

Community Preservation Committee
Minutes
March 19, 2015

Present:

Chairperson Helen Dunlap, Mark Pease, Don Plummer, John Hassan, George Malonis, Debra DeWitt, Louise Tremblay and Recording Secretary, Marylee Enos. Warren Shaw was in the audience. The meeting was held at the Town Hall, 62 Arlington St, Dracut, MA.

Absent: Linda Kawa and Harvey Gagnon

Chairperson Helen Dunlap called the meeting to order 7:01p.m.

Minutes:

Louise Tremblay made a motion to approve the March 3, 2015 minutes, Debra DeWitt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

Open Space:

52 A Avis Ave:

Chairperson Helen Dunlap stated there have been some changes with the Avis Ave Property; there have been issues that have arisen, and the prospective farmer, who we all know is Dana Taplin, is very keen on having this land protected by a real APR.

Helen asked Warren Shaw to speak on this property; he has been involved with what is going on. Warren stated as we all know, there have been complications and various struggles between the interested parties. What is clear is that we need, in his opinion, to get the APR program funds as part of this project. Warren explained that the family is not apparently going to be in a position to wait, which could be two years.

Warren stated that he and Chris Chislom, from the APR Program, are going to meet tomorrow with a woman from the Trust for Public Land (TPL). Chris Chislom has already asked them to stand in and consider purchasing the farm from the family.

The way the land trust works is they would purchase the farm, and then the family would be gone. Then they file the application with the APR Program and then work with the Town for CPA funds. Presumably, if all of this works, we would get some money from the state program which would be anywhere between Ten Thousand (\$10,000) and Twenty Thousand (\$20,000) dollars an acre. Then the balance would come from CPC. This would solve a lot of problems that people have in Town with this property and save the Town a lot of local money and end the drama with the family and everyone else involved.

Warren stated that hopefully tomorrow at their meeting they will be able to get a final answer from the Trust for Public Land, stating they are going to move forward with it. Warren stated he feels very optimistic about it.

Chairperson Helen Dunlap explained one thing that she wants to be very clear on, it is that Chris LaPointe is no longer with the Trust for Public Land. A new person is on board, and this person will be apprised with everything Chris LaPointe found out. Helen explained the difference is not that we have a new person; the difference will be that we will have the involvement of the APR Program and having them as a proponent for this.

Helen stated she is very optimistic about this and that the Fox Family is keeping their fingers crossed. Warren stated that tomorrow the whole story about this property will be told.

George Malonis stated this is great news, at his perspective, sitting on the outside and looking in at this. He would agree with Warren, the plan for whatever reason, what happened last time created some anxiety about this site and if you can introduce the APR and the Trust for Public Land it will sail through. George also explained as a timing perspective, given the other project that is available; it would be almost like a competing project and would probably put this proposing project at risk.

Louise Tremblay agreed with George and Warren. She believes this opens this up to a new avenue. Louise asked Warren after they buy it, and then it goes through the APR Program, is the farmer still involved? Is it still a three way split? Warren stated they actually need a qualified farmer on this, Dana Taplin is. Once the APR gets involved, then you get federal dollars.

Warren explained that Dana has supported and is still interested in the project.

George Malonis asked if the TPL is going to be looking for anything from the CPC as part of that process. Are they just going to rely on our good faith or our representation that we are going to try to purchase it?

Warren explained that if it didn't all come together and it went to the ARR Program and they funded forty percent and then they came back to the Town of Dracut and said we need the other sixty percent, and if the Town said no they would probably sell it to a developer; they are in this for the short term. Chairperson Helen Dunlap stated they trust us to come through.

George explained he thinks it's a big stretch on their part, they might be looking for a letter of understanding, or a binding legal agreement. Warren explained that they might need that, he will know more tomorrow after the meeting.

Debra DeWitt stated she thinks this solves all our problems. Debra stated the Selectmen already said if it's not APR, they are not going to support the project.

John Hassan asked if the Appraisal update is done, Helen explained it will be done at the end of the month.

Warren explained as soon as the meeting is done tomorrow he will call Helen and the Town Manager. Helen thanked Warren for all his efforts.

Chairperson Helen Dunlap explained that Gail and Gene Fox went over to Helen's house with the video presentation of her property and of land preservation in general. Helen said that it was very good and she is hoping to get it on Dracut Access T.V.

Mark Pease asked if it's definably off the table for the June Town Meeting, Helen stated if the TPL says no tomorrow, then we need to hoof it and make it to the June Town Meeting.

761 Mammoth Rd:
Richardson Property:

Chairperson Helen Dunlap stated that the appraisal for this property will also come at the end of this month. Helen explained that she, Jim Duggan, the Town Manager, and Warren Shaw had a meeting to discuss this property. The Town Manger is very excited about this project and he is willing to do anything we needed. He is willing to work to get more funding than just CPC. He would also like to appoint an ADHOC Committee, to look at the buildings, the land, and the possibilities of what can be done with the land and to work on it intently for a while. The Town Manager is also interested in hiring a consultant to see and discuss possible ways to best use this space and buildings. Helen stated at Town Meeting we could include the consultant in the Article.

Warren Shaw stated that the Town Manger is willing to do whatever it takes in purchasing this. He is also talking about bonding this property instead of paying in cash to free up CPA funds for other projects the Town is working on know, like housing.

Warren also explained that the consultant would also be looking for funding sources for what the town can do with it. The Town Manager has a great attitude about this piece of land and what can be done with it for the Town.

Helen explained that Warren took her and Don Plummer on a site visit to the property and asked the rest of the board to do the same so they can see how big and beautiful it is.

Debra DeWitt asked if Mr. Richardson is still interested in selling the property, Helen explained yes, she has the application from him.

John Hassan asked if it would be an APR, Warren stated no it would be bought outright from the Town. It would be a community piece.

Mark Pease asked if the Appraisal will be done even with all the snow still on the ground, Assistant Town Manager Glen Edwards stated yes.

Warren Shaw asked the CPC if they have any names for the ADHOC Committee to just let him know and he will give the names it to the Town Manager. Warren did mention that he thought Andy Graham from the School Grounds should be on it since the property is connected to the High School, and also Ellis Neofotistos, who is an architect and from that area.

Chairperson Helen Dunlap stated even though the Town Manager is willing to bond some of this project, we still have to reach the appraised value.

Don Plummer passed out a list of 24 potential uses for the land to the committee that he had thought of. Helen stated he had great ideas.

George Malonis stated we should just wait and see if the P&S gets signed, Helen agreed and stated it is very exciting talking about it.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

FEASIBILITY STUDY:

Chairperson Helen Dunlap stated that the Town Manager, Jim Duggan and Mary Karabastos had a meeting about the results from the senior housing feasibility study. Helen told the committee she wanted to give them a heads up that the Town Manager will be coming to the next CPC on April 7th, along with Mary Karabastos from the Housing Authority to ask for Three Million dollars (\$3,000,000) for one of the housing projects, which won't be known until closer to the Town Meeting. Then the Town Manager would like to have a public hearing on the 21st of April.

The Town Manager explained to Helen that he is also going to get conventional financing for another one million dollars (\$1,000,000). This state funding, he's sure they could come through with another perhaps 3 Million dollars (\$3,000,000) for this project, assuming down the road the projects costs is Seven Million dollars (\$7,000,000).

Helen went over the two projects that were discussed at the last meeting.

Mark Pease asked if he would be interested to see what information they will be providing to say how this is going to cost 7 million dollars (\$7,000,000).

Debra DeWitt stated that the Housing Authority did have a meeting, and the reason for the cost is the new building, the parking, and the elevator that would have to be put in. Also it included the complete razing of the old building, among other things that have to get done.

George Malonis asked Debra, if anyone looked into the prefab buildings that have been mentioned in the past, Debra DeWitt stated yes and there was not that much of a difference. Debra DeWitt explained that she thinks the best way to go with this, is to start with 13 units and then go from there, that way the Housing Authority can keep control of them.

Helen explained that Mary Karabastos will send a memo before the next meeting to let the committee know what they are going to present in more detail.

Mark Pease asked Helen if they will be looking for a vote at the next meeting. Helen stated no, not until the public hearing on the 21st of April.

George Malonis stated that he would hate to give a commitment of giving funds and then have them say that the alternate funds they were seeking were not available. And then they are asking the CPC for more.

Chairperson Helen Dunlap stated that will be a good question to ask them.

Debra DeWitt stated that Mary and the Town Manager explained at the last Housing Meeting that they were going to look hard at alternative funding, including conventional bank funding that they may be able to get.

Glen Edwards stated that, the biggest problem with this article will be the sticker shock.

Debra DeWitt stated that, these are fair market values, they are nothing crazy.

George Malonis asked if this is going to be in time for this Town Meeting. Assistant Town Manager, Glen Edward stated yes, the Town Manager has already asked him to prepare Articles.

Don Plummer asked if the Housing can build 26 units using outside sources, Debra DeWitt Explained that we want to control our units, and get the Dracut residents off our list. Most outsource funding comes with wanting control of the housing and the units. We want to manage them ourselves and keep control.

George Malonis asked if we go with the Richardson project, can we sell the other property. He stated that we could probably get half of a million dollars (\$500,000), and that it is a good piece of real estate because of its location.

George also asked the Assistant Town Manager, Glen Edwards, what is our current funding situation, and stated that we should get the balance before we decide on the projects coming up. Glen stated he will find out and update the committee at the next meeting.

520 Coburn:

No new update

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairperson Helen Dunlap explained to the board she and the CPC were invited to the Selectmen's Meeting on March 10, 2015 to give a description on the policies, procedures and guidelines. Linda Kawa, Louise Tremblay and Debra DeWitt also attended the meeting. The board told Helen she did an outstanding job. Helen said she used the opportunity to explain what CPC is and does.

OLD BUSINESS:

Chairperson Helen Dunlap explained that she was going to talk to the Boston Office to see if the Needs & Possibilities Plan could be put off and done every 3rd or even 5 years instead of every year. She will update the committee at the next meeting.

Next Meeting:

April 7, 2015

John Hassan made a motion to adjourn at 8:16 p.m. George Malonis, seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

	
	
	
	
	