

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
April 04, 2019

A Public Hearing of the Community Preservation Committee was held on Thursday April 04, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in Town Hall Conway Hearing room.

Present: Rich Scanlon, Vice Chairman and Chief Assessor, Mary Leach, Member, Marlies Henderson, Member, Tom Conway, Member and Joe Fiumara, Member, Doug Meagher, Member, Matt Battcock, Member and Katie Mahoney, Community Preservation Coordinator

Absent: Jim O'Donnell, Chairman and Travis Brown, Treasurer

CALL TO ORDER:

Vice Chairman & Acting Chair Rich Scanlon called the hearing to order at 6:00 p.m. and stated the meeting is being recorded by BATV.

PRESENTATION:

Katie Mahoney did a brief presentation on the projects being voted on tonight. There are four (4) projects presented, a handout was provided:

- Billerica Affordable Housing Trust
- Billerica Library Historic preservation of the Great Deed
- Billerica Fire Department 1926 Maxim Ladder Truck
- Billerica First Parish Steeple Preservation

PUBLIC HEARING ON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION APPLICATIONS:

Joe Fiumara, seconded by Tom Conway made motion to open the public hearing on CPA applications.

It was voted:

7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Rich Scanlon asked if anyone from the public would like to speak on any of the projects:

The Great Deed – No one came forward

The Affordable Housing Trust – No one came forward

The 1926 Fire Truck – No one came forward

The First Parish Steeple Restoration – Scott Romanowski, Billerica Resident came forward.

Mr. Romanowski spoke against using CPA funds for this project. He mentioned separation of Church and State, a few pieces of history regarding separation of Church and State and stated the Supreme Judicial Court struck down a similar sized historical preservation award on a Church in Acton. He stated a few alternatives the Church could apply for.

Kathy Meagher, Local History Librarian for the Billerica Public Library and Billerica resident also came forward. Mrs. Meagher made clear that the funds are not to preserve the Church but rather to preserve the spire and the spire is a piece of the village of Billerica. It was noted that the steeple is on our town flag. It was also stated that the building was used as the towns' fourth meeting house in the 1800s and the building housed the towns' library. The earliest images of the town all include the building and its steeple.

Joe Fiumara, seconded by Doug Meagher made motion to close the public hearing on CPA applications.

It was voted: 7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

VOTE ON TOWN MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS:

Marlies Henderson stated that she would like to hold off voting for the Affordable Housing Trust and place the \$90,000 in to Housing Reserves because the declaration of trust has not been recorded yet and the Grant Agreement is not yet completed.

Doug Meagher stated that the funds would not be transferred to a Trust where the documents to the trust have not been completed yet or without the Grant Agreement being in place.

Doug Meagher, seconded by Joe Fiumara made a motion to recommend a \$90,000 appropriation for the Billerica Affordable Housing Trust.

It was voted: 6 – In favor
Marlies Henderson 1 – Opposed

Doug Meagher, seconded by Mary Leach made a motion to recommend \$7,180 for the Billerica Public Library Great Deed Preservation.

It was voted: 7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Doug Meagher, seconded by Joe Fiumara made a motion to recommend \$29,000 for the Billerica Fire Departments restoration of the 1926 Maxim Ladder Truck.

It was voted: 7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Marlies Henderson stated that due to the 10% not being fully met for Historic Preservation they should add \$943 to the First Parish project bringing their total to \$53,820. This would fulfill the 10%. Doug stated that the actual appropriation for FY20 is \$855,000, therefore \$85,500 would be the 10% for historic preservation and in fact it is going to be \$89,057 which brings us over the 10% requirement.

Mary Leach expressed her support for the steeple project and there is no doubt in her mind that this is history, it is the heart of Billerica, and it was a true meeting house.

Doug Meagher expressed his support for the steeple's historical significance. When the Town provides CPA grants to private entities for historic preservation, there is another public interest that is served. The Town also has the opportunity to require a preservation restriction on the property and there could be a possibility of the right of first refusal in the event the property owner decides to sell the property.

After residents spoke, Vice Chair and Acting Chair Rich Scanlon opened discussion up to the Committee.

Joe Fiumara stated that he did a little research and there were three (3) other churches last year in Massachusetts that had their steeples funded by CPC money. Two were in Rockport and one in Newburyport. Joe also went into some of the history of the bell and steeple.

Tom Conway stated he remembers the fire and the steeple being set on the lawn while the building was being rebuilt. However, he also remembers there was a firefighter died in that fire and he is remembered on the Public Safety Memorial in front of this building (the Town Hall) which is meaningful to him (Tom) and to the community.

Rich Scanlon stated he went to the Mass Historic Website and they have a MACRIS database that you can search. He did a search for the First Parish Church and it is inventoried in that database. This is an outside agency that is objective and considers the property to be historic.

Doug Meagher, seconded by Mary Leach made a motion to recommend \$52,877 for the First Parish Church Steeple Rehabilitation and Restoration.

It was voted: 7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Doug Meagher, seconded by Tom Conway made a motion to recommend \$90,000 be set in Open Space and Recreation Reserve.

It was voted: 7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Doug Meagher, seconded by Joe Fiumara made a motion to recommend \$45,000 for staff and Technical Administration Support for FY20.

It was voted: 7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Doug Meagher, seconded by Joe Fiumara made a motion to close the public hearing on CPA applications.

It was voted: 7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Katie Mahoney stated for the record that the Masonic Hall did submit an application but has since withdrawn.

MINUTES:

Marlies Henderson noted that at the last meeting it was indicated that the Housing Authority was waiting on confirmation from Counsel for the MOU when in actuality they are waiting from Counsel on a grant agreement.

Doug Meagher, seconded by Matt Battcock made the motion to accept the minutes of March 14, 2019.

It was voted:

7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

MISCELLANEOUS/CORRESPONDENCE – NOT OPEN FOR DISCUSSION:

N/A

ADJOURNMENT:

Joe Fiumara, seconded by Matt Battcock made motion to adjourn.

It was voted:

7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Vice Chairman & Acting Chair Rich Scanlon adjourned the meeting at 6:31 pm.

Joyce MacMillan
Recording Secretary