

Minutes  
Monday, February 11, 2008  
Community Preservation Act Study Committee  
  
Conference Room 2 – Town Hall – 7:30 P.M.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m. by Chairman Adam Dash. Members present were John Dieckmann, Peter Gunness, Caroline Huang, Delores Keefe, Mark Paolillo, Joseph Scali, and Ann Verrilli, constituting a quorum.

Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti was also present.

No members were absent.

Guests present were Lisa Harrington, Historic District Commission, and Selectman Angelo Firenze.

II. Approval of Minutes

The Committee moved: To approve the minutes of the Committee's January 17, 2008 meeting.

Motion carried unanimously (8-0).

III. Schedule of Upcoming Meetings

Our next meeting is Tuesday, March 4 at 7:30 PM in Conference Room 1. Mark Rudnick of Waltham is tentatively scheduled to attend. The next meeting after that will be on Tuesday, April 1, 7:30 PM.

IV. Reports

- A) Rappaport Institute Report: Jeff Conti will distribute the CPC response, which he received in email from Katherine Roth (Associate Director of the CPC). One of the criticisms of the CPA by the Rappaport Institute was lack of oversight, but Ann Verrilli pointed out that the DOR might increase reporting requirements for CPA fund usage.
- B) Potential CPA projects:
  - a. Historic: Lisa Harrington gave us a list at the last meeting.
  - b. Underwood Pool: Adam Dash left a message with Peter Castanino (DPW) regarding cost of repair or renovation, but Peter is away for two weeks.

Adam also left a message with Dan MacAuley, chair of the Recreational Commission, but has not heard back. Mark Paolillo will follow up.

- c. Planning Board: Adam left a message but no reply yet.
  - d. Mass Audubon: Adam left a message but no reply yet.
  - e. Affordable housing: Ann Verrilli contacted the Housing Trust and Housing Authority about desirable projects, and they suggested she draft a list of projects which they would look at. Their main priority is acquisitions. Ann has drafted a list but not discussed it with them yet.
- C) Administrative needs and financial impact to Belmont: The next meeting of the Board of Assessors is in March, but Jeff Conti will try to get them to talk to Mark Paolillo earlier. Jeff spoke to Dick Simmons, Assessing Administrator, and he said he didn't know how many low-income residents there are or how many would apply for low-income exemptions. Belmont has no low-income tax exemption, only an exemption for seniors (and the circuit-breaker), so we don't have a mechanism in place to easily handle exemptions for the CPA. Angelo Firenze says that a common comment he hears from other towns is that they wish they hadn't allowed the low-income exemption because of the administrative burden. It's hard to estimate the administrative and financial impact of allowing exemptions for Belmont because there is a broad economic spectrum in Belmont.

#### V. General discussion:

It was briefly discussed when the report of the CPA Study Committee should be completed. The original mandate was for six months, so the report would be due in May, but it is up to the Board of Selectmen to decide. The committee wants feedback from everyone who is interested. If the CPA question were to be voted on (i.e., if the Study Committee recommended it and Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting approved), the vote might be affected by other questions on the ballot at the same time. The Wellington override is probably going on the ballot this April, and perhaps an operational override will be voted on next April.

The CPA Study Committee has not yet had the conversation of whether to recommend adoption, but some pros and cons were informally discussed at the present meeting. An argument for CPA is that the surcharge is relatively small, and we'd get matching funds. Also, the longer we wait, the less money we'd be likely to get, because more towns will adopt and we'd all share the funds. Belmont residents pay about \$100,000 per year into the state CPA trust fund (through Registry of Deeds fees), but Belmont gets nothing back.

An argument against adopting the CPA is the additional tax burden. It can be argued that roads and Wellington are first priority, and adding 3% to the increase due to overrides would be undesirable. In order for CPA adoption to make sense, we would have to want to do the eligible projects anyway. It can be argued that we wouldn't do a lot of the eligible projects even at half the price. Furthermore, we'd have to spend 10% on each category even if the other categories are lower

priority. For example, given the needs of the town, renovating the Underwood Pool could be considered a luxury. It could instead be closed or privatized.

Angelo Firenze asked for a list of projects for the Board of Selectmen to prioritize. We should list not only potential future projects but also the completed projects we could have used CPA funds for.

#### VI. Future work:

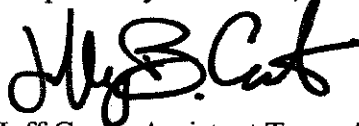
- A) We should ask the assessors about the financial impact of a 1%, 2%, or 3% surcharge as well as the administrative burden.
- B) Angelo Firenze suggested talking to Winchester, which rejected CPA adoption recently.
- C) We would like to talk to the Warrant Committee before the report is finalized to make sure their questions are answered in the report. Mark says that after budget deliberations, an initial meeting to gather questions and a final meeting to present and discuss the report would be possible.
- D) Outside speakers: Mark Rudnick of Waltham was involved in two campaigns and will speak at our next meeting, March 4. (Note differences between Waltham and Belmont though: Waltham is a city and it has never had an override.)
- E) Future of CPA: look for DOR projection, due this month (Feb.); track legislation.
- F) We will begin to discuss our recommendation soon.
- G) For the report, we can refer to other towns' reports (such as the Northfield report, which is available online) for the background information. A PowerPoint presentation is also planned.

#### VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 PM.

*(Minutes approved by unanimous vote of the Committee, March 4, 2008.)*

Respectfully submitted,



Jeff Conti, Assistant Town Administrator