

Community Preservation Committee

Minutes

August 3, 2021

Members Present: Pamela Tobey, Jennifer-lee Levitz-Aronson, Hank McCarl, Heidi Wakeman, Bob Whitmarsh, Matthew Lundberg, Kerry McKenna, and Bill Cuff.

Absent: None.

Members of the public: Jamie Sirois, Jennifer Hale.

Staff: Jaimie Corliss, Kara Jameson.

Meeting called to order 6:07 PM by Matt L. with the following preamble: This meeting is recorded by video and audio in accordance with state Open Meeting Law. Consistent with the Governor's orders suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law and banning gatherings of more than 10 people, this meeting will be conducted by remote participation.

If you are calling in on a phone you can press Star 9 (*9) to request to speak. If you are watching on a computer or device there is a "raise hand" button that you can tap or press to request to speak. Please use either of these options during oral communications to be recognized to speak.

Matt L. added that this meeting will be a discussion of applications and be open for public comment, but voting will not take place until September 21st.

Attendance was taken by roll call. Bob W. arrived at 6:21 PM.

Item # Discussion of Projects

Annisquam Village Church – Matt L. gave a brief overview of the Annisquam Village Church application and funding request. Kerry M. asked if there was any information provided by Chip Payson, Legal Counsel, regarding this project as it is a religious institute. Matt L. updated the Committee that he and Pam T. met with Chip Payson to discuss this project. Matt L. reviewed the three prong test used to determine whether or not this project violates the Aid Law. The three factors are: 1. Is the purpose of the grant to found, maintain, or aid the Church; 2. Will the grant substantially aid the church; 3. Will the grant risk political or economic abuses or does it entangle the City with the church. It is Chip's opinion that this project does not violate the Anti-Aid legislation based on those factors. Bill C. added that he read the emails regarding the concerns raised in 2018 for the grant to the Annisquam Village Church. Jaimie C. stated that there was no additional follow up from the watchdog group or the community and payment was issued for the grant. Matt L. added that a letter was sent to the Freedom from Religion Institute, which received no further response.

First Parish Burial Ground – Matt L. gave a brief overview of the Gloucester Cemetery Advisory Committee application and funding request. There were no questions or comments.

Gloucester 400 – Matt L. gave a brief overview of the Gloucester 400 application and funding request. Hank M. expressed his concern that digitization will need to be continually updated in order to remain current and accessible. He would like to know how the documents will be digitized, how it will be maintained, and for what length of time will it be relevant. Matt L. added his agreement that you cannot rely on digital copies and would like to review where the

digital and original files will be retained. Kerry M. stated the application seemed reasonable and believes they will be collaborating with the library. Matt L. is the contact for this project and will do follow up in time for the September 21st meeting. Jaimie C. mentioned the email received from Stuart Saginor which stated the digitization of documents is not an allowable expense. There was further discussion regarding the value of digital preservation and the potential for these efforts to be funded in the future. There was discussion regarding focusing the funding on conservation. Pam T. stated that there are two pieces of preservation in their application that are not currently part of the request, but would be better suited to this project. Jennifer-lee L. asked if we could broaden the award beyond the original request. There was further discussion regarding how to assist the Gloucester 400 with this project. Matt L. summarized the three outstanding questions/areas for clarification on this project: 1. Provide more detail on the digital storage, maintenance, and long term. 2. Discussion regarding redirecting their budget to areas of project that are restoration and better suited for CPC funds. 3. Is there anything else in this project that has not yet been considered that could be funded. Bob W. stated he does not feel this project meets the threshold for eligibility and that digitizing documents is not one of the approved funding categories.

Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation – Matt L. gave a brief overview of the Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation application and funding request. Bob W. stated he believes this is an important building for the community as it has so much history and offers much more than religious services. Jennifer-lee L. asked if they have other sources of funding that they could utilize if they did not receive the full amount requested. Hank M. stated that most organizations have access to other funding sources, but that this building is worthy of the investment from CPC. Matt L. pointed out that the application includes significant anticipated funding from another grant source. He added his concern about the amount of funding being requested for the front lawn, but noted that the meeting green is on the National Register of Historic Places. Bill C. added that he believes that there is value added to the application that part of the restoration includes an open space. Pam T. asked about directing funds towards the contingency. Jaimie C. added that wrapping the funds up in contingency is administratively more difficult. All the contracts include clauses about using CPC funds after all other sources, which speaks to this concern.

Jennifer Hale, 20 Gould Court, stated they are opposed to their tax dollars going towards the church. The church is the main beneficiary of this project. They are concerned about the Meetinghouse Foundation not including the neighborhood in their plans for activities and has often disregarded the neighborhood concerns about activities. They gave an example of a theater project that was expected to have 500 people outside. Jennifer H. believes the church's renovations have changed the whole character of the neighborhood and operates with disregard for the neighbors. Matt L. asked if there were other issues the neighborhood has experienced due to activities from the Gloucester Meetinghouse. Jennifer H. added that removal of a wall at the end of Gould Court that has changed the traffic pattern and safety of the street. She asked if there is a way for other residents to submit concerns if they are unable to attend meetings. Jaimie C. suggested they be emailed directly to jcorliss@gloucester-ma.gov.

Jamie Sirois, 20 Gould Court, noted their support of Jennifer H.'s comments and stated they are uncomfortable with tax funds going to the preservation of a church property. As a resident living near the church, the church and meetinghouse have not done a great job at engaging the neighborhood. The Meetinghouse Foundation has changed the nature of the neighborhood and not for the positive. Before getting public funding, the Foundation needs to consult with neighbors about plans.

Pam T. will be reaching out to Charles Nazarian to address these concerns. Jennifer-lee L. asked if there are permits that are required for these events and if there is an avenue for public input at that time. Jamie S. stated they do not believe events on private property are required to obtain permits. Jennifer-lee L. stated we should look into the events process. She also asked if there are permits required to do different types of construction work, such as tearing down the exterior wall. Jamie S. clarified that the City took a portion of the wall on Gould Court down during paving/sewer work and it was not rebuilt. It used to be a dead end street, but is now a thoroughfare. Jennifer-Lee L. asked if it was done for the purpose of access for firetrucks. Jamie S. stated it is his understanding that it was done to allow for additional parking. There was discussion regarding the kind of permitting required for projects approved through the CPC.

Hammond Castle Museum – Matt L. gave a brief overview of the Hammond Castle Museum project and funding request. There was discussion regarding the clerestory project that was recently before the Committee. Matt L. stated he believes the Hammond Castle Museum is a well-run, professional organization. His one concern with this project is the potential for additional work to be required once the project begins. Jennifer-lee L. asked if this building is truly historic preservation, as it is a hodge podge building. Pam T. added that if there is a significant part of the building that needs to be addressed, for example if support columns on the front of the building need to be replaced in order to prevent it collapsing, then that would rise to the threshold of historic preservation. She added that maybe the arches meet that definition. Kerry M. stated she believes that CPA funds are becoming a bank account for the Hammond Castle Museum. Bob W. stated the Castle and the arches are historic based on the historic value it adds to the community. There was further discussion regarding the amount being requested.

Ocean Alliance – Matt L. gave a brief overview of the project and funding request. Bill C. stated he has concerns about the amount being requested of the CPC for this project and prior projects. He added that he understands that donors are more interested in funding the whale research and not in the preservation of the building, but the request is high. Kerry M. added that this request is to fund the start of the process that would allow them to begin fundraising efforts. Jennifer-lee L. added that funding has been awarded for the development of plans for Stage Fort Park. Matt L. asked why the amount being requested went up to \$150,000 in the application from \$100,000 in the eligibility form. Kerry M. stated that it is related to requirements issued from the EPA. Matt L. expressed his concern over the nature of the plan as it seems more of an economic development plan and not historic preservation. Jennifer-lee L. asked if there is a way for Ocean Alliance to commit to paying back the CPC once they are operating with a profit. Matt L. will be following up with Chip Payson to discuss. Bill C. asked about a discrepancy in the request budget. Pam T. stated that per the applicant, it was an error and that the soft costs should have also been included. There was further discussion regarding the future fundraising efforts of the Ocean Alliance.

Saunders House Murals – Matt L. gave a brief overview of the project and funding request. There were no questions or comments.

Schooner Adventure – Matt L. gave a brief overview of the project and funding request. There were no questions or comments.

Trustees of Reservations – Matt L. gave a brief overview of the project and funding request. Kerry M. stated her support for the project and added that during the site visit it was clear what they are looking to do. Heidi W. added that the schools use Ravenswood for cross country running.

Bill C. asked about doing a site visit at the Meetinghouse to review concerns expressed by members of the public. Pam T. will be coordinating that meeting. Bill C. asked for clarification of the CPC's budget. Jaimie C. stated that the budget for FY22 is \$760,000 and that there is approximately \$1.5 million available in the fund balance.

There was discussion regarding whether or not CPC funds have been used to purchase open space.

There was discussion regarding whether to continue meeting virtually. Matt L. will follow up with the Mayor's Office to express the Committee's preference to continue meeting remotely.

Next Meeting – September 21, 2021

MOTION: Bob W. moved to adjourn. Seconded by Hank M. Roll call vote: Jennifer-lee A. yes; Hank M. yes; Heidi W. yes; Kerry M. yes; Pam T. yes; Matt L. yes; Bill C yes; and Bob W. yes. Motion passes.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM.