

# Meeting Minutes

## Stoughton Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

### Meeting held on Google Meet

### Wednesday, January 4, 2023

**Members Participating:** Chairperson Mark Zamanian, Vice-Chair Dwight MacKerron, Treasurer Michael Barrett, Members John Morton, Donald Brady, Rich Terry and John Linehan [at 7:28]; Program Administrator (PA) Barry Kassler.

**Members absent:** Laurice Rubel and Bunmi Olotu

**Others Participating:** Conservation Commission Chairperson Gerry McDonald and Resident Paula Grubenskas.

#### **Preliminary Items:**

Mr. Zamanian read the Governor's Order authorizing remote meetings, and announced the remote link information for the meeting.

1. **Call to Order:** MOTION: Mr. Morton moved to open the meeting at 7:04 pm; seconded by Mr. MacKerron and so voted unanimously, 6-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.

2. **Chairperson's Report:** Mr. Zamanian noted that he had consulted with Mr. Kassler and had made the decision to hold the meeting online due to the increase in the number of cases of Covid and other illnesses; the plan is to resume hybrid at the next meeting.

3. **Administrator's Report:** Mr. Kassler proudly reported that the updated Community Preservation (CP) Plan has now been completed and posted on our website. He thanked the members of the committee for their help. Mr. Zamanian thanked Mr. Kassler and also noted the work done by former member Janice Esdale-Lindwall as a valuable contribution to the project, as well as that of our other members.

4. **Treasurer's Report:** Mr. Barrett presented his report via screen-share. He reviewed administrative expenses this fiscal year to date, as well as debt repayment and ongoing project expenditures. Mr. Morton asked about the \$73,000 balance in the Glen Echo Acquisition account. Mr. Kassler explained that we previously released \$200,000 from that account, and that the remaining funds are for expenses related to establishing a conservation restriction on the six-acre active recreation portion of the

property. Mr. Morton would like us to draw up an active recreation conservation restriction and find an organization to hold it. Mr. Zamanian asked Mr. Kassler to find a party which would be interested in holding it. He also asked him to set up an email subgroup consisting of himself, Mr. Morton and Mr. Barrett. Mr. Kassler asked that Ms. Rubel also be included in that group, as she is the CPC's Recreation representative.

Mr. Barrett reviewed the balances in the various CPA Fund accounts. He reviewed the outstanding CPA debt balance by bonded project. He noted that he will explain the CPA debt limit and where the fund stands in relation to it in greater detail in February or March. He also showed the list of projects which we have approved and are still reviewing for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting (ATM). He added that the current debt load is approximately 50% of the statutory limit. Mr. Zamanian asked Mr. Barrett to get the actual figures in preparation for meeting with the Finance Committee (FinCom). He noted that we have now received a 38.5% state contribution to our CPA fund this year, following their special second payment. He also asked Mr. Barrett to work with the Town Accountant to develop next year's budget for the ATM, so that he can present it this year to FinCom as the committee treasurer. Mr. Barrett assured the committee that he is fully capable of taking on that role.

5. **Public Comments:** None.

**New Business:**

6. **Full Application: Design and Construct Parking and Trailhead Area at Atkinson Ave:** Mr. McDonald presenting for the Conservation Commission. He reported that the 4.5-acre parcels which CPA funds paid for last year were legally purchased by the Town in September. He noted that the Town owns a total of almost 200 acres of conservation land in that area. The purpose of the acquisition was to gain access to that land, and create a parking area and trailhead. The project will construct a gateway and parking area for six vehicles, plus associated grading and landscaping, and the install signage and an information kiosk. All design costs are also included in the \$105,000 request. *[Mr. Linehan joined at 7:28.]* Mr. McDonald now has an estimate for \$60,000 for the construction; there may be additional materials, engineering, escalation, and other costs required.

Mr. Morton asked if the Conservation Commission had voted to include the cost of a memorial plaque for the Goulston Family, which had donated 88 acres of the adjacent land to the Town. Mr. McDonald replied that the focus right now is on the construction and grading; the plaque is a small-cost item, but it will be done. Mr. Kassler noted that the cost of the plaque for land not purchased with CPA funds may not be eligible to be included; Mr. McDonald added that he can get the funds for the plaque elsewhere

without any problem. Mr. MacKerron suggested that the cost of the sign could be included in a future phase of the Historical Signs project. He also asked about the difficulty getting from the parking area to the trails. Mr. McDonald replied that it was very easy, and offered to show him the route at the site. Mr. Linehan also said he had no problem accessing the trails. Mr. McDonald again noted that the proposal is about the parking area, adding that it will be designed to be expandable to accommodate additional vehicles, should usage levels dictate. He added that this particular project does not include extensive trail clearing beyond what is necessary to provide access, though that is envisioned as part of a future project. He noted that the sign crediting the CPA Fund with financing the 4.5-acre acquisition will be located just inside the fence at the street entrance to the parking area, along with signage stating the Rules of Use, such as prohibiting ATVs. Writing the article language broadly to include the option of trail development was debated.

Mr. McDonald noted that there have been no design costs incurred to date for the parking area, and that there will be sufficient funds for the information kiosk. He added that the parking area would be designed to prevent vehicles and ATVs from going beyond it and entering into the wooded open space.

Mr. MacKerron asked that our motion include "trail access". Mr. Kassler suggested "trailhead development"; that was modified to "trail access and development". Mr. Zamanian noted that this project should be restricted to work on the newly-acquired parcels only. Mr. Barrett cautioned not to leave the wording open-ended. He stated that we need to know up-front what the limits to the project are, and stick to them. Mr. McDonald clarified that the access to the donated land will be created on the new 4.5 acres which are the subject of this application. Mr. Zamanian asked for public comments; there were none.

**MOTION: Mr. Morton moved to have the CPC recommend Town Meeting approval of the expenditure of \$105,000 as a cash article, for the recreational purposes of the planning, development and construction of a parking area including grading, at the Town-owned Atkinson Avenue Extension property, and for trailhead development and conservation land access, a kiosk, signage and other related work. Seconded by Mr. MacKerron, and so voted, 7-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

**Continuing Business:**

**7. Full Application: Grubenskas Property on Benson Road:** Mr. Zamanian thanked Ms. Grubenskas for bring this property to our attention. Mr. Linehan stated that

the property has been surveyed and a 12-acre open space area has been delineated. Ms. Grubenskas had named a price of \$160,000. Mr. Linehan has submitted an application on behalf of the Open Space Committee for \$220,000 to cover the cost of the acquisition plus related expenses, including a Chapter 21E evaluation, legal expenses, the creation and implementation of a conservation restriction, and an appraisal. He noted that the open space area appears to have the potential for two or three residential lots if it were to be developed. It also includes the perennial stream Dorchester Brook, among other natural features. Ms. Grubenskas, the landowner, said she wants to ensure that the area is protected. Mr. Linehan noted that this property abuts fifty acres of existing conservation land recently acquired by the Town, and is also near conservation land owned by neighboring Easton, and its acquisition is in line with the public recommendations received when the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan was being updated. Mr. Zamanian again thanked Ms. Grubenskas for bringing this project to us.

Mr. Morton asked if the appraisal for the property could be paid for out of the CPC's Administrative Account in order to move the project forward expeditiously, and to be able to establish that the property has already been appraised at a higher price prior to Town Meeting, rather than leaving that issue unresolved. Mr. Kassler also recommended doing so. Mr. Zamanian noted that the committee had voted to use the Administrative Account for appraisals when appropriate, on a case-by-case basis. Mr. MacKerron asked how the appraisal was handled for Atkinson Ave; Mr. Zamanian replied that Town Counsel wrote an opinion that the purchase price was safely below market value, and therefore an appraisal was not needed. In this case, however, there is a new parcel being created, so there is no pre-existing assessed value to go by. Mr. Barrett agreed that it makes sense to have the appraisal completed before Town Meeting.

**MOTION: Mr. Barrett moved to pay for the appraisal out of the CPC Administrative Account. Mr. Morton noted that we need to state a dollar value on the appraisal cost in this motion; he suggested between \$3,000 and \$5,000. Mr. Zamanian suggested that we allow for up to \$10,000, even though the cost will likely be less. Any unspent balance would remain in the Administrative Account. Mr. Morton accepted that as an amendment to his motion, with the added language that we would like to have this completed by the end of March. The motion was seconded by Mr. Linehan. Mr. McDonald stated that he would like to be able to have the appraisal by February 15th if possible. Mr. Linehan advised him to contact the Town Procurement Officer and get an appraiser working right away. Mr. Kassler asked Mr. Linehan to contact Ms. Bruttaniti, and Mr. Linehan agreed to do so.**

**The motion was approved 7-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

Mr. McDonald, speaking as the Chairperson of the Conservation Commission, stated that this property would be an excellent addition to the Town's open space portfolio. He then asked why a Conservation Restriction (CR) is required, given that the Conservation Commission will have custody of the property. Mr. Zamanian explained that the CPA statute requires a CR for any property purchased with CPA funds. Although it is difficult, conservation land is possible to be taken for other uses, under a Home Rule petition. Creating a CR ensures, to the extent legally possible, that the land will permanently remain as open space. Mr. Barrett asked if a CR had been created for the Atkinson Ave property. Mr. Zamanian asked Mr. Kassler to follow up on that and make sure it is taken care of. Mr. Kassler stated that the Town had been waiting to see what the exact use of the property would be. Mr. McDonald offered to work with the committee to get that accomplished. Mr. Linehan noted that the CR would have to allow for parking expansion; he added that Wildlands Trust holds the CR on Glen Echo. Mr. Zamanian noted that the Town owns a parcel that runs from Sumner Street to the Grubenskaskas property; Mr. McDonald stated that it may be too wet to use for access.

**MOTION: Mr. Linehan moved to recommend that Annual Town Meeting approve a cash article for \$220,000 for the acquisition of this property and all related expenses, including but not limited to establishment of a Conservation Restriction, Chapter 21E evaluation, and legal expenses. Seconded by Mr. Morton, and so voted 7-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

**Project Updates:**

**8. Update on Student Engagement Project:** Mr. Linehan reported that Ms. Olotu, who is not present, is having difficulty making contact with the school staff who will be involved in this project. Mr. Zamanian tabled the issue until our next meeting.

**9. Glen Echo Project Punch List Items:** Mr. Kassler reported that he has been in contact with Eric Kolman, the Chair of the Glen Echo Committee. He has also received updates from Paul Giffune, the head of the DPW. The security camera was installed, but is not yet recording at the police station. The gate arm is working properly, and the CPA sign has been installed. There are plans for installing solar lights as the last item in the project; vendors are being sought.

Mr. Linehan reported that the park is getting good use. Mr. Zamanian agreed, saying that it is rarely empty whenever he visits. Mr. MacKerron announced that the Historical

Commission is planning a program at the park in April or May which will include a presentation on the restaurants that were once located there; Mr. Morton asked him to come to Conservation with a formal request to use the park for a public function. Mr. Zamanian asked Mr. MacKerron to hold a program where the Indigenous community can present a history of the area from their perspective.

**10. Capen Reynolds Grant Updates:** Mr. Terry reported on two grants. First, he was notified on December 9 that the \$165,000 MAPC grant for the community gardens that had been applied for in October was not awarded to the project this year due to limited funding from the grant source; he was urged by the granting entity to apply again later in 2023. Second, the new application period for the Stanton Foundation grant for the dog park opened this week. He reported that the application is complete except for the Town Manager's signature; he expects it to be submitted later this week. The amount of the application is equal to Stanton's maximum grant: \$225,000. This would be applied toward construction costs, as the design costs have already been paid for. He noted that it takes approximately two months from the date of submission until the Capen Reynolds Committee learns whether they have been awarded the grant.

**11. Stoughton Ancient Documents Upload:** Mr. MacKerron reported that progress is being made towards getting the collection posted online. The entire collection is a massive file, and cannot be uploaded as one file. There will be a presentation on January 22 at the Society's offices in the Lucius Clapp Building in tandem with Canton's Historical Society, to introduce the collection to the public. He plans to at least have some of it posted on the Historical Society's website, and plans to ask the library to post the link as well. The immediate goal is to focus on a handful of prominent Stoughton historical figures, and present items related to their lives. Mr. Linehan asked if copies could be made of documents from the collection and posted in the library on a rotating basis. Mr. MacKerron noted that captions need to be created for each item displayed, which is currently being worked on. The index for the collection also still needs work.

**12. Closeout of Historic Site Signs Project:** Mr. Kassler commended Mr. MacKerron for his efforts and for the successful completion of the project, noting that people often stop and read the signs and learn about the history of Stoughton. Mr. MacKerron noted that there may soon be a second phase which will involve additional historic sites. **MOTION: Mr. MacKerron moved to close out the project and release the balance back to the Historic Preservation account; seconded by Mr. Barrett and so voted unanimously, 7-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

**Administrative Items:**

**13. Approval of Minutes of December 7, 2022: MOTION: Mr. Barrett moved to approve the minutes as presented; seconded by Mr. Morton and so voted unanimously, 7-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

**14. Acceptance of Revised Project Narrative on Hansen Playground Project: Mr. Kassler explained that the narrative was revised to reflect that the construction portion of the project would be going out to bid. MOTION: Mr. Barrett moved to accept the amended narrative; seconded by Mr. Terry, and so voted unanimously, 7-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

**15. Discussion on Pierce Street Church Parcel: Mr. Zamanian reported that Roberta Harback, a member of the Redevelopment Authority which he is Chairperson of, notified him last month of a church that had gone up for sale. Mr. Zamanian said that the building has since gone under agreement with another buyer. He wanted to bring it before the CPC to see if we would consider recommending CPA funding to purchase the property, before he learned that it was already under agreement. He noted that if the Town had had an Affordable Housing Trust in place, it could have acted sooner, and made an offer. He noted that Select Board Member Stephen Cavey has made providing affordable senior housing a priority. He added that plans are to revisit bringing back the proposal for an Affordable Housing Trust next year. He noted that the Town has so far spent very little of its CPA funds on housing, and pointed to the experience with the church as a lost opportunity for the Town. Mr. Barrett reinforced the point, saying that this is exactly the type of situation an Affordable Housing Trust is made for; adding that a housing trust is a vital tool for the Town to have at its disposal.**

Mr. Linehan noted that the CPA itself had failed to pass the first time it went before the voters. Mr. Barrett stated that we could have done a better job educating the public. Mr. Zamanian stated that while some of the fears expressed at the Town Meeting where the proposal was defeated were valid, they still need to be addressed and responded to.

**16. Update CPC Application Form: Mr. Kassler noted that two items on the current application form need to be addressed. First, the form currently requires applicants to provide ten full printed copies of their full application. Mr. Zamanian stated that these copies generally end up being wasted, including 100 sheets at our last meeting. Mr. Kassler recommended that we no longer require paper copies. MOTION: Mr. Linehan moved to have Mr. Kassler remove the paper copy requirement from the application forms. Seconded by Mr. Barrett and so voted unanimously, 7-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

Second, the application requires the applicant to be responsible for creating the warrant article for their project. Mr. Zamanian cited this as no longer necessary or even desirable, as Mr. Kassler performs this task, a process that most applicants are not sufficiently familiar with to do an effective job. Mr. Kassler stated he would change the wording so that the applicant is instructed to work with the CPC to ensure that the project's warrant article is submitted in a timely manner. **MOTION: Mr. MacKerron moved to eliminate the requirement that applicants file the warrant article for their project and update the forms accordingly; seconded by Mr. Morton and so voted unanimously, 7-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

17. **New Laptop for Program Administrator:** Mr. Zamanian stated that we need to provide Mr. Kassler with a new laptop to replace the existing device, which is no longer adequate. He suggested that we authorize up to \$2,500 from the Administrative Account to cover costs. Mr. Barrett noted that we need to account for purchases of software and peripherals, and suggested raising the amount to \$3,000. Mr. Terry pointed out that we should also include an external hard drive to be used as a CPC file backup. That cost should be added in as well. **MOTION: Mr. MacKerron moved to authorize the expenditure of up to \$3,200 from the administrative account for the purchase of a laptop, software, and peripherals for the use of the Program Administrator. Seconded by Mr. Morton and so voted unanimously, 7-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

18. **Other Unanticipated New Business:** None.

19. **Schedule Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be held on February 1. Mr. Zamanian noted that we intend to meet hybrid again, with the option to attend in person or remotely, and will change the format to remote-only, if conditions warrant.

20. **Adjournment:** **MOTION: Mr. Barrett moved to adjourn; seconded by Mr. MacKerron, and so voted unanimously, 7-0, at 9:14 pm: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Brady, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Barry Kassler  
Program Administrator, Community Preservation Committee

*Approved on February 1, 2023*