



TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

BOARD/COMMITTEE: Community Preservation Committee
MEETING DATE: January 7, 2021
TIME: 7:30 PM
PLACE: Remote Meeting pursuant to Current Executive Order of March 12, 2020
See instructions below.

AGENDA

1. Review and Approve Minutes from December 3, 2020
2. Correspondence and New Business (if any)
3. 7:35 PM, Continuation of Public Hearing (opened 12/3/2020)
 1. Housing Board: Boxborough Rental Assistance Program (BRAP)
 2. Conservation Commission: Conservation Trust Fund
 3. Recreation Commission: Capital Improvements at Liberty Field
4. Discuss and vote on recommendation of Applications to proceed as Warrant Articles for the 2021 Annual Town Meeting
5. Next Meeting, February 4, 2021 – draft agenda items

Join Zoom Meeting

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BOXBOROUGH COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

29 Middle Road, Boxborough, Massachusetts 01719

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DRAFT

Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

December 3, 2020

Remote (Zoom) Meeting, Open to the Public
Pursuant to Executive Order of March 12, 2020

Votes on All Motions are by Roll Call

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dennis Reip, Chair, Conservation Commission
Rita Gibes Grossman, Vice Chair, At-large
Hugh Fortmiller, Clerk, At-large
Hilary Greven, Recreation Commission
Robin Lazarow, Planning Board
Keith Lyons, Finance Committee
Alan Rohwer, Historical Commission
Ron Vogel, Housing Board

MEMBER ABSENT:

John Neyland, Agricultural Commission

PRESENT, EX OFFICIO:

Maria Neyland, Select Board Liaison

ABSENT, EX OFFICIO:

Simon Corson, Town Planner

VISITORS:

Jeanne Kangas
Al Murphy, Channing Wagg: Housing Board
Megan Connor, Claudine Lesk: Recreation Commission

HANDOUTS:

- Agenda for December 3, 2020
- Draft of CPC Minutes from November 5, 2020
- November 24, 2020 email from Finance Committee regarding CPC applications
- Recreation Commission cost estimates for Liberty Field Renovation options;
all include accessible parking, access paths, irrigation, drainage
 - walking path, pavilion, playground
 - baseball, walking path
 - basketball, tennis, walking path
 - basketball, tennis
 - walking path
- Conservation Commission power point for ATM
- Recreation Commission power point for ATM

7: 32 PM – After taking a roll call for a quorum (8 members present), Chair Dennis Reip called the meeting to order and reviewed the specifications of the Executive Order of March 12, 2020.

7:35 PM -- Dennis opened the public hearing to discuss the three applications for 2021 CPA funding.

1. Review of Boxborough Rental Assistance Program (BRAP) application: Al Murphy gave a summary of the application and an explanation of how the Housing Board is managing the program since the resignation of Lauren Abraham. **Jennifer Barrett has taken over major responsibility for the administration** of the program. Because of Covid-19, the Housing Board has temporarily extended the usual two-year rental assistance term to a third year for two recipients. Twelve renters are now receiving assistance. The pandemic is creating more need, given employment problems in the worsening economy. Channing Wagg pointed out that **Lauren’s departure means that people are not receiving counseling and confidential social services** that the program is designed to give. Al, Channing, and Maria explained that a first effort to fill Lauren’s position did not yield an acceptable candidate, and they are planning to hold another set of **interviews after the holidays**. In response to a question from Robin, Channing explained that the Housing Board does not know the names of recipients; Jennifer does know names when she sends assistance checks directly to landlords. In response to Jeanne’s question of whether the funding might be “holding people back” from efforts to gain employment and training, Al explained that the Community Services Coordinator advised, counseled, and monitored the progress of all recipients; therefore, finding a qualified Coordinator has become a necessity. Dennis reported that the Planning Board supports the BRAP application. **All members voiced support** for the application. A final vote will take place most likely in January.

2. Review of Conservation Trust Fund application: As Chair of the Conservation Commission, Dennis reviewed the power point presentation he will give at ATM. Maintaining **a reserve of about \$30,000** allows the Trust Fund to provide **land management** and to be prepared for **land acquisitions**. The Town has contributed to the Fund each year for ten years, the last four years from CPA funding. The Town recognizes conservation land as a major asset of Boxborough, and further conservation is part of the Town’s capital plan. Jeanne wished the funding could be more, observing that tough economic times makes that impossible. **Each member expressed support** for the application. Dennis asked Maria and Keith if the Select Board and FinCom might place this request on the ATM **“Consent Agenda”**; Maria and Keith responded that it would make the “Consent Agenda,” unless a member of the BSB or FinCom chose to raise a question for public discussion. Dennis asked if he might be given the opportunity to answer such questions beforehand; Maria and Keith said they would attempt to give him that opportunity.

3. Review of Liberty Fields Renovation application: Hilary presented the power point slides the Recreation Commission will use at the 2021 ATM. She explain the history, the needs, and the construction options and cost estimates RecCom has developed since last year’s requests were set aside at the 2020 ATM because of Covid-19. With the goal of developing Liberty Fields **to serve all ages for recreation and as a community meeting place**, RecCom estimates that the total cost to do so would be **\$1,556,100**. RecCom has broken the project into smaller pieces for the Town to consider. RecCom is applying for **\$300,000 from CPA funds**, and would ask the Town at ATM for the balance of funds for whichever project RecCom proposes. At a recent meeting FinCom expressed concern about the high cost of doing small portions of construction in separate phases and asked how CPA’s \$300,000 would be spent if ATM did not approve the additional \$1,256,000 to complete the entire project.

4. Phasing options at Liberty Field: Each of the partial options includes funds for paved, accessible parking and for irrigation and drainage work to serve the entire project. The phased options and estimated costs include:

- walking path (1/3 mile), covered pavilion, playground - \$407,442
- rebuilding of baseball field, walking path - \$588,236
- basketball court, two tennis courts, walking path - \$751,479
- basketball court, two tennis court - \$544,685
- walking path only - \$266,874

Hilary explained that RecCom is looking at what it would cost to simply dig up and grade the baseball area for general use, and then add the cost of building only the walking path. RecCom would then ask for \$300,000 from CPA funds and create an article for ATM to ask the Town to fund the balance of the cost. Hilary pointed out that the Town needs a flat, safe walking path for both young people and the elderly; she also said that RecCom wants to provide services citizens are finding only in other towns.

Hilary presented this **possible timeline:**

- May 2021, ATM approval
- May-July 2021, design development
- May 2022, start construction
- Fall or spring of 2023, completion

In reviewing drawings of all the changes to Liberty Fields, Hilary explained that in wintertime the DPW has agreed to plow the paved parking areas and would plow the walking path if time and conditions allowed. Dennis asked members for their comments:

- Keith agreed that **short-term bonding is attractive**, and the program needs considerable publicity and explanation to inform citizens and gain their support, because “it’s hard to get your arms around it.” He thinks the total cost would raise taxes about **\$50 for the average household**. He has the impression that FinCom members support the CPA funding but are evenly split regarding Town funding.
- Alan supports the CPA funding. He has **difficulty defending** the major funds necessary for rebuilding the **baseball field**, wondering if baseball serves many people in Town. Alan also asked about the future of Cisco property which has safe walking paths.
- Hugh supports the CPA application; he also questions the advisability of putting major funds into the baseball field for boys and **no softball field for girls**. He also thought winter walking might not be safe in the icy winter months. He also asked if a covered pavilion was useful.
- Ron also **supported the \$300,000 CPA funds**, and questioned the expense of rebuilding the baseball field.
- Robin asked for information about the **cost of maintenance** and wondered if the mistakes made in building the baseball field years ago would be repeated. Hilary responded that RecCom is seeking professional planning to be sure mistakes aren’t repeated. Robin asked if the baseball area could get many uses. Robin thinks what we spend \$300,000 to build could be spoiled by subsequent construction; therefore, we might find that **“all or nothing”** makes the most sense.
- Rita also thought we should consider “all or nothing,” either without baseball, or by converting that field to multiple use. She pointed out that in sunny weather people would appreciate the **shade of a covered pavilion**. Rita asked if people in wheelchairs or others with disabilities could use the path safely. She also asked whether the surface would be impervious or permeable. Rita also thought a **buffer** would be necessary between the playground and neighboring gravel and soil processing.

- Dennis agreed that work for \$300,000 would be OK only if it's not being "penny wise and pound foolish." He agreed with earlier comments about the cost of the baseball field being too high for the benefit. As part of promoting Liberty field use, Dennis suggested that the presentation should highlight the **trail connections** into conservation land.
- Megan Connor, RecCom Chair, pointed out that a good **baseball field could be rented out**. She also pointed out that the covered pavilion would get good use. A tent provides cover at Ferra Field, at a cost of \$3,000 a year.
- Jeanne asked if RecCom's 2013 **survey of public opinion might be outdated**, and if what we "want" and what we "need" requires further thought, particularly in an economy in which many people are having a difficult time paying their taxes. She asked about walking possibilities at Steele Farm and Cisco, and the use of courts and fields at ABHS. Dennis and Megan pointed out that Steele Farm and Cisco are not **ADA compliant**, and Liberty Field facilities would have to be.
- Maria accepts FinCom's view of "cheap money," and she thinks the Town needs to consider its **priorities**. She thinks the **baseball field area needs to be leveled**, and if it isn't, it should be abandoned.
- Claudine observed that **RecCom is under considerable pressure** to find a logical way to improve Liberty Fields.
- Dennis observed that **if the Town is unwilling to approve an article for \$1,256,000, what would the CPA \$300,000 be used for**, if anything?

5. Recommendation to continue this hearing: Dennis suggested that the CPC continue this hearing to allow RecCom time to consider the questions raised in this discussion and to decide just what \$300,000 of CPA money would accomplish without further funds from the Town. Everyone present agreed. Dennis moved to continue this hearing at the next CPC meeting, January 7, 2021. Rita seconded the motion. **VOTED:** Unanimous, 7-0. (Ron had left the meeting; seven members were now present.)

6. Review and Approval of Minutes from November 5, 2020: Dennis moved to approve the minutes as written. Robin seconded the motion. **VOTED:** Unanimous, 7-0.

7. Correspondence and New Business: Dennis reported that the only correspondence was an email on November 24, 2020 from the Planning Board supporting the applications for BRAP and the Conservation Trust, and remaining neutral on capital improvements to Liberty Field.

8. Agenda for Next Meeting: Approval of minutes for December 3, 2020. Correspondence. Continue public hearing on RecCom application for capital improvements to Liberty Field. Vote on the CPC recommendation for each of the three applications for CPA funds seeking approval at May 2021 ATM.

NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 2021, 7:30 PM. REMOTE PUBLIC MEETING

There being no further business, Rita moved to adjourn the meeting. Keith seconded the motion. **VOTED:** Unanimous, 7-0.

9:22 PM – Dennis adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Hugh Fortmiller, Clerk



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