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TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Community Preservation Committee
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**Community Preservation Committee
December 7, 2023 Meeting Minutes
Approved as Amended January 4, 2024**

This meeting was conducted in the Select Board meeting room and broadcast via Live Stream link YouTube with the link provided on the agenda.

Members Present: John Campbell, Chair; Leslie Harrison, Jeff Leland, Sean Durkin, Peter Martin, Millie Milton, Andy Clark

Members Absent: Andy Dowd, Todd Helwig

Others Present Laurie Connors, Town Planner; Scott Charpentier, DPW Director; David Sherman, Celia Brown, Gordon Hart, First Parish Church; Rae Carlsen, Rick Leif, NAHC; Norm Corbin; Bob Licht, Historic District Commission

The meeting opened at 7:15pm. The Chair read the public hearing notice into the record.

PUBLIC HEARINGS RE: FY2025 CPA APPLICATIONS

Melican Middle School Courts (\$75,400)—Scott Charpentier, DPW Director, presented on behalf of the Recreation Director. Melican Middle School has six tennis courts and four basketball courts widely used by the community, all of which are in varying states of disrepair, and approximately 50 years old. Mr. Charpentier believed many of the deterioration issues with the surfaces were related to lack of subsurface drainage. Additionally, the courts have substandard lighting, and the current fencing consists of manned gates only, which is problematic for maintenance. The existing lights are minimally functional but if they are not desired by the community, then other components of the design phase can be advanced. The objective is to have new drainage, new fencing, and lighting improvements.

Mr. Charpentier said the request for \$75,400 is broken down in the proposal. After the public engagement process, they will go through conceptual design and then preliminary design with construction cost estimates. He hoped to have this done in the next fiscal year so that a funding mechanism for construction can go forward. Funding is planned to come from a variety of different sources, such as capital planning, CPA, Boosters, and any other sources they can seek out.

Applicability under the CPA was discussed. Mr. Campbell said there is a sense of urgency in that this project has been sitting for a long time. The proposal is consistent with other projects approved by the CPC in the past. Community support appears strong. There is a clear benefit to the community.

Mr. Charpentier will follow up with budgetary numbers for the total cost.

Sound Proofing of Outdoor Pickleball Courts (\$54,500)—Mr. Charpentier presented. The pickleball courts have been popular with the community, however, the sound associated with the sport is something that

many communities are struggling with. Mr. Charpentier appreciated the fact that residents abutting Ellsworth-McAfee have been cordial and understanding.

Mr. Charpentier said that when the ball hits the paddle, it results in a very high vibration over a thousand vibrations per second, a sound that can be particularly annoying to the human ear; that sound is in the 70 to 80 decibel range for someone 100' away from a pickleball court. Some towns have implemented mitigation measures using a fabric acoustical fence. He explained there are two ways to manage sound; it can be reflected, or it can be absorbed; acoustic fencing is absorptive, and results in dropping the sound to 40 decibels at 10' from the fence. He was in favor of the absorptive fence for this project since those waiting for the courts can still watch and when someone is playing, they wouldn't feel boxed in.

Mr. Charpentier said a quote was included for installation. While the installation is not complicated, the materials are over \$40,000, and he thought it was best to have it professionally installed. His department will handle the long-term operations and maintenance. The fencing will be translucent. At 9 gauges, it is a heavy product and appropriate to handle this type of treatment. Lifespan is generally 10 years. Ms. Connors showed a sample of the finished product.

Criteria was discussed. Mr. Campbell said there seems to be some urgency in getting this approved to minimize the growing complaints. He assumed there would be community support, that may need to be determined. Regarding applicability, he suggested they look to see if it qualifies under enhancing or refurbishing of the courts. Affordability will be considered after all proposals have been reviewed.

First Parish Church Structure Restoration of Steeple (\$210,000)—David Sherman and Gordon Hart presented. A similar application submitted last year did not go forward as it was without an engineering evaluation. A detailed engineering analysis has since been performed showing the structural deficiencies; the church bell is no longer rung because of those deficiencies. Funding is needed to provide replacement of the bell supports, the staircase and wooden trusses that support the flooring and stairs, as detailed in the application. The cost of the project is expected to be \$300K, \$210K of which is being requested from the CPA. The remainder is anticipated to be covered with MPPF funds and private fundraising.

Applicability under the CPA was discussed. Regarding urgency, Mr. Hart had said the leakage was being addressed, but the rotted wood will continue to deteriorate without work being done. They have the support of their community. Northborough's Historic Commission deems it significant. There is clearly a public benefit to the restoration. Regarding affordability, Mr. Campbell acknowledged it was a significant amount of money and that they still need to review the other applications.

Aqueduct Historic Marker (\$4,729)—Bob Licht presented. It was realized this Fall that the marker was missing. After checking with the DPW to make sure it wasn't taken down for maintenance, a police report was filed.

Mr. Licht provided more background. The Aqueduct was built between 1896-98. The bridge is on the National Register of Historic Places; he felt it may be the most iconic structure in Town. The historic marker was originally funded by CPA funds. He felt that the application met the goal of the CPA to assist in the preservation of historic resources and that it was consistent with the goals in the Master Plan to maintain and expand the protection of Northborough's historic resources.

Mr. Licht said the original marker was done by Crown Trophy; they were able to save on design costs since they still had the mockup. The sign will be installed by the DPW with a new adhesive which will make it difficult to remove. The cost includes a 10% contingency as a price increase is expected next year.

Applicability under CPA was discussed. While not urgent, it would be nice to have it replaced. The cost is not significant. Community support is well established. The application will be considered.

Conservation Fund (\$350,000)—Mr. Campbell presented on behalf of Open Space. The current amount in the Conservation Fund is approximately \$670K. The Open Space Committee has a goal of reaching and maintaining \$1M in that fund for the purpose of land preservation and to capitalize on opportunities when they come up. The committee will be sending letters to landowners reminding them that the Town is interested in acquiring land for prosperity or to provide a conservation restriction, as the Town owns large tracts and would like to see them maintained as open space for public benefit rather than for development. The committee also tries to see where they can be proactive in aiding the implementation of the Master Plan, in acquiring land for recreation space and adding to open space, and perhaps connecting parks and expanding the Town Common.

Conversation turned to use of the Conservation Fund for purchase of land for affordable housing. Mr. Campbell said property acquired with CPA funds must be preserved, it can't be acquired and built on. There have been projects that have combined the acquisition of land with part of it maintained as open space and part of it developed for housing. Discussion followed.

The request for funding's applicability under CPA was discussed; it is applicable in that it is for Open Space acquisition. There is no urgency in that there is no property at risk of being developed right away. It has community support; the Town supports preserving open space and reducing unneeded development, which enhances the community and public benefit. Regarding affordability, the funding request is higher than those of the other applications received, so they will need to assess after reviewing all applications.

Affordable Housing Development Reserve Fund (\$126,855.65)—Mr. Leif requested \$126,855.65 to bring funds available to NHNC back to \$500K. Approvals for funding from 2016-2019 have left \$373,144.35 in the account. There are no active projects under way, but some potentials were discussed. Creation of affordable housing in the Downtown was touched on as well as the MBTA Multi-Family Act and the fact that Northborough needs to provide an updated zoning plan to the State by the end of 2024. Part of their goal as the Housing Corporation has been to increase the amount of affordable housing to offset any market rate housing that might be built in Town. Mr. Leif said the request is twofold; the \$373,144.35 currently in the account exists from prior Town Meeting approvals, and since the two-year limit has gone by, they are requesting that the CPC consider approving that money going forward, with the additional request of \$126,855.65 to bring the fund back to \$500K.

Mr. Campbell said the request is applicable for CPA funds, and the need is always urgent. He thought it was fair to say that community support was strong.

Mr. Campbell said the anticipated FY25 revenue is \$820,000 so \$82,000 is the minimum amount they will be working with, the total amount available is just over \$2M.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Consideration of Minutes from November 2, 2023—Mr. Martin made a motion to approve the minutes from November 2. Mr. Durkin seconded the motion. Roll call vote followed, all were in favor.

Continuation of the Public Hearing—Ms. Harrison made a motion to continue the public hearing to January 4, 2024 at 7pm. Mr. Leland seconded the motion. Roll call vote was taken, all were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:52pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Cilley, Board Secretary