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**Community Preservation Committee**

MINUTES

July 14, 2020

The virtual meeting was held online on Tuesday, July 14, 2020 beginning at 7:00 pm. Community Preservation Committee (CPC) members present included Mark Armstrong, Dan Brody, Byron Dunker, Rick Kronish, Susan Lunin, Robert Maloney, Jennifer Molinsky, and Martin Smargiassi. Community Preservation Program Manager Lara Kritzer were also and served as recorder.

Mr. Armstrong opened the meeting and all members introduced themselves at this time. Ms. Kritzer briefly reviewed the CPC's proposal review process and the procedures for the virtual proposal review.

**Proposals & Projects**

**Pre-Proposal for Grace Episcopal Church Tower, Belfry and Spire Restoration**

Applicant Austin Stewart introduced himself as a member of Grace Episcopal Church. He then introduced Jean Papalia, the Senior Warden of the Vestry's Executive Committee, and Vestry member and architect Scott Aquilina. Mr. Stewart began by noting that the church was located at the Northeast corner of Farlow Park and was one of the City's oldest standing stone churches. The building was a defining feature of both Farlow Park and Newton Corner and was listed as "a local landmark of outstanding quality" in the 1982 architectural inventory of the area completed by the Newton Historical Commission. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Farlow and Kenrick Parks National Register District and is mentioned in architectural and historical surveys of Newton.

Mr. Stewart explained that the tower houses a bell carillon which is presently endangered due to the condition of the structure. As part of the feasibility study conducted for the project, the congregation had discussed the use of the structure and determined that it was not integral to its religious mission. While the structure was a significant element of the streetscape, they had agreed that it had very little to do with the congregation's activities. Mr. Stewart noted that the bells were often used for public celebrations and community activities, such as ringing them for the 2020 high school graduation ceremony and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Mr. Stewart went on to explain that the congregation had hired John Wathne from Structures North to evaluate the masonry structure. Mr. Wathne completed an exterior condition report on the structure which noted the open joints and cavities in the masonry as well as how the structure was buckling outward due to the weight of the stone roof. Mr. Stewart noted that individual stones could be removed from the building now by hand. The building needed structural repairs to remediate the

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fatal flaws in the design of the tower as well as repointing on both the interior and exterior of the structure. Mr. Stewart explained that the restoration of the tower was a benefit to the community, and that they were asking for CPA funding to complete work that they could not do themselves.

Mr. Armstrong stated that he had several issues with the pre-proposal beginning with the amount of the public contribution in comparison to the private one proposed. He noted that Newton's CPA guidelines recommended that CPA funding be no more than half of the cost of a project, but the amount currently requested was closer to 55%. Mr. Armstrong asked if the tower was a public feature and Mr. Stewart explained that it was a neighborhood landmark. Mr. Armstrong recommended that the Applicants consider amending their CPA proposal to be less than 50% of the total project budget.

Ms. Lunin noted that the Applicants had provided several examples of the bell tower being used for a public benefit. She thought that the bells brought joy to the community and could be seen as a community resource. Mr. Stewart added that the property was also used as a polling site and that a portion of the building was leased to Riverside Community Care. He explained that many social and community organizations utilized the space and that they saw the property as an available public asset.

Mr. Kronish asked if the property was owned by Grace Episcopal Church. Mr. Stewart answered that the congregation owned the property as a corporate body. Mr. Kronish asked if there were any restrictions on the future sale of the property that would limit any future uses. Mr. Stewart stated that there was already a Preservation Restriction on the property which is held by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). The restriction was placed on the property in the 1990s when the congregation received funding for the exterior restoration of the clerestory windows. It was noted that the current project involved the restoration of the supportive structure holding up the bells and their tower.

Ms. Molinsky noted the previous work completed by the congregation to maintain and preserve their building, the efforts made to study and develop plans for the problem areas and asked about the number of quotes received for the proposed work.

Architect Larry Bauer stated that he has been involved with Grace Episcopal since 1975 and had overseen the restoration work done in 2010-2011 as well as the repointing of the masonry on the spire in 1989. He explained that they were also planning to apply for MHC grant funds to replace the interior structure where the diaphragms had rotted and restore the belfry. He also noted that they did have additional quotes for the work which can be shared with the Committee. Architect Scott Aquilina stated that he had worked with Mr. Bauer for five years on the building and had been a member of the church since 1984. He explained that they had been tracking the current problem with the tower since 2010 when they had engineering firm Simpson Gumpertz & Heger look at the structure and assess the structural problems. John Wathne of Structures North had also been part of the analysis of the building, which identified several other issues at the time but had found that the tower was not in imminent danger. In 2018, the congregation took another look at the towers and did an in-depth review, bringing in preservation masonry expert Judy Selwyn to assess it as well. They had also brought in Shawmut Construction and Allegrone Companies, companies which specialized in tower and masonry work, to provide quotes for the project.

Ms. Molinsky asked if the tower had a faulty design that was causing the deterioration. Mr. Bauer answered that the damage was not known until 2010 and was due to the weight of the stone tower pushing out on the walls below. The first signs of this problem appeared in 2010 and Mr. Bauer noted that if the surrounding buttresses had been longer, there would not be a problem with the spire. Mr. Maloney asked how recent the quotes and estimates were for the work. Mr. Aquilina stated that the quotes were from the first quarter of 2020. He added that they were hoping to see some economies due to the current situation. He noted, however, that Boston was in the midst of a hundred year building boom and that unpredictable weather could impact the timing of the project. The restoration required very specialized work so they could not use just any contractor to complete it, but Mr. Aquilina thought that if they received funding and could go forward with the full project soon, that they might be able to see economies in the project.

Mr. Dunker asked if the City had ever spent this much funding before on an historic preservation project. Mr. Armstrong noted that the CPC had recommended the Durant-Kenrick House project in 2007 for \$1.7 million. Ms. Kritzer also reviewed the Allen House, which had received over \$2 million in funding over several different funding rounds.

Mr. Brody raised the issue of the Caplan v. Acton case which questioned the use of CPA funding on religious buildings. Mr. Stewart addressed the Anti-Aid Amendment question raised in the case and explained that they were also seeking out counsel to address the fundamental issues raised in the case. Mr. Aquilina noted that Cambridge's CPA had funded restoration of many of its religious buildings over the last fifteen years and that Boston was considering projects in churches in Back Bay and Roxbury. Mr. Stewart stated that the Caplan v. Acton case had been largely supported by American United for Separation of Church and State and that both the Supreme Judicial Court and Superior Court had found that public grants did not infringe on the Anti Aid Amendment and were allowable. Mr. Bauer added that the Massachusetts Historical Commission had also funded churches through their Mass. Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) since the 1980s, with approximately 20% of their projects being religious structures.

Mr. Armstrong thought that the applicants had gone to great lengths to separate the tower from the nave and stated that he thought that both elements were essentially the same structure in the public's view. He thought that the iconography of the interior was only realized when viewed from the exterior as an element of the landscape. Mr. Stewart explained that the building had functioned for the last ten to twelve years with the tower off limits. He noted that they could continue their religious mission without the tower but wanted to be good stewards to their historic building. The tower could also serve as an entrance to the structure if it was stabilized, but this was also not necessary for the church to function. Mr. Armstrong thought that the tower felt like the symbolic heart or anchor of the building. Mr. Stewart disagreed, explaining that Episcopalians did not have a strong recognition of icons and were instead focused on their religious practice.

Mr. Smargiassi asked if the building was a landmark. It was noted that it was not a designated historic landmark under the City of Newton's Landmark Ordinance but that it was a neighborhood landmark and a significant historic structure. Mr. Stewart explained the history of the building and its importance to the neighborhood and community. Mr. Bauer reiterated that the building was included on the National Register as a contributing element of a National Register Historic District. Mr. Smargiassi thought that all historic property owners needed to be prepared to address challenges

with their buildings and asked if the congregation had funds available to do this work. Mr. Stewart noted that the congregation had maintained the building on its own for 150 years. He added that their pre-proposal included a list of other funding sources and that they were actively working to raise additional funding through grants and other programs. Mr. Stewart stated that they could not do this on their own, though, and would need assistance from the CPA fund to complete the necessary structural work on the tower.

Mr. Smargiassi asked how the congregation would proceed if they got less CPA funding or no funding at all. Mr. Stewart stated that the deterioration of the tower has accelerated. If funding was not available to restore the structure and it continued to endanger the public, then the congregation would be forced to consider extreme measures. Mr. Brody noted that the project was divided into four scopes and asked if it was possible to divide the work into two projects. He asked if it was possible to do the stabilization work and then stop work until the rest of the funding was raised. Mr. Aquilina explained that the project both posed a tremendous challenge and raised significant concerns for public safety. While the plan identified a separate scope for the stabilization work, which was anticipated to cost approximately 50% of the CPA funding allocation, the rest of the work would need to follow shortly thereafter to prevent further damage. The stabilization would take care of the base and secure the structure, but without the second phase of work to repoint and restore the masonry, water infiltration would continue and could undue the completed structural work. Mr. Stewart also noted that it was an issue of momentum, and that there were cost savings in doing all the work at one time.

Mr. Brody stated that he would be more comfortable with a CPA proposal that requested 50% or less of the overall project cost, in part because of the uncertainty of the other funding sources. Mr. Armstrong echoed the sentiment and added that he was in favor of the project. He agreed that the unique conditions of the masonry roof made the project a difficult one but thought that the applicants were doing their homework and had called in many of the top consultants and preservation specialists to review the structure. Mr. Armstrong thought that this was a site which many people saw and interacted with, and which was part of the neighborhood's memory and landscape.

Mr. Brody moved to invite the applicants to submit a full proposal and asked the applicants to address the concerns raised during the discussion in their proposal. Mr. Maloney added that the proposal should include any cost savings possible through restructuring the work. Mr. Bauer noted that this was a two-part project and that the CPA funding was requested to be divided up over two to three years. However, if they were able to get more funding in one year, that could reduce the need to spread out the project and save up to \$350,000. Mr. Maloney appreciated this information and asked if the applicants could investigate more ways to save costs. Mr. Aquilina explained that they had received a lot of input from consultants on the work and that they had pinned their hopes to John Wathne's plan to use minimally invasive measures to stabilize the deterioration. Mr. Aquilina explained that the previous estimate from Simpson Gumpertz & Heger had been higher than the current estimates. He explained how their team was already working to make the project as cost effective as possible. Mr. Armstrong noted that they were proposing a high-tech solution for the tower. Mr. Aquilina agreed, explaining that this solution avoided the cost of having to completely rebuild the tower, and that this was a patented solution which had been successfully used on several

other significant historic structures. Ms. Lunin seconded the motion which was passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

### **Pre-Proposal for Commonwealth Avenue Carriageway Redesign**

Nicole Freedman, Director of Transportation Planning, and Barney Heath, Director of the Planning and Development Department, were present on behalf of the City's proposal. Ms. Freedman explained that the proposed project would redesign the northern carriageway of Commonwealth Avenue from Lyons Field west to Auburn Street. The goal of the project was to add useable greenspace to the area, including a bike path. The Carriageway would serve to link the Charles River Path, which comes out in Lyons Field, to Weston, which was working on a walkway to run through the town to Natick. The project would also increase the access to, and visibility of, the existing boathouse on the Charles River. Ms. Freedman explained that the northern carriageway provided only local access to residents throughout most of the City, but that this pattern falls apart in this area of Auburndale, where the northern carriageway becomes the highway access. The project would leverage funding that was already in place to reconstruct the Charles River Bridge to complete the design of the new greenspace. Ms. Freedman noted that the City had already provided \$200,000 to complete the 25% conceptual design and that the final design work would be done in conjunction with the MassDOT plans for the area. The construction of the new greenspace was already included in the \$5.9 million project which was now budgeted in the 2025 TIP. Ms. Freedman explained that the City was very fortunate to have the construction funding approved in the first round of review.

Mr. Smargiassi stated that he supported the project and thought that it was a great allocation of funds. He thought that the project would be a great resource for the community. Mr. Kronish asked for more information on the design of the bike path and Ms. Freedman explained how it would be designed. A member of the public, Scott Sanders, noted that there were no signals in this section of Commonwealth Avenue and asked if the project would include any accommodations for crossing the street. Ms. Freedman answered yes that they were looking at that as an option and hoped to build crossings into the design. A second member of the public, Doug Cornelius, thought that this would create a better entrance into Newton.

Mr. Dunker asked if the project would include any parking. Ms. Freedman responded that yes, there would be some parking at Lyons Field. She stated that they would try to have a similar amount of parking to what was there now but that they did not want to build a parking lot. Mr. Kronish moved to invite the applicants to submit a full proposal for the Commonwealth Avenue Carriageway Redesign Project. Ms. Lunin seconded the motion which was passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

### **Final Report on 236 Auburn Street Affordable Housing Project**

Mr. Armstrong summarized the history of the project, which combined historic resource and affordable housing funds to restore the original house and create three new units of affordable housing and one group living home for disabled adults. Metro West Collaborative Development Executive Director Jennifer Van Campen presented a brief PowerPoint presentation on the completed project at 236 Auburn Street. She explained that her firm had overseen the project for the property owner, CAN-DO, and that the group home in the rear building had been purchased by the Barry L. Price Rehabilitation Center. Ms. Van Campen reviewed the timeline for the project, noting that it had

taken a number of reviews and public hearings to complete the permitting process. She noted that the last outstanding item of the project was the completion of the preservation restriction on the front building. This restriction had been submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission in April, but they had not yet received comments. Ms. Van Campen stated that she had enlisted the help of Senator Creem's office to help the process move forward. The units were now fully occupied, with the first CAN-DO tenants moving in on March 1. The sale to the Price Center had taken longer, however, and the Covid-19 emergency had slowed down the final project approvals as well. Ms. Van Campen reviewed before and after photos of the project and noted that their lottery for the three rental units had had 151 applicants, forty of which had had local preference. She added that the average household applying for these units had annual incomes of \$35,165.

Ms. Van Campen reviewed the submitted final budget against the initial, conceptual, and GC bid budgets. The final project had come in just over \$4 million and they had been able to access additional HOME funds to complete the project. The project had included many funders and elements, including historic preservation work, setting up a condominium association, and using the public procurement process, all of which had created additional challenges and complicated the process.

Mr. Armstrong asked about the status of the property's finances. Ms. Van Campen explained that the MWCD had been contracted to finish the construction, sell the group home to the Price Center, and lease up the rental units, but was no longer connected with the day to day operations of the site. She noted that the property had only been in operation now for 1-2 months and that she did not have any information on the future operating budget. Mr. Kronish stated that he was surprised that there was no updated pro forma for the site and no information on its future or the stability of the units. Ms. Van Campen noted that an early pro forma had been included with the original proposal. Mr. Kronish stated that he was looking for clarity on the rent coming in and wanted some assurance that the units and site would be stable. Ms. Van Campen answered that the original operating budget was included in the original proposal and that she had no reason to think that it had changed significantly. Mr. Kronish reiterated that he would like to confirm the viability of the site and Mr. Maloney agreed.

Mr. Heath asked a point of order at this time. He believed that MWCD's primary roll was to deliver the project and noted that their association with the project had ended with the completion of the rental process. It was their job only to get the site up and running but they did not own the property and MWCD has no further roll with the running of the site. Mr. Heath stated that other parties now had that responsibility. Ms. Van Campen added that this information had not been a requirement in the CPA funding agreement. Mr. Kronish stated that he did not want to increase the requirements for completing the project but wanted assurances that the site would remain in the black. Mr. Armstrong suggested that the Committee vote on approving the final report with the caveat that Ms. Kritzer reach out to CAN-DO following the meeting to request this additional information before the historic preservation restriction was completed.

Ms. Lunin moved to approve the final report as submitted with the caveat that additional financial information and a current pro forma be submitted and the historic preservation restriction recorded before the project would be considered to be complete. Mr. Maloney seconded the motion which was passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

**Other Business**

Ms. Kritzer reviewed the current CPA finances with member at this time, noting that the funding information had been updated for FY21.

**Approval of June Minutes**

Members had reviewed the June minutes prior to the meeting and had no changes at this time. Ms. Lunin moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Maloney seconded the motion which was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 P.M.