

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES
January 27, 2022, 4:30 p.m.**

An online meeting of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) was held via Zoom beginning at 4.30pm on January 27, 2022. Real-time public access was provided by Orleans Channel 18 on the Town website and cable television.

Attending for CPC: Chair Walter North, Vice Chair, Barry Alper, Clerk Sue Christie, members Chet Crabtree, Charles Ellis, Stephanie Gaskill, John Lipman, Kevin Galligan. Joan Francolini was absent as previously notified.

1. Call to Order – The Chair called the meeting to order at 4.30pm

The chair advised the meeting's agenda might alter slightly to accommodate Mr. Walker. The chair discussed the need to start the February 3, 2022 meeting at an earlier time than 4.30.

2. Public Comment: No one presented for public comment.

3. Presentation and consideration of selected FY 2023 Project Applications (approximately 15 minutes each)

- Cedar Pond Parcels – CPC Liaison Kevin Galligan briefly introduced the Cedar Pond Parcel project and invited the Open Space representative Ms. Gaskill to discuss the grant application. A request for \$10,000 has been made for the purpose of acquiring lots #6 and #10 at Cedar Pond Rd for restoration, open space, recreation and to fit with the historical aspects of the Cedar Pond area. These two lots would accompany the acquisition by eminent domain of three other parcels of land to form a large swathe of conserved land. Committee members asked if the sum requested was sufficient and if the site needed management, weed eradication and other labor. The sum is believed to be adequate, and maintenance is not anticipated.
- Senior Center Walkway Restoration - CPC Liaison Sue Christie introduced Judi Wilson and Anita Rogers from the Council on Aging. Ms. Rogers reviewed to development of the walkway and the ongoing use of the resource. She described the current need which is to rehabilitate and restore the walkways and the garden. COA would fund a design of the garden walkways. The proposed grant would be for the implementation of a new design plan. Maintenance is not part of the grant application. Ms. Wilson described a range of recreational and public use activities that occur on the walkway and in the garden including therapeutic fitness, meditation, yoga, Tai Chi, concerts, luncheons, group gatherings, daycare, and other programming. Approximately 56% of the Orleans population is over the age of sixty and qualify to use this space through the COA. Mr. North confirmed that maintenance would be undertaken but was not funded by the grant. Mr. Lipman suggested it would be useful to see a more precise budget and timeline.
- Federated Church Steeple Renovation – Mr. Galligan introduced Mr. Brink to speak about the Federated Church and the historic restoration of the steeple and weathervane. Mr. Brink

explained the church building was on the historic register and dated to 1829. (The church itself was founded in 1648). An urgent safety issue necessitated the repair of the steeple louvres without waiting for an application and approval of a grant. The restoration was made more complicated by the need to be historically appropriate, and that some metal components were not readily available on the Cape. The steeplejack created the necessary pieces for an authentic-style restoration by hand. Mr. Stoeckert also spoke about the project. The Federated Church has previously received CPC funds because the building is both historic and serves the public at large through clubs, meetings, and support groups. Previous grants helped with a fire suppression system and lightning protection. Representatives for the Federated Church clearly articulated that CPC funding would NOT be used for the founding of a religious order. Funding is not required for the church's essential functions and the presenters believe there is no threat to civic harmony from the project. They stated they thought there should be no legal impediment to receiving a CPA grant. The committee asked Mr. Ellis to check with the Historic Commission regarding the compliance of the restoration to historical standards.

4. Bonding –consideration of bonding needs, implications, and variables – Town Treasurer Mr. Walker joined the meeting and showed a spreadsheet forecasting future CPC payments including debt servicing in the event all the requests for bonding (\$8million) were to go ahead. Mr. Walker noted a 3% increase in funding was estimated each year but could vary. He reminded members that debt service cannot come from the State's portion of annual CPC funding.

A lengthy discussion followed probing the relationship between debt obligations and the amount of town monies received for annual CPC allocation. Mr. Ellis observed this was between 80 and 90% of the total available town funding. Ms. Gaskill approximated the bonding of \$1M per year to debt servicing averaging \$75K per year.

Mr. Walker noted that interest rates were estimated to go up but that even if rates doubled to 5%, debt service could be managed, although 2026 could be a very tight year for the budget with very little funds for new grants.

Mr. Galligan asked about the view of rating agencies to debt. It was suggested that because CPC funding does not impact the property tax rate, it could be a benefit to bond through CPC.

Mr. Alper noted the current forecast left little room should other bonds be requested in future years.

Mr. Lipman and Mr. Crabtree suggested comparing Orleans to other towns to see how much neighboring towns have in debt and in what areas. It was noted that the Community Preservation Coalition does not recommend a specific level or ceiling for debt servicing. Some communities choose 100% of their CPC funds to go to debt servicing while many others choose a much lower percentage. It is a local decision.

Without expressing an opinion for or against bonding, Mr. Alper questioned whether taxpayers anticipated incurring ongoing debt when first approving CPC with the goal to

“preserve the semi-rural character of Cape Cod.” He noted the two-thirds vote for CPC bonding was somewhat easier to achieve than a ¾ vote for general bonding. He noted that such a vote only canvassed those who formed a quota at a Town Meeting, not the full electorate. Mr. Alper reminded everyone that some say now is not a good time to undertake capital projects. Others on the committee observed that borrowing rates are quite advantageous now.

There was discussion of other ways the town could fund affordable housing. Mr. North noted the bonding to fund affordable housing (as requested in the grant for FY23) would remove the annual need to allocate funds to AHTB and that projects would still have the oversight of the Select Board.

Several committee members expressed concern, but not a final decision, that a high level of bonding/debt service beginning in FY23 would possibly put future projects at a disadvantage. It was also suggested that such bonding may not fit within the vision or concept of CPC.

The discussion was exploratory in nature and no vote was taken.

5. Continued consideration of Legal Opinion from Town Counsel – The final memo from Town Counsel was discussed briefly. It was agreed that CPC carefully evaluate each grant application to ensure it meets any qualifying guidelines outlined in the memo.

6. Payment of annual dues for Community Preservation Coalition –

Mr. Alper moved the CPC pay the annual dues of \$3500 to the Community Preservation Coalition. Mr. Galligan seconded the motion. Vote by roll call with all present voting AYE: 8-0-0.

7. Minutes to be Approved:

Mr. Alper moved to approve the minutes of the CPC meeting on January 20, 2022. Mr. Lipton seconded the motion. Vote by roll call occurred with all present voting AYE: 8-0-0.

Mr. Ellis advised the committee that the meeting of the Historic Commission earlier in the week voted 5-0-0 that the Commission did not have enough information to endorse the plans for the rehabilitation of the Old Firehouse. The vote was not on the merits of the project, but solely the historical compliance of the project.

8. Adjourn

Ms. Christie moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Alper seconded the motion. All voted AYE. 8-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 6:01pm

*Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Fountain*