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Community Preservation Committee

MINUTES of PUBLIC MEETING

15 June 2011

The meeting was held on Wednesday 15 June 2011 at the Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut Street, Newtonville. Members of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) present: Nancy Grissom, Thomas Turner, Leslie Burg, Zack Blake, Jim Robertson. Arrived approx. 7:15 pm: Joel Feinberg, Dan Green, and Michael Clarke. Absent: Wally Bernheimer.

Program manager Alice Ingerson served as recorder.

Committee Chair Nancy Grissom opened the meeting at 7:08 pm.

PROPOSALS & PROJECTS

CITY HISTORIC BUILDINGS SURVEY

Stephanie Gilman, Public Buildings Commissioner, reviewed the draft scope for this project. The overall consultant for the city's capital needs assessment is Kleinfelder/SEA. The consultant for the historic buildings portion of the assessment is Building Conservation Associates (BCA), specifically Andrea Gilmore. The BCA contract would be finalized in the next week or two. Gilman expects initial data from both assessments to be submitted for City review in September, with a first-draft report by early October. The assessment will inform the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) that the Mayor must submit to the Board of Aldermen on October 17, 2011.

Gilman distributed her draft list of the buildings for BCA's assessment. She felt that detailed historic assessment should focus just on buildings in poor condition, to use funds efficiently. She felt the alternative approach might cost more than the funding she had requested and that was appropriated, and that the CPC's requested approach would mean paying the consultant to confirm what was already obvious to City staff. Zack Blake agreed with Gilman's approach.

Nancy Grissom and Leslie Burg recalled that the CPC's funding recommendation required the consultant to start by looking briefly at all City buildings, and then identify a smaller number for detailed historic assessment. Tom Turner felt that the number of buildings considered significant should be a function of the buildings' history, not the amount of funding available. Ingerson also noted that some significant buildings would not need a detailed assessment; for example, the Crafts Street Stable had recently been added to the National Register of Historic Places, based on detailed work by the City's senior preservation planner, Brian Lever.

Gilman said she herself had recognized the historic interest of some buildings only after looking at them more closely. The Nonantum Branch Library was an example. Michael Clarke felt that the Nahanton Park garage seemed more historically interesting than its listed construction date of the 1960s seemed to imply. Ingerson noted that, although it might seem more efficient to start with

building condition and only then think about historic significance, in practice doing things in the reverse order was often a more efficient way to design projects that could qualify for CPA funds.

After further discussion, Gilman accepted the Committee's requirement for an initial drive-by survey of all City buildings. The Committee then accepted Ingerson's suggestions that: (1) the consultant flag schools that deserved further historic assessment, without making detailed recommendations for the preservation or rehabilitation of school buildings; and (2) if the historic consultant's draft list of City buildings deserving detailed assessment was completed between CPC meetings, the Committee should delegate that review to staff and the CPC members with historic resources expertise, perhaps along with the current or incoming officers, to avoid holding the project up.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Ingerson asked the Committee to reschedule its July meeting, with which she had a personal conflict. After brief discussion, the Committee unanimously agreed to cancel its July meeting.

Ingerson then reviewed the possible CPC schedule for fy 12, and noted that the Committee needed to finalize that soon, to give proposal sponsors adequate notice of any changes.

Nancy Grissom proposed postponing the next regular deadline until summer 2012 for pre-proposals, and fall 2012 for proposals that could be funded from either fy12 or fy13 funds. By summer 2012, all currently ongoing surveys and plans will be finished, including the City Archives Survey, the City Historic Buildings Survey, the new Recreation and Open Space Plan, and the full CIP. The CPC needs these surveys and plans to help it screen new proposals.

In the meantime, Grissom proposed continuing to accept pre-proposals on a rolling basis, as the CPC began doing in fall 2010. This would let sponsors make a case for off-cycle consideration of any truly time-sensitive proposals. Ingerson summarized the CPC's past practice of accepting proposals off-cycle only when a "unique opportunity would be lost by waiting for the next regular deadline." Mostly cases had involved real estate acquisitions, when the seller needed a rapid decision.

After a brief discussion, the Committee unanimously accepted Grissom's proposal and asked Ingerson to finalize the new schedule. Ingerson said she would draft a press release about the new schedule and distribute it after review by the CPC officers.

Ingerson recommended organizing outreach for the program's 10th anniversary in fy12-13 by neighborhood. Grissom felt that Aldermen might be especially willing to help during the fall 2011 election season. Burg felt neighborhood events should be spaced out, as it was already too late to plan all the events for the coming fall. In response to a question from Dan Green, Ingerson agreed that the CPC should carefully plan and manage any video production undertaken as part of the 10th anniversary activities. The Committee postponed any further discussion of outreach for the program's 10th anniversary year. Ingerson apologized to intern Alex Marks-Katz for inviting him to attend tonight's meeting because this topic was on the agenda, and thanked him for the time-consuming but critical work he had done in compiling webpages for all past CPA projects in Newton.

The Committee accepted Grissom's suggestion that the CPC officers work with Ingerson to draft a 10th anniversary workplan for review by the full Committee at its next meeting.

The Committee then discussed its future schedule for regular meetings. Ingerson noted that the current schedule conflicted with several Aldermanic committees, making it difficult to find meeting rooms in City Hall and difficult for many Aldermen to follow or participate in CPC meetings, especially when the CPC met outside City Hall. Ingerson noted that Tuesdays did not have these problems and

especially recommended 4th Tuesdays, if the Board accepts a current proposal to eliminate its 3 committees that currently meet on those days (including its Committee on Community Preservation). After further discussion, the Committee agreed to move its regular meetings to Tuesdays and back to City Hall, and asked Ingerson to finalize the new schedule.

PROPOSALS & PROJECTS cont'd

UPDATES on CURRENT PROPOSALS & PROJECTS

Nancy Grissom reported a good turnout at the open house for the housing project Veterans House (2148-55 Commonwealth Avenue). Veterans Administration (VA) representatives had stayed for the entire time. The first tenant, a female veteran, was moving into one unit in early June, and the VA thought they had a second tenant lined up for the other, larger unit.

Grissom also suggested that members visit the Durant-Kenrick Homestead while the archaeological work was going on there, and asked Ingerson to forward senior preservation planner Brian Lever's email about this to the entire CPC.

Ingerson noted that some Aldermen had recently questioned the use of CPC administrative funds to meet the Massachusetts Historical Commission's matching funds requirement for a grant to produce historic preservation guidelines. Ingerson noted that, once the Board approved the CPC's overall administrative budget, its approval was not required for each expenditure within that budget. However, she felt that the Committee should consider the Board's views carefully when making major commitments of administrative funds and advised that there might be a detailed discussion of any planned administrative expenditures for the program's 10th anniversary when the Board reviews the final fy12 program budget in October 2012, once state fy12 funds are confirmed. She also suggested that CPC members review the June 8, 2011 meeting of the Board's Rules Subcommittee, at which some Aldermen had been fairly critical of the CPC. This report and sound file are online from www.newtonma.gov/Aldermen/Agendas/rules-subcommittee.htm.

Finally, Ingerson noted that she had not yet received any written response to her written requests on the CPC's behalf for the Parks and Recreation Department to close the project account for the Albemarle Community Commons project, or for the Conservation Commission to close the account for the Flowed Meadow Boardwalk project. Dan Green reported orally that the Conservation Commission had voted to close the latter account.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS cont'd

Dan Green moved acceptance of the draft CPC minutes for 15 May 2011, subject to corrections noted by Leslie Burg. Zack Blake seconded the motion, which was approved by a vote of 8-0.

After a motion by Dan Green, seconded by Zack Blake and supported by all other members present, Nancy Grissom adjourned the meeting at 8:00 pm.

PRE-MEETING PACKET & MEETING HANDOUTS:

- for City Historic Buildings Survey: CPC recommendation (available from www.newtonma.gov/cpa/projects.htm) and S. Gilman draft list of buildings to be included
- staff-drafted goals for program 10th anniversary activities (see next page)

A Ingerson notes to CPC

first draft 17 Sept 2010, rev. Feb 2011 & June 2011

Happy 10th Birthday, Newton CPA!

GOALS

1. use a "place-based" approach to setting priorities

Most people in Newton pay little attention to City government until it does something visible in their neighborhood. Don't fight this -- use it!

2. encourage multi-year plans & programs [See CPC section of *Fy12 City of Newton Budget*.]

3. foster regional learning & leadership [There was little CPC interest in this when it was first presented, so this section has been deleted.]

ACTIVITIES

◆ **preparation**

Newton has funded between 45-50 projects or sites. Complete & correct webpages & state database entries for all by late June 2011 (possible thanks to Alex!). Ask each CPC member to review 5-6 project webpages & recommend 1-2 to feature in 10th anniversary events.

◆ **publicity & collaboration** It all depends on who will *really pitch in*, but ...

Make the *process* as well as *products* newsworthy: involve residents, nonprofit groups, Board of Aldermen. CPC members should write op eds, make presentations, offer interviews.

Work with student journalists as well as professionals. In Newton, students are always news.

◆ **neighborhood meetings** (organized & run by CPC and staff)

Hold at least 4 neighborhood meetings in 2011-2012, at times of year when the CPC & staff don't have major proposal review workload, and the public is not away (i.e., not summer).

Timing: Bunch together? Or spread out (1 each fall, 1 each spring)?

Don't just have an open mike. Instead, offer information for people to comment on:

- neighborhood maps & photos (minimize statistics) for all CPA-eligible resources & needs, including projects already funded
- city-wide surveys & plans: *Comprehensive Plan*, *Capital Improvements Plan* (Archives Survey, City Historic Buildings Survey, Archaeology & Early Architecture Surveys), *Recreation & Open Space Plan*, proposed new approaches to funding for housing

NOTE: Newton's 2007 *Comprehensive Plan* recommends "initiating neighborhood-level implementation ... through history presentations/discussions that integrate all the issues and goals covered in this *Plan* ..." Ideally, the CPA should also be about synergy rather than competition among eligible resources & projects.

◆ **other neighborhood activities & products** (run mostly by someone other than CPC and staff)

Would be great advance publicity for mtgs, but if mtgs are mostly fall 2011, treat as follow-up instead, with extra channels for public feedback (incl. online or mail survey).

- a. "CPA weekend" of "Open Studios" site visits; walking/bike tours/photo safaris are great but much more work to plan, and some n'hoods are too spread out for tours
- b. postcard contest ("special places") -- a good school or afterschool activity
- c. video interviews (by student journalists)

Put maps, photos, postcards, & interviews online; display at schools or branch libraries.

◆ **citywide video** – Source materials could be used for an exhibit at the Library or City Hall, but best cost/benefit ratio will be for a portable, re-usable final product without a fixed date.

Edit neighborhood results into a half-hour presentation. Premiere at full Board of Aldermen mtg, then move on to Library, NewTV, PTOs, etc. Post clips on website.