

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN &
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF JOINT MEETING
JUNE 18, 2018

Selectmen Present: Chair Shawn Farrell, Scott Maddern,
William Olson, Jeff Hubbard, and Allison Jenkins

Community Preservation Committee Members Present: Chair Tom Catalano, Jay Butler, Ed
Howard, Katherine Mittelbusher,
Robert Preston, Neil Duggan

CPC members absent: Chris Currier

Interim Town Manager: Robin Crosbie

Other Town Staff Present: Finance Director Marisa Batista, Coordinator Dorr Fox,
and Director of Planning & Inspections Patrick Reffett

Board of Selectmen (BOS) Chair Shawn Farrell called the joint meeting to order for the BOS at 7:02 p.m. Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Chair Tom Catalano called the meeting to order for the CPC. Mr. Farrell read the official public hearing notice, which explained the purpose of the annual public hearing: to inform community members about grants and projects and seek their input.

Introductory Remarks—Tom Catalano, CPC Chair

Mr. Catalano said the CPC is continually striving to engage the public more actively and seek input, especially in light of dwindling reserves. The CPC updates its plan annually and comes to Town Meeting. He gave a brief financial history of CPC grants among the allowable categories: historic preservation, community housing, and open space and recreation. He discussed the status of available funds and future predictions, as well as bonding to fund large projects. A list of the CPC's future anticipated grants may be found on the Town's website. He discussed the debt payment on the Donovan Project and Sagamore Conservation project, funding of the Patton Homestead renovation, awarding of a grant to the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust to facilitate its efforts, and giving \$30K to the Planning Board to update its comprehensive plan [housing element]. The CPC spends up to 5% of its revenue on administrative expenses, including membership in the Community Preservation Coalition. Revenues from the Town are approximately \$400K per year, which come from the Town's 2% surcharge. The CPC receives a State match, which used to be

substantial (100% match), but has gone way down over the years to only 11% in the last fiscal year. This is due to many communities joining the pool, so it is spread over a wider number of communities. The State match may increase if pending legislation on raising fees at the Registry of Deeds passes. Mr. Catalano said the Town may want to discuss possibly increasing its surcharge from 2% to 3%. Mr. Catalano is leaving the Town of Hamilton July 1. He turned the floor over to Vice Chair Jay Butler.

Town Hall Building Project Status

Mr. Butler, CPC member and newly appointed member of the Town Hall Building Committee, listed the other Building Committee members and said at their last meeting they were given copies of four proposals for the OPM (Owner's Project Manager) to review. The Building Committee will discuss them at its next meeting, June 21. The Committee will be looking at feasibility studies and hiring a designer for the Town Hall renovation project.

Mr. Catalano said the CPC has approximately \$500K in reserves, most in the unrestricted category. The CPC is required to set aside 10% of its revenues to each of the three categories: historic preservation, community housing, and open space and recreation. Mr. Farrell clarified the CPC *will have* \$500K in reserves—that money is being collected now, as the new fiscal year begins July 1.

Rich Property Potential Grant Request—Chris Davis, Hamilton Wenham Open Land Trust

Chris Davis introduced himself. He said he is Vice President and a member of the Hamilton Wenham Open Land Trust along with David Smith, and not actually a committee member with the Chebacco Woods Land Management (as was listed on the agenda). He was involved in the joint acquisition of Chebacco Woods with Hamilton and Manchester. He said the plan for the Rich property is very preliminary and there isn't a project to put before them yet. They are in constructive, but early discussions with the land owners, the Land Trust, and Greenbelt. The Rich property (which is the estate of Frank Rich) is at the intersection of Essex Street (Route 22) and Chebacco Road. It is 66 acres, has Meadowbrook farm on it, and is abutted by Chebacco Woods on two sides. They are working with a consultant to determine the best use of the land—for example, open space, agricultural preservation, water supply, and/or community housing. He hopes to bring a proposal forward at a later date and explore the benefits to the Town with this piece of property, but for now wanted to put it on the CPC's radar.

Mr. Farrell added none of the property is chapter land; it is all fair market value.

Mr. Catalano said they need to discuss the big projects on the horizon, how much the Town can undertake, and how much bonding it can take on.

Mr. Butler said they can only bond on the amounts tied to the Town surcharge collection. He said in discussing bonding with Finance Director Marissa Batista, he learned that if, for example, they bond \$2M over 20 years the first full-year payment is \$178K. For a 10-year term, it jumps to \$280K per year. Therefore, it is not likely the Town can take on two such large projects at once.

Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) Grants (\$350K)

Coordinator Dorr Fox said he was standing in for HAHT Chair Russ Tanzer. He detailed CPC grants already awarded to the Trust (\$250K in 2016, \$400K in 2017, and \$100K in 2018; the latter goes into effect July 1.) He said two years ago, there was a major concern about tying up large sums of CPC money for a long time, so expiration dates were put on the grants. The expiration date on the 2016 grant was set at two years out, which is coming up on June 30. (\$50K of the \$250K in grant money has been spent primarily on consultants and legal fees.) Over the last few years, the Trust has been working hard, looking at several properties for affordable housing, including the Longmeadow site, a portion of Gordon-Conwell, and 13 Essex St. The HAHT has a Community Host Agreement with Harborlight Community Partners, and at one point it decided \$300K would go to 20 senior housing units at 59 Willow St., and \$300K would go to 40 family housing units at Longmeadow. Recently the Trust found this isn't a viable option—unless the Town would be interested in purchasing a portion of that property for municipal use. Now a proposal is on the table for just developing 7 units at Willow Street (family housing not senior housing), but due to financing options, the project will cost \$800K. If that project goes forward the Trust will need to ask the CPC for approximately \$150K in additional grant money. If they can't get the Willow St. agreement signed by June 30, the Trust will need to ask that its original grant money be re-appropriated.

Hamilton Housing Authority—Kate McGuire, Executive Director

Ms. McGuire said the Housing Authority met earlier this month to discuss their application for funding. They have narrow parameters within which to work. The most important project they have now within the parameters is for the repainting of the exterior of four townhouse-style apartments on Central Ave. and Harris Ave. The total is \$11,796.

Renovation of Basketball Courts at Patton Park—Sean Timmons, Recreation Director

Mr. Timmons thanked the CPC on behalf of the Recreation Committee for how supportive they've been in the past for recreation projects like the Town pool, bleachers and baseball diamond at Patton Park, as well as many playgrounds. The project he is presenting now is to completely remove two existing basketball hoop systems, which are leaning heavily forward and don't sit at 10 feet, and to install two new gooseneck systems. Kids won't be able to hang on the rims of these. The cost is approximately \$4K plus the cost to install.

Mr. Catalano said there are restrictions on using CPA money for maintenance, although they can spend money on maintenance for projects originally funded with CPA funds.

Mr. Farrell mentioned the idea of increasing the surcharge to 3%, thereby increasing the percentage of the State match and resulting in more CPC grant money for funding projects. William Olson asked where that would take the Town in terms of the match. Robert Preston said it was public record and they could find out, although it does vary from year to year. Jeff Hubbard said they will need to investigate the numbers. Mr. Farrell said the increase would have to come to Town Meeting via a citizen's petition. Mr. Butler said right now, funding is a moving target until they find out if the bill passes [regarding the potential increase in Registry of Deeds fees]. He said if they went to 3%, the amount collected from the Town would jump from \$4K to about \$6K.

Scott Maddern said prioritizing projects is needed. He suggested polling the townspeople regarding the surcharge. His sense and personal opinion is that the Town should stay at the 2% and focus on sustaining what it already has, as opposing to acquiring more. He said it was confusing having taxpayers pay into too many streams. Regarding the Town budget for Fiscal Year '19, the Town looked hard at keeping the total spending increase to less than 1%. He feels an increase in the surcharge is another burden on the taxpayer. Mr. Preston commented that one of the nice features of the surcharge is that it can be waived for those who need it. With other taxes, you can't do that.

Robin Crosbie said it's been her experience that often when a community acquires things, it forgets about budgeting for associated operational costs. She said it might be helpful to have parameters outlined—for example, something under \$10K is not considered a capital project. For things like painting, she said, other funding sources can usually be found.

The two boards agreed they need to look at all the proposals and prioritize them rather than just determining as they go along whether a project is eligible for CPC funds or not. Projects that tick off more than one box and have multiple uses are best.

Rick Mitchell of the Planning Board and Hamilton Development Corporation said he wanted to support long-range thinking in talking about a potential 3% surcharge with so many projects coming down the rails. He supported the idea of a survey, but said it would be important to specify how a move to a 3% surcharge would impact the taxpayer's bottom line. One of his concerns is that while everybody loves open space, it takes more property off the tax rolls.

Jack Lawrence, 105 Rock Maple Ave., posed the question: What is the impact if the CPA disappears and there are bonding obligations? Planning years out is critical, he said.

Mr. Catalano mentioned the townspeople can vote to retire an existing bond with general funds.

Mr. Farrell presented Mr. Catalano with a citation and commemorative pin for his 30 plus years of service to the Town. He has been on numerous boards and committees, primarily the CPC and Historic District/Historical Commission.

Mr. Farrell thanked everyone for coming and said they would take a five-minute break before adjourning the public hearing and beginning the regular BOS meeting.

Adjournment of the CPC Portion of the Meeting

Mr. Butler made a motion to adjourn the CPC portion of the meeting at 7:50 p.m. Ed Howard seconded the motion. The CPC voted unanimously among those present (6-0) to adjourn the meeting.