

Minutes
Tuesday, November 27, 2007
Community Preservation Act Study Committee

Conference Room 2 -Town Hall - 7:30 pm

I. Call to Order

A meeting of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) Study Committee was called to order in open session at 7:38 p.m. Members present were Adam Dash, John Dieckman, Caroline Huang, Delores Keefe, Joseph Scali and Ann Verrilli. Mark Paolillo arrived about 10 minutes later. Absent was Peter Gunness. Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti was also present.

II. Approval of Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes of the November 6 meeting as presented (6-0).

III. Schedule of Upcoming Meetings

In addition to the previously scheduled meeting for December 11, the Committee scheduled a meeting for Wednesday, January 2, both at 7:30 p.m. at Town Hall. It agreed to try to set a schedule for coming months at the December 11 meeting.

IV. Reports

1. Report on CPA Conference

Caroline Huang reported on a conference on the Community Preservation Act that she attended on November 10th in Bridgewater and distributed notes she had taken there as well. Her notes also provided links to conference materials and several policy studies and included several newsclips on CPA repeal efforts in four South Shore communities. The conference was sponsored by the Community Preservation Coalition.

2. Rappaport Institute Report

Adam Dash noted that a July 2007 study by Robin Sherman and David Luberoff of the Rappaport Institute, "The Massachusetts Community Preservation Act: Who Benefits, Who Pays", includes estimates of the amounts every city and town "contributes" to the State CPA Trust Fund through Registry of Deed fees on local transactions. Fees on Belmont transactions were estimated to total just under \$600,000 from FY2002-FY2007.

The study criticized the CPA Act as inequitable because most of the fees are generated by transactions in larger, poorer cities that have not adopted the Act, while the recipients of Trust payments are generally smaller, richer communities. It also pointed out that current

reporting requirements on how communities spend their CPA funds are weak.

Adam noted that the study modeled that impact of CPA adoption on housing prices in Greater Boston and found them to be about 7% lower in communities that adopted CPA than the authors estimated they would be absent adoption, with the biggest effect on condominium and multifamily housing (though the latter were not statistically significant once Cambridge was excluded). Ann Verrilli agreed to contact the authors to learn more about their methodology. The Committee agreed it might be useful to invite Robin Sherman to speak at a Committee meeting.

3. Possible Projects

Committee members reported on possible projects in Belmont that might have been funded in the past using CPA funds and potential future projects based on conversations with various Town committees. Caroline included some possible historic, open space and recreational projects in the notes she distributed, including possible acquisition of the Uplands site and the Committee discussed the special restrictions on recreational projects. Ann reported on preliminary conversations with the Housing Authority and Housing Trust. Jeff Conti reported on a suit alleging violation of CPA restrictions in connection with park improvements in Newton. The Committee agreed Adam would compile a master list based on discussions with contacts supplied by Jeff.

4. Financial Impacts of Adoption on Town/ Administrative Needs

Committee members discussed the potential “hidden costs” of Town overhead. While 5% of CPA funds can be used for administrative costs, Town costs can only be billed to CPA if directly associated with CPA. Jeff noted that it would be helpful to have a spreadsheet of the impact of CPA surcharges on property taxes over time. Mark Paolillo agreed to talk to the Assessor and Jay Sklut about this.

In terms of administrative needs, the Committee agreed it should look how much money 5% of CPA would be and whether it could support a dedicated employee and what costs (e.g. legal) can be charged to CPA.

5. Experiences of Other Towns

Mark Paolillo suggested contacting other comparable communities to learn about their administrative experiences with CPA and it was agreed that the Committee will contact Lexington, Sudbury and Waltham.

6. Potential Speakers

The Committee discussed potential speakers to invite to discuss pros and cons of CPA, ideally during January, February and March, including someone from the State Department of Revenue to discuss nuts and bolts of how CPA works. Others include:

- someone from the Community Preservation Coalition (Caroline will contact for a January meeting),
- someone from the Mass. Association of Realtors (Jeff will see if they have a policy brief on CPA).
- Someone from the town Capital Projects Committee, to discuss potential sites in Belmont such as Purecoat and the town incinerator (Jeff will invite someone to attend the December 11 meeting).

The Committee also agreed that it should hold at least one public forum to present information on CPA to town residents and solicit comments.

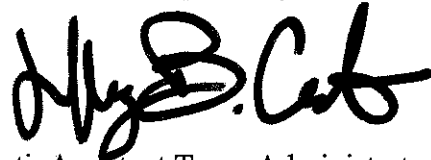
V. Other Business

Jeff Conti noted that there are currently eight members on the Committee, with one vacancy (David Webster had notified the Town that he is unable to participate). It was agreed that the Committee would try to meet with the Conservation Commission at one of their meetings as an alternative way to get their input on CPA.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 PM.

(Minutes approved by unanimous vote of the Committee on Wednesday, January 2, 2008.)

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff B. Conti". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Jeff Conti, Assistant Town Administrator