

Wrentham Community Preservation Committee Minutes
Monday October 29th, 2018

Present: Chair Barry Kassler, Robin McDonald, Leo Immonen, Mark Cuddy, Carol Mollica, Alex Leonard, Scott Manchuso

Absent: Steve Langley, Chuck Woodhams

At 7:03 p.m., Barry Kassler called the meeting to order in the Bennett Gardens Meeting Room

Barry Kassler called a special meeting of the CPC to review a CPA funding request that was submitted by the Conservation Commission. Barry noted that since the October 24th meeting of the CPC new information surfaced relative to the Askin property that affected the window of opportunity to purchase the property. Barry reminded CPC members that the Askin Property has been put on the market and that recent conversations with the seller and an abutter led him to call the special meeting. A warrant article requesting approval to fund the property purchase would need to be filed by October 30th in order to be eligible for a vote at the November 16th town meeting. Mark Cuddy reminded CPC members that it was agreed by vote at the September CPC meeting that the process as outlined in the guidelines to apply for funding would be adhered to. Mark noted this meant funding applications would be received up to March 30th 2019 with funding recommendations made at the November 2019 town meeting. Barry indicated that due to the timing of the land sale an exception was warranted. It was also noted that the required town informational meeting had yet to be held and considering this request seemed premature. CPC members indicated that the application has been made available to the public via social media and therefore available to others who may have a desire to submit a project request.

Barry indicated that he learned from the realtor that the seller has an offer for the property that is close to or at asking price of \$625,000. The seller has indicated willingness to sell the land to the town but would require immediate action and would need to be at or above the listed price. Barry introduced a guest at the meeting Mr. Larry Johnson, Mr. Johnson owns property abutting the Askin property. Mr. Johnson is willing to participate with the town to purchase the land. Mr. Johnson indicated the possibility of providing \$300,000 toward the purchase. In return, Mr. Johnson would require an agreement that would include mutually agreed on conservation

easements that would be worked out between him and the town. With the participation of Mr. Johnson, the town would be responsible to fund an estimated \$400,000 toward the \$700,000 estimated costs to acquire the property. Leo Immonen also noted that the Conservation Commission has funds available that could be used for items such as land appraisal and a property survey that would be required. These funds would also lessen the final amount of CPA funds needed.

CPC members asked what the CPA fund balance is currently. Barry indicated there was approximately \$340,000 of which approximately \$54,000 was restricted for "open space" projects. Barry suggested that one option to purchase the property would be for the town to bond \$700,000 over 20 years. If the interest rate was 4% this would mean about \$63,000 in year one for the purchase and a total cost of approximately 1.2 million over the 20 years to pay the bond.

The project-funding request from the Conservation Commission was distributed. The Conservation Commission is requesting \$700,000 to be used to purchase the land. Committee members inquired about the benefit to the community and how this request aligns with CPA priorities. Members suggested that there was significant environmental advantage in owning the Askin property (about 68 acres) that is contiguous with some other property currently owned by the town as conservation land. Additionally, individual residents would possibly be able to use the land for passive recreation to include walking, nature and wildlife viewing. The project meets the eligibility criteria for funding. The proposal has the support of both the Open Space Committee and the Conservation Commission and meets the requirements of the CPA, which specifically includes the acquisition of open space as one of the eligible uses for funds. With the participation of Mr. Johnson the project eligibility is further strengthened as additional criteria for eligibility includes: "leverages additional public or private funds".

Robin McDonald asked if the Conservation Commission would consider amending the project proposal to \$400,000 in anticipation of private funds of the abutter used toward the purchase. This option was considered by Conservation Commission and Open Space however having the full amount of the request approved would allow the maximum flexibility that may be needed should private funds not be used or made available. Robin McDonald made a motion to approve funding \$400,000 of CPA funds to be used toward the purchase of the Askin property, seconded;

Vote: in favor: Robin McDonald, Scott Manchuso, Carol Mollica, Mark Cuddy; opposed: Leo Immonen, Barry Kassler, Alex Leonard; motion passes, 4-3.

Scott Manchuso then made a motion to approve fully funding the proposal request of \$700,000. Barry Kassler did not accept this motion, instead Mr. Kassler asked Mr. Manchuso to make a motion to reconsider the previous vote. Scott Manchuso made a motion to reconsider the vote to fund the purchase of the Askin property with \$400,000 of CPA funds, seconded
Vote: in favor: Scott Manchuso, Barry Kassler, Leo Immonen, Alex Leonard, Carol Mollica; opposed: Robin McDonald, Mark Cuddy; motion passes, 5-2.

Leo Immonen made a motion to bring forward Robin McDonald's motion to fund the project at \$400,000 with an amendment to fund the project at \$700,000, seconded
Vote: in favor: Scott Manchuso, Barry Kassler, Leo Immonen, Alex Leonard; opposed: Robin McDonald, Mark Cuddy, Carol Mollica; motion passes, 4-3.

Leo Immonen made a motion to approve funding the project at \$700,000 seconded,
Vote: in favor: Scott Manchuso, Barry Kassler, Leo Immonen, Alex Leonard; opposed: Robin McDonald, Mark Cuddy, Carol Mollica; motion passes, 4-3.

Scott Manchuso asked what the next steps were for the project to move forward. Barry Kassler will write a warrant article to submit to town meeting. The warrant article will be presented at town meeting for vote. Additionally, Barry will share the warrant article with the Town Administrator. Barry also noted that due to the seller's urgency to sell and the fact that there is a competing buyer; Mr. Johnson may put an offer in to purchase the land and then work out the details with the town to obtain ownership of the land.

Mark Cuddy made a motion to adjourn at 9:30, seconded, unanimously approved.

Next meeting is on Wednesday November 28th at 7:00 p.m. in the Bennett Gardens Meeting Room.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Robin McDonald