



Ruthanne Fuller,
Mayor

Barney S. Heath
Director

Community Preservation Committee

MINUTES

September 20, 2021

The virtual meeting was held online on Tuesday, September 20, 2021 beginning at 7:00 P.M. Community Preservation Committee (CPC) members present included Mark Armstrong, Dan Brody, Eliza Datta, Susan Lunin, Robert Maloney, Jennifer Molinsky, Martin Smargiassi, and Judy Weber. Committee member Byron Dunker was not present at the start of the meeting but arrived during the general discussion. Community Preservation Program Manager Lara Kritzer was also present and served as recorder.

Chair Dan Brody opened the Community Preservation Committee's public meeting at 7:00 P.M. and introduced the CPC members present at this time.

Committee Member Introductions

Mr. Brody explained that at each meeting, two members would have a chance to briefly introduce themselves to the rest of the Committee. This meeting's introductions would be from Committee member Martin Smargiassi and staff person Lara Kritzer.

Mr. Smargiassi stated that he is on the CPC as the Mayor's appointee for historic resources. He explained that he is a strategic planner and licensed architect and has over 25 years of experience in the design and construction industry as a real estate developer and builder for small scale residential to large scale commercial projects. He served as the Director of Brady Sullivan Properties, overseeing numerous developments throughout New England including 80-300 unit historic mill conversions, 12-20 story office high rise towers, commercial/ mixed use office complex including high-rise, residential communities of 49+ units, and multiple building types. He served as the CEO and Principal Architect to Innovative Collaborations, Inc., an award-winning Boston firm, with a portfolio of boutique projects. He then became the founder and president of IC Development, Inc., a real-estate development firm with a range of work including a 16-unit residential project with affordable units in Falmouth and a 4-unit historic restoration and several single family developments in Newton.

Mr. Smargiassi stated that he has worked with local, state and federal agencies in completing these projects, including the National Park Service and General Services Administration, and has experience working with low income housing programs, Federal tax incentives, and municipal boards and commissions throughout Massachusetts as well as serving on the Auburndale Historic District Commission. He believes his diverse experience gives him a unique understanding of projects from multiple perspectives and noted that his company has been recognized by Green Building and Design Magazine for using energy & resource efficient sustainable strategies in a healthcare clinic and repurposing shipping containers within the harsh desert climate of Namibia, Africa. He has also been

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recognized for “Outstanding Design” by the Boston Redevelopment Authority and has been featured in numerous publications and television shows.

Ms. Kritzer started by noting that she had started working with the CPC about a year and a half ago but had actually started her career in Newton in the late 1990s after completing her Masters in Historic Preservation. Ms. Kritzer had worked as Newton’s Preservation Planner, overseeing the demolition review and landmark programs as well as the existing Chestnut Hill and Upper Falls Local District Commissions for eight years. During that time, she also oversaw several federal Survey and Planning Grant Projects and the creation of two new local historic districts in Newtonville and Auburndale. She explained that she had become interested in the Community Preservation Act and its possibilities when it was first established and in 2008 went to work in Concord to oversee their Community Preservation Act program. While in Concord, she also worked as the staff person to the local historic districts and historical commission and had an opportunity to work as the staff person to several affordable housing projects, including new development, rehabilitation, and existing unit resales. After nine years in Concord, Ms. Kritzer briefly moved to consulting where she worked on a range of projects in historic preservation, community preservation act administration, affordable housing planning, and slum and blight program reviews. A resident of Upper Falls, she was excited to have the opportunity to return to Newton and work full time with the Community Preservation Program.

Review of Proposed New Signage

Ms. Kritzer presented the draft sign designs completed by the Newton North Graphic Design program for temporary project signage. The students had proposed a horizontal sign that could be used for a vinyl banner style sign that could be hung on site fencing, and a vertical sign made from a plastic composite material used by NNHS to advertise plays and activities that can be installed on a flexible, moveable outdoor stand.

Members had no comments or changes to the proposed design for the new signs but did have concerns about the materials. Mr. Maloney noted that the composite sign material is generally used for signs that are only out for two to three weeks. CPA project signs could be out for several months at a time and he was concerned with how these signs would look after being out for a long period. He suggested that the CPC use the vinyl banner instead. Mr. Brody agreed that the composite sign would be similar to a political sign and might not age well. Ms. Weber agreed that the signs should be redone. Mr. Armstrong wanted to make sure that there was consistency in the CPA program’s signage and discussed changes to the dimensions of the signage. Ms. Weber agreed with Mr. Armstrong’s comments and noted that the NNHS program was also offering to redesign the CPC’s branding and logo. She thought the logo was fine but could be simpler. Mr. Brody agreed and suggested that the City map in the logo be altered to remove the streets and that the canoe be replaced with a more active recreation element such as people playing soccer, etc.

Members discussed the text of the signage and whether “residents of Newton” should be replaced with “taxpayers” or another word. Ms. Molinsky thought that “residents” was more inclusive and members agreed to leave the text unchanged but to ask that the website be added to the sign as well. Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Maloney discussed the configuration of the sign and its dimensions

before agreeing that the dimensions as proposed would be right for a banner sign. Mr. Maloney stated that he had experience with banners and that a durable vinyl banner would stand up outside for at least a year. Mr. Smargiassi stated that they had had good results with aluminum signs with PVC backing.

Ms. Kritzer stated that she would contact the student at NNHS with the design changes and let them know that the Committee was ready to work on a new logo.

Review of CPC Guidelines

Mr. Brody noted that a clean and redlined copy of the CPC's guidelines were included in the packets. He stated that he thought the revisions looked fine and suggested that the CPC hold a general discussion on the revisions. He asked members if they were generally satisfied with the proposed text, or if a more detailed discussion was needed. He also suggested that any text revisions should be sent to Ms. Kritzer so that she can create a new draft for review at the next meeting.

Mr. Brody opened the discussion by asking if the general response was that the document was going in the right direction. Ms. Weber stated that she was glad that it explained the difference between capital improvements and maintenance but thought that the definition was fuzzy. Mr. Brody raised the case of the City Hall/War Memorial steps and noted that the thought in this project was that it did not matter how long the work had been delayed, it still should be done by the City. However, he recognized that the City was not known for its historical accuracy and thought that the CPC could be willing to fund the difference between a regular repair and an historically correct one. He also stated that he liked the use of the narrative text in place of the table for clarity. Ms. Datta agreed that it was helpful to have additional details on the table items. Ms. Kritzer described the changes that were made between the original table and the undated narrative text.

Mr. Armstrong asked how the creation of an Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) might change these guidelines. He wondered if an AHT might cause the CPC to reconsider how this document was used. Ms. Weber agreed that the guidelines would need to be revised if an AHT was established but felt that it would be some time before any such changes were needed. Ms. Datta agreed that the creation of an AHT in Newton would not be done in the near future. Ms. Molinsky noted that even with an AHT, the CPC would still be allocating the community housing funds to the Trust on an annual basis. Mr. Brody agreed and thought that the CPC should move forward with the revisions. He suggested that members have two weeks from today to get their comments into Ms. Kritzer on the existing language and that the Committee be ready to vote on the changes at the next meeting. He asked that everyone send their changes directly to Ms. Kritzer, who would update the narrative to include changes and send it out in the October meeting packet.

Review of Current Finances

Ms. Kritzer reviewed the updated Finances At a Glance page with Members at this time, noting the updated Beginning Balance and funds reflected in the total amount. Ms. Weber asked about how the funding that is held in reserve is reflected in the amounts. Ms. Kritzer stated that it is included in the beginning balance as available funding for future use. Ms. Kritzer explained that a fourth page had

been added to the document for the program's recent spending history. The page includes FY21 – FY23 funding allocations to provide additional data on how the CPA funding has been spent. Ms. Kritzer noted that the Administration budget for FY22 and FY23 was highlighted and explained that this was because this would be adjusted at the end of the fiscal year to reflect the actual amount spent. Mr. Brody explained that including the Spending History information had been prompted by the conversations with the City Council during the Grace Tower reviews. He noted that the CPC already provided a huge amount of data on the program website but that the idea behind this document was to provide a succinct explanation that was easier to understand.

Current and Future Project Status

Ms. Kritzer reviewed the status of the currently funded projects and reviewed a list of potential future projects at this time. She noted that the future projects list had been assembled with the help of key stakeholders in each of the funding categories.

Review of Allocation Targets

Mr. Brody asked if the CPC thought that these numbers should be revised and if so, what the process should be to make those changes. He noted that the CPC had first established these targets in 2012 for the tenth anniversary of the program based on a public meeting process and had updated the numbers in 2018. He thought that it would be fine if the CPC did not want to make changes but that if they did, then the Committee should seek advice from the public before setting new goals.

Ms. Lunin noted that the West Newton Armory was likely to be a large funding request and wondered if that might throw a wrench into any new process that was established. She stated that she was less concerned with other projects but was not sure how they could address such large requests. Mr. Brody noted that the CPC could always bond large projects if necessary and that he was comfortable considering that for any substantial request. He reviewed the process used for the Webster Woods project and noted that the West Newton Armory could conceivably follow a similar one.

Mr. Brody stated that he always regarded these as multi-year targets and stated that he would agree with spending more in one year if necessary and balancing out in others. He noted that the CPC had spent a lot more in community housing in recent years than in other categories. Ms. Datta noted that the proposals for the West Newton Armory project would include rough estimates that would give the CPC a sense of what developers thought they would need for the project. Ms. Molinsky thought that it was reasonable for the CPC to open this question up to the public every ten years but noted that there were challenges to doing outreach. Ms. Weber thought that the CPC needed to consider how to best sustain all of the categories over time and that when asking the public, the issue was really about management over time. She noted that areas of popularity and need would change over time and that their efforts should be done carefully and with guidance to ensure that the survey reaches a wide range of residents.

Mr. Brody noted that the CPC had previously been in talks with the City Council to set up a joint meeting. He stated that he would reach out to the City Council President to see whether a date could

be set for this meeting. He suggested that the Committee share the Finance At a Glance materials and the current program guidelines and be prepared to discuss the role that City Council would like to play in the CPA process and public input. He expected that this would be a fifteen minute discussion at a City Council meeting. Ms. Lunin agreed with the materials and topics that Mr. Brody proposed. Mr. Brody stated that he would reach out to President Albright and let the CPC know when there was a potential date.

Approval of August 10 Minutes

Mr. Brody stated that he had reviewed the draft minutes for August 10 before they were sent out to the full Committee. Ms. Weber moved to approve the August 10 minutes as submitted. Mr. Maloney seconded the motion which passed by a vote of six to zero with Mr. Dunker and Mr. Smargiassi abstaining from the vote. Ms. Weber agreed to be the reviewer for the September draft minutes.

Mr. Armstrong moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Lunin seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 P.M.