

**Town of Great Barrington
Community Preservation Committee (CPC)**

Minutes of November 1, 2022

This meeting was held in-person and via Zoom as noted on the meeting agenda.

Call to Order: Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

All were present: Tom Blauvelt (Housing Authority), Leigh Davis (Selectboard), Martha Fick (Citizen rep), Jeremy Higa (Planning Board), Jim Mercer (Historical Comm), Patricia Sharpe (Citizen rep.), Karen W. Smith (Parks Comm), Kate Van Olst (Conservation). Also, Phil Orenstein was present to represent the Finance Committee.

Also present: CPA Administrator / Assistant Town Manager Christopher Rembold.

Minutes: Blauvelt moved approval of the minutes from the September 15, 2022 meeting. Davis seconded. On a roll call vote, all were in favor (9-0).

Review of Step 1 Applications

1. Town of GB, Conservation Comm., for the McAllister Wildlife Refuge. Van Olst and Conservation Agent Shep Evans briefly discussed this application. Blauvelt moved that the proposal was eligible for CPA and could move to Step 2. Davis seconded. On a roll call vote, all were in favor.

2. Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC), for Three Mile Hill Trail improvements. Deanna Smith from BNRC discussed the application. She said the trail bridges need to be replaced and other improvements are needed. She said this is a cooperative application. Blauvelt moved that the proposal was eligible for CPA and could move to Step 2. Davis seconded. On a roll call vote, all were in favor.

3. Town of GB, Dept. of Public Works, preservation of the Brown mausoleum. Rembold presented this project on behalf of the Town. He said the Town's Historical Commission voted that the Mahaiwe Cemetery is significant to the Town. Therefore this proposal would be eligible for CPA historic funds. Members asked a number of questions including: are other funds available, including cemetery funds: Why was the roof tarp not replaced? What are the long term plans for this structure and are there other structures to be preserved or restored? Is the family not responsible for the cost? Who tried to contact them? Rembold said he would pass these questions along to the DPW and Cemetery Commission for their Step 2 proposal. Blauvelt moved that the proposal was eligible for CPA and could move to Step 2. Higa seconded. On a roll call vote, all were in favor.

4. First Congregational Church, Manse Restoration, Phase 2. Charles Hamilton presented this project on behalf of the church. He said Phase 1 is complete, thanks in part to the CPA and Mass. Historic Commission funds. He said this second phase is for the south and east facades of the Manse. Blauvelt asked if religious services are conducted in the Manse and Hamilton said no. Blauvelt moved that the proposal was eligible for CPA and could move to Step 2. Davis seconded. On a roll call vote, all were in favor except Sharpe, who recused herself (8-0).

5. BAB Capital 77 LLC, for preservation of The Cove - Ph 1. Craig Barnum of BAB presented this project. He said his goal is to retain the structures there and the bowling use as well, but the costs to do so are significant. He said the Historical Commission on August 8 voted 5-0 that this was significant to the Town. Mercer said that vote was for the signage. Barnum said that included discussion about the assembly and

recreational aspect of the site also. He has asked the Historical Commission for the minutes from that meeting.

Blauvelt moved that the proposal was eligible for CPA and could move to Step 2. Fick seconded. On a roll call vote, Fick, Mercer, Higa, Davis, and Sharpe voted yes. Voting no were Smith, Blauvelt, Van Olst, and Orenstein. Motion passed 5-4.

6. Ian Rasch, Alander Group, for 343 Main Street

6. A. regarding the June 2022 Town Meeting grant for historic preservation at 343 Main Street:

Blauvelt and Higa recused themselves.

Rasch described his project at 343 Main Street and said he will move forward with the historic preservation work. Smith said she felt he should have communicated the change of purpose of the building from the wellness center that was presented to the Committee. She said the Committee only heard about it through the newspaper. She said the Committee will discuss whether or not the Town Meeting voters should reconsider the grant of CPA historic preservation funds. She said this Committee needs to hear the new plans because we are responsible to the voters.

Rasch described why the planned uses have changed and reiterated the historic preservation will move forward. He said he has already purchased the historically correct replacement windows which are \$140,000 more than conventional windows would have been.

In discussion Davis said the building was pitched to the Committee as a wellness center and she thought it needs to be referred back to Town Meeting. Fick disagreed and said it was about historic preservation. She said we did not approve it based on what was in the building. Van Olst said she wanted to hear more about the housing proposal, which is a good idea.

Rembold said the motion and vote at Town Meeting was for historic preservation, though the description in the Committee report to Town Meeting indicated the use would be a wellness center.

Davis thought citizens deserved another shot to consider the proposal. Smith disagreed and said the citizens voted for historic preservation, not a wellness center. Orenstein said we cannot go back in time; the best resolution is a package deal which will include a housing component. Moving forward we will learn from past mistakes and be clear about what benefits the Town will get for the funding, such as how many units will be affordable.

Rasch said the budget for historic preservation presented for CPA funds was specific and that has not changed. He added that state funders, namely Mass Development, did not have any issues with the change of use.

Van Olst said she is not opposed to the new uses; however, she was swayed by the previous proposal, where we thought using taxpayer funds to support a project in which there would be community serving uses was a good thing. Fick said it is to our benefit as a town to support projects that restore historic buildings, otherwise people will just demolish old buildings.

Fick moved to continue support of the historic preservation funds already granted and not have the decision go back to Town Meeting. Sharpe seconded. On a roll call vote, Mercer and Davis voted no, and Fick, Smith, Orenstein, Van Olst and Sharpe voted in favor. (5-2).

6. B. Alander Group for affordable housing at 343 Main Street

Blauvelt, Higa and Davis recused themselves.

Rasch described the lack of new housing in the Berkshire and his proposal to put housing into this building. He said the use of 343 Main Street is a mixed-use building with storefront commercial and 13 apartments. He said at least three of those units would be affordable housing, with a 20-year deed restriction. These will include a 3 bedroom unit, 2 bedroom unit, and a studio unit. He added the units will be built to the same level as the market-rate apartments in the building.

Orenstein asked about the difference between the affordable rent and the market rate rent and how we would know if the grant is worth it. Rasch said he will show what a market rate unit is and what an affordable rent is, and what the revenue difference is between the two. Orenstein asked if the adjacent contaminated property is a concern. Rasch said there is no contamination at 343. He would not have purchased the property if there were.

Sharpe moved that the proposal was eligible for CPA and could move to Step 2. Fick seconded. On a roll call vote, all were in favor. (6-0).

7. Ian Rasch, Alander Group, for historic preservation and affordable housing in the Mahaiwe Block (322 Main Street). Blauvelt, Higa and Davis recused themselves.

Rasch said this is the building at the corner of Main and Castle Street. He said there will be 22 apartments total. He said this will be a historic preservation project with new systems, windows, elevator, and the apartments will be a mix of incomes. He said at least 5 of the 22 apartments units in this building will be designated as affordable at not more than 100% area median income.

Sharpe moved that the proposal was eligible for CPA and could move to Step 2 under both historic preservation and housing. Fick seconded. On a roll call vote, all were in favor. (6-0).

8. Town of GB, Affordable Housing Trust, for various affordable housing projects. Davis recused herself.

Housing Trust chairperson Fred Clark described the Trust's proposal. He said this request is to fund our housing efforts. We operate a down payment assistance program. It's a revolving fund loan program, so when the house is sold the Trust is paid back. We also operate an emergency rental assistance program, in partnership with Construct. Each rental assist is around \$800 and it's the last money in, after other sources are sought. It helps both renters and the landlords. The Trust is now exploring an accessory dwelling unit program and an affordable tiny house demonstration program. Also the Trust has been offered, at a below market price, a property in the Mahaiwe / Pope Street area where three or four housing units could be built possibly in partnership with the CDC of South Berkshire.

Fick suggested the budget in Step 2 show the amount to be used in each of the programs.

Mercer moved that the proposal was eligible and could move to Step 2. Blauvelt seconded. On a roll call vote, all were in favor except Smith (7-1).

9. Construct, Inc., for a Housing expansion feasibility study. Davis recused herself.

Jane Ralph, Executive Director, described the proposal. She said this proposal is to create more housing in neighborhoods on a small scale in what she said was a more agile fashion. She said the income level served would be at or below 100% of area median income but most of Construct's housing is at or below 60% of area median income.

Sharpe moved that the proposal was eligible and could move to Step 2. Blauvelt seconded. On a roll call vote, all were in favor. (8-0).

10. Reistan Enterprises, Inc., for elevator replacement to serve apartments at 284 Main Street . Davis and Higa recused themselves.

Smith asked if this was for historic. Rembold clarified the application is to support housing. He said the proposal does not discuss the income level of the residents who will be served.


Sharpe moved that the proposal is not eligible for CPA housing funds. Blauvelt seconded. On a roll call vote, all agreed except Orenstein (6-1).

Citizen's Speak: Jennifer Clark said the vote for the 343 Main Street project was to continue the historic grant approved by Town Meeting. She wondered what would happen if Town Meeting did not grant the affordable housing component; would that make a difference to the grant for the facade.

Next Meeting: to be determined.

Adjourn: Smith thanked the Committee and adjourned the meeting at 7:20 PM.

Minutes prepared by:


Christopher Rembold