

**Town of Great Barrington
Community Preservation Committee (CPC)**

Minutes of December 21, 2023

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

All members present: Leigh Davis (Selectboard), Martha Fick (Citizen rep.), Richard Geiler (Finance Committee), John Grogan (Housing Authority), Jeremy Higa (Planning Board), Jim Mercer (Historical Comm), Patricia Sharpe (Citizen rep), Karen W. Smith (Parks Comm), Kate Van Olst (Conservation)

Also present: CPA Administrator / Assistant Town Manager Christopher Rembold.

Continued Review of FY25 Applications

Smith said there are over \$2 million in request and we estimate only \$800,000 available. Fick asked if the funding awarded at the special Town Meeting last October counts towards this round's percentages. Rembold said no, it counted for Fiscal Year 24. Higa asked about the debt service for Memorial Field. Rembold said it is already accounted for – taken out of the figure you have available tonight – and it will count towards the percentage for Open Space projects each year.

As a straw poll,

Smith asked each member their thoughts on whether to fully fund, partially fund or not fund each project. Straw poll results were:

Open Space:

- Berkshire Natural Resources Council - Thomas & Palmer reserve trail
 - Full: none
 - Partial: Grogan, Davis, Higa
 - No funding: Mercer, Fick, Geiler, Sharpe, Smith, Van Olst.
- GB Land Conservancy - Pfeiffer Arboretum trails
 - Full: Grogan
 - Partial: Higa, Davis, Geiler
 - No funding: Smith, Sharpe, Fick, Van Olst
 - Mercer recused
- Town - Conservation Commission - McAllister Wildlife Refuge
 - Full: none
 - Partial: Fick, Geiler, Van Olst
 - No funding: Mercer, Sharpe, Grogan, Davis, Smith, Higa
- Town – DPW - Grove Street park
 - Full: Davis, Smith, Sharpe, Geiler, Fick, Mercer
 - Partial: Higa, Grogan, Van Olst
 - No funding: none

Historic:

- Town – DPW - Mason Library sconces
 - Full: none
 - Partial: none
 - No funding: all
- Town – DPW - Mason Library clamshell entrance
 - Full: Grogan

- Partial: Smith, Sharpe, Geiler, Fick, Mercer, Van Olst
- No funding: Higa, Davis
- Town – DPW - Mason Library steps
- Full: Smith, Davis, Sharpe, Geiler, Fick, Mercer
- Partial: Van Olst, Higa, Grogan
- No funding: none
- Town - Ramsdell Library - Planning and design phase
- Full: Grogan, Van Olst
- Partial: Mercer
- No funding: Fick, Geiler, Sharpe, Davis, Smith, Higa
- Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire (UUMSB) - Restoration of 1089 Main Street
- Full: none
- Partial: Higa, Davis, Grogan, Sharpe, Mercer, Van Olst
- No funding: Smith, Geiler, Fick
- Mahaive Performing Arts Center - Roof and exterior repairs
- Full: none
- Partial: Mercer
- No funding: Fick, Geiler, Sharpe, Grogan, Davis, Smith, Higa, Van Olst
- Great Barrington Historical Society – Restoration/preservation of Museum and artifacts
- Full: Higa, Grogan, Fick
- Partial: Davis, Grogan, Geiler
- No funding: Van Olst, Smith
- Mercer recused

Housing:

- Marble Block Realty LLC – create housing at 268-278 Main Street
- Full: Fick
- Partial: Mercer, Sharpe, Grogan
- No funding: Geiler, Smith, Higa, Van Olst
- Davis recused
- Construct, Inc. – housing support services
- Full: Mercer, Fick, Geiler, Sharpe, Smith, Van Olst
- Partial: Grogan
- No funding: Higa
- Davis recused
- Town - Affordable Housing Trust Fund – housing creation, support, acquisition
- Full: none
- Partial: Higa, Van Olst, Smith, Grogan, Sharpe, Geiler, Fick, Mercer
- No funding: none
- Davis recused
- Community Development Corp of South Berkshire – create housing at 453 Stockbridge Rd
- Full: Van Olst, Higa, Geiler, Fick
- Partial: Smith, Grogan, Sharpe, Mercer
- No funding: none
- Davis recused

Funding Decisions

Ramsdell Library

Smith moved that Ramsdell not be funded through CPA but rather through the Town's capital budget process. Fick seconded.

Discussion included confirming that the Town has time to build it into the proposed capital budget, and whether or not it should be fully or partially funded.

Roll call vote, all were in favor.

Passed 9-0.

Mason Library steps

Mercer moved to recommend \$95,000 from CPA. Geiler seconded.

Higa suggested all funds to housing proposals. Geiler said after this, remaining funds should go to housing. Sharpe suggested at least \$60,000 go to each of the three areas to meet the requirements.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Smith, Davis, Grogan, Sharpe, Geiler, Fick, Mercer

No: Van Olst and Higa

Passed 7-2.

Mason Library sconces

Smith moved that this not be funded through CPA, Mercer seconded.

No discussion

Roll call vote, all were in favor.

Passed 9-0.

Mason Library clamshell

Smith moved that this not be funded through CPA, Mercer seconded.

No discussion

Roll call vote, all were in favor.

Passed 9-0.

Historical Society

Mercer recused himself.

Fick suggested funding this at \$77,000 so that they have enough to match their other grant.

Davis so moved, Higa seconded.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Fick, Geiler, Grogan, Davis, Higa

No: Smith, Sharpe, Van Olst

Passed 5-3

UUMSB, 1098 Main St.

Grogan moved to fund the roof work from CPA, for \$85,000. Higa seconded. Geiler said he appreciated that proposal but it does not strike him as needing the funding now. Grogan said it is not an emergency until it is. Smith suggested tabling this until later in the meeting.

Grogan withdrew his motion and Higa withdrew his second.

Construct

Van Olst moved to fully fund this at \$110,000. Higa seconded.

Higa said initially he was thinking of sending the housing money to the Trust. Smith and others said they want more transparency and communication from the Trust before fully funding the Trust. Higa said he

thinks we have now delivered that message to the Trust. He said we have been really hard on them and they are town board.

Yes: Grogan, Sharpe, Geiler, Fick, Geiler, Grogan, Higa, Smith

No: none

Davis recused herself.

Passed 8-0

Grove Street Park

Mercer moved to fully fund this at \$95,000, Davis seconded.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Smith, Davis, Sharpe, Geiler, Fick, Mercer

No: Van Olst, Higa, Grogan

Passed 6-3

Community Development Corp (CDC)

Van Olst moved to fully this at \$250,000. Higa seconded.

Smith has concerns about shared living spaces and shared kitchens and the rent for that seemed high to her. CDC President Jim Harwood said these rents are not meant to be at the lowest level, like the Windflower project, but rather for workforce at a moderate level. There was a discussion of the rental ranges in the proposal. The CDC said 10 of the units would be restricted to 100% AMI and the other 8 rented at flexible levels.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Van Olst, Higa, Grogan, Sharpe, Geiler, Fick

No: Mercer, Smith

Passed 6-2

Davis recused herself.

At this point \$173,000 was left in the estimated \$800,000 available.

Van Olst left the meeting (6:15pm).

Sharpe said the open space proposals are very worthy, but she would recommend that we focus the remaining funds on housing.

BNRC Thomas & Palmer trail

Smith moved not to fund BNRC. Geiler seconded.

Roll call vote, all were in favor.

Passed 8-0.

Van Olst not present

GBLC Pfieffer Arboretum

Smith moved not to fund GBLC. Davis seconded.

Roll call vote, all were in favor.

Passed 7-0.

Mercer was recused. Van Olst not present.

Conservation Commission McAllister

Smith moved not to fund this proposal. Higa seconded.

Roll call vote, all were in favor.

Passed 8-0.

Van Olst not present.

Marble Block housing

Fick said she would like to see the Marble Block funded for a couple reasons. She said the CDC wanted to do this a year ago but couldn't make it work, but now a private citizen can take it on and create two units. Mercer suggested the funding be for two units at 90% AMI rather than 100% AMI, for a minimum of 15 years. He said this would be similar to what the Trust did for two units in a private project in Housatonic. Owner Craig Barnum said the proposal is for a rent at 100% AMI is possible, but that is not his intent.

There was discussion about whether to partially fund all remaining projects. Higa reminded the members that CPA money for the Trust is important because it helps them act quickly to acquire property.

Mercer moved to fund the Marble Block at \$150,000 for two units at 90% AMI for 15 years each. Smith seconded.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Mercer, Fick, Geiler, Fick, Smith

No: Sharpe, Grogan

Passed 5-2

Davis recused herself. Van Olst not present.

It was noted that \$23,000 is now remaining from the estimated available funds.

Housing Trust Fund

Geiler moved that the balance of \$23,000 be awarded to the Trust. Grogan seconded.

Roll call vote, all were in favor.

Passed 7-0.

Davis recused herself. Van Olst not present.

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center and UUMSB

Smith moved to not recommend CPA funding for these two projects. Geiler seconded.

Roll call vote, all were in favor.

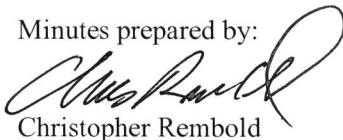
Passed 8-0.

There was a suggested that the CPC meet in late March or early April to allocate additional funds if there is a higher estimate at that time. And that this be a meeting with the Housing Trust.

Citizen Speak: none

Adjourn: Grogan moved to adjourn. Hearing no objection, Smith adjourned the meeting 6:45 pm.

Minutes prepared by:



Christopher Rembold

