibility states that we cannot "create" historic resources. Tom thought that this was a great project, but just wasn't sure it was a good fit under CPA. This project will be discussed at the March 21<sup>st</sup> HDC meeting at 7pm at Town Hall.

### **Model T Building – Discuss Cancellation**

The discussion of the Model T Building was postponed.

### **Meeting Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15pm.