

RECEIVED  
STOUGHTON, MASS.  
2023 MAR -3 A 8:51

## Meeting Minutes

### Stoughton Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Joint Meeting with Select Board, Planning Board and SRA Meeting held at Great Hall, Town Hall, and on Google Meet Tuesday, January 17, 2023

**CPC Members Present In Person:** Chairperson Mark Zamanian, Treasurer Michael Barrett, Members John Morton, Rich Terry and John Linehan

**CPC Members Present Online:** Vice-Chair Dwight MacKerron; Program Administrator (PA) Barry Kassler

**Select Board Members Present In Person:** Chair Debra Roberts, Vice-Chair Stephen Cavey, Members Joseph Mokrisky, Lou Gitto and Scott Carrara

**Stoughton Redevelopment Authority (SRA) Members Present In Person:** Chairperson Mark Zamanian

**SRA Members Present Online:** Treasurer Reggie Nunnally and Member Roberta Harback

**Planning Board Members Present In Person:** Chair Daniel Kelly, Members Rich Terry and Paul Beliveau

**Planning Board Members Present Online:** Vice-Chair Paul DeMusz

**Others Present In Person:** Town Manager Thomas Calter, Town Planner Pam McCarthy, Town Engineer Marc Tisdelle, Finance Committee Member David Lurie

1. **Call to Order:** MOTION: Mr. MacKerron moved to open the meeting at 8:44 pm within the Select Board meeting already in progress; seconded by Mr. Morton and so voted unanimously, 6-0: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye. The members and the Program Administrator introduced themselves.

2. **Discussion Regarding Plans for Stoughton Depot:** Ms. McCarthy stated that there had been a Capital Projects Survey conducted online and gave the results. She noted that in the survey there were six potential capital projects which residents were asked for their opinions on, including relative level of importance: Online Permitting Software, Renovation of the Police Station, ADA upgrade at Lucius Clapp, Stabilization of the Armory, Improving the Town Hall Parking Lot, and Stoughton Depot Renovation/Re-use. She reported that approximately 60% of respondents felt that renovation/re-use of the Depot was important or very important.

Ms. Roberts asked if people were aware that it had been determined that the Depot would be used as a multi-purpose center. A number of those in attendance were not aware of that. Mr. Mokrisky pointed out that no formal vote had been taken. He said that he hoped that the grant Ms. McCarthy has applied for will allow the public to give its opinions on the future of the property. He noted that the Town has options it can implement in the short-term to make the building usable, short of the long-term goal of having it fully restored, in accordance with whatever outcome is determined.

Mr. Calter stated that he looked at the Town's "non-performing assets", and advised that the Town needs to use the buildings it owns, and not just let them deteriorate. He stated that if no viable plans can be developed and implemented, then the best option would be to sell those properties. He had asked Mr. Mokrisky to look into the cost of getting the Depot cleaned and heated, including activating other utilities. Mr. Calter believes that the project would be a good fit for a MassWorks grant.

Mr. Zamanian noted that the station has already received \$600,000 in CPA funds for acquisition and renovation. He said that the CPC would like to get a definitive idea of the long-term plan.

Ms. Roberts stated that there are both short- and long-term plans. Ms. McCarthy suggested making the building tight and opening it up to small, temporary uses. She noted that the Town began its restoration by using two small grants to get rid of the bird guano that had built up during the years it had been under the MBTA's ownership. Ms. McCarthy added that she had met with former Town Manager Grimm and Procurement Officer Fran Bruttaniti last spring and applied for a grant with MassWorks; the Town issued an RFP, and got two responses: one for a brewery, and one for a restaurant. Ms. McCarthy applied for the grant in May, and made a presentation to the Select Board last July. The Town was notified in October that it had been awarded \$25,000 to hire a consultant for technical assistance with the project. The project would need to be completed by the end of June.

Mr. Nunnally of the Redevelopment Authority advocated selling the building to a developer and putting it back on the tax rolls. Mr. Barrett stated that the Town's priority should be coming up with plans for both the short and long term. He added that the CPC has started to use up some of the CPA Fund's savings in the last two years, and it needs to be aware of the level of priority the Select Board gives to this renovation. Mr. Terry noted the building's listing on the National Historic Register, and mentioned other towns with similar historic structures that have been able to preserve and develop them, some for municipal and some for commercial purposes, including Easton and Canton.

Ms. Roberts addressed short-term planning first. Mr. Mokrisky noted that the building no longer has electricity, and reported that National Grid has been contacted and will restore power soon and install a new meter inside the building. Water and gas utilities also have to be installed in order to provide heat. He said that DPW Superintendent Paul Giffune is working on that.

Mr. Zamanian asked "How can we help?", given that the committees he chairs were invited to this meeting. Ms. Roberts recapped that the building can be restored to operation, and that Ms. McCarthy has a consultant lined up, along with funding from grants, and asked what those present would like to see done in both the short and long term. Mr. Mokrisky stated that \$200,000 is needed for the immediate repairs mentioned, including providing secure locking exterior doors, fixing the water-damaged floor, installing a bathroom, and sealing up windows with Plexiglas or plywood. He mentioned as an example that the Capen Reynolds House's windows were temporarily sealed with plywood which was then painted to look like real windows. Money and time are short, and he asked if it is still possible to put this before Town Meeting, and if there was still time to apply to the CPC for the funding. Mr. Zamanian stated that it may still be possible.

Mr. Zamanian noted that the CPC has been busy, and there are already ten projects which the CPC is recommending for approval at Annual Town Meeting (ATM). He stated that the CPC has one regular meeting before the warrant closes, and could also call a special meeting if necessary, but noted that there is only a small window of time to act before the warrant closes on February 7. He stated that if we receive an application within seven days, it will be heard at the next CPC meeting. He noted that the CPA Fund has already invested about \$600,000 in the depot building for acquisition and repairs.

Mr. Mokrisky said that if his board supports the proposal, he will work with Mr. Giffune and put together an application for the CPC. Mr. Zamanian said that it needs to include a quote for the work; a formal bid would not be necessary at this time. Mr. Barrett stated that the CPC would need to see an accounting of the items CPA funds have been spent on under the depot's previous CPA grants presented with the proposal. Mr. Morton said he is in favor of preservation efforts and would support this if there were a specific proposal and a timeline. Mr. Mokrisky said that the goal is to "button up" the building, adding that Mr. Giffune felt that \$200,000 would cover the items mentioned as short-term repairs. He said that he can get an application to the CPC within seven days, adding that the goal is to get the building secure and the utilities connected.

Ms. Roberts asked the Select Board to comment on their level of support. Mr. Gitto asked about the need for permits. Town Engineer Marc Tisdelle agreed that the short-term focus should be on getting the building secured and the utilities hooked up; he did not believe any of that work would require permits. He estimated the long-term cost of full restoration at between \$2.5 and \$4 million. Mr. Mokrisky noted that there is still an active rail line, which may make federal grant money available. He said it may be possible to open the building to commuters as they wait for their trains, and perhaps to add a bakery stand to cater to them. He referred to Stoughton's state and federal legislators as a potential source of assistance. He noted that once the building is again functional, it will be easier to attract businesses who want to set up there. He stated that the building's roof and flashing and skylight have been re-done, which stopped the leakage that had been seen prior to those repairs.

Mr. Zamanian mentioned the option of turning the building over to the SRA, adding that Town use would likely not be included in that case, due to the need to turn a profit. Mr. Mokrisky asked to let Ms. McCarthy go through her process, adding that the building is on the National Historic Register, so it needs to be preserved. Mr. Zamanian asked to see the results of the previously mentioned survey. Mr. Lurie, speaking as a citizen, suggested that the town's upcoming 300th anniversary [in 2026] could be used as an impetus and a goal for getting the work done.

Ms. Roberts asked for the will of the Select Board regarding the \$200,000 proposal. Mr. Cavey stated that his two priorities are securing the building and activating it as a usable space. He supports the proposal. Mr. Gitto expressed his concern about tapping into the Town's operating budget, but would support applying for CPA funding. Mr. Calter said he supports the idea of applying for CPA funding because it would be worthwhile and advantageous to preserve the building whether the Town keeps it or decides to sell it. He urged the CPC to support the proposal.

Mr. DeMusz asked if the building's presence on the National Historic Register opens the possibility of federal grants. Ms. McCarthy replied that it may be possible to secure tax credits, but there needs to be at least a 29½-year lease in place for the Town to qualify. She added that even without heat or electricity, the Town has held functions in that space; the biggest problem was the buckled flooring. She noted that people have been interested to see the building's interior where the film *Little Women* was shot. She asked for guidance in setting up the survey. Ms. Roberts said that they would need to set up a subgroup and connect via email.

Mr. Mokrisky said that the federal government would want to see a history of good stewardship, adding that replacing the roof would cost about \$3 million all by itself. Mr.

Nunnally suggested checking with the Massachusetts State Preservationist, who has worked on similar sites. Mr. Calter said that person would likely know what grants are available, adding that we can also ask our local representatives for earmarks for the project. He foresees hosting a breakfast at Town Hall where we would need to be ready to present our case to our legislators. The state may have \$3 to \$5 million to offer towards this project; the federal government may potentially have funding in the tens of millions of dollars. He advised that we don't need to come up with every possible usage option for the site – we can focus on presenting one or two of the most attractive ones. He added that February and March is the best time of year to do this.

Ms. Roberts again asked if there is agreement among the Select Board members on applying to the CPC for \$200,000. Mr. Zamanian suggested that there be a formal vote. **MOTION: Select Board Member Mokrisky moved that the Select Board support applying to the CPC for \$200,000 for making the railroad station building operational. Seconded by Mr. Cavey, and so voted 5-0: Mr. Cavey, Aye; Mr. Gitto, Aye; Mr. Carrara, Aye; Mr. Mokrisky, Aye; and Ms. Roberts, Aye.** Mr. Zamanian reminded the Board that they would need to file for Urgent Review with the submission of the Full Application, noting that the urgency is to avoid having to wait another year before being able to act to preserve the structure while it continues to deteriorate. Mr. Kassler will email the forms that need to be filled out and filed.

Ms. Roberts noted that there is a February deadline on the public survey, and added that there need to be specific plans drawn up. Mr. Calter said that we need to be able to show the existing state of the building; the details can come later. Ms. McCarthy also noted that she has letters of support from all three of Stoughton's state legislators, and offered to be the point person for the survey process, coordinating with the chairs of the other boards via email.

**3. Discussion Regarding Plans for the Stoughton Armory:** Mr. Mokrisky stated that he would allow the SRA to see if the Armory building is appropriate for redevelopment. Mr. Carrara objected because he and Mr. Cavey had been asked to lead the effort to investigate the re-use the property. He noted that he had offered the site to Recreation Director Matt Cauchon, who was reported to not be interested due to the location. Mr. Carrara stated that he believes the best use to be as a police station, if the cost of redevelopment makes sense. That would allow the existing police headquarters to be used to satisfy the new downtown zoning housing requirements. Mr. Carrara noted that when Stoughton purchased the Armory, the original plan had been to use it as a police or fire department building. He suggested giving the current police station to the SRA for redevelopment as elderly housing.

Mr. Mokrisky stated that the SRA would be the best option for the Armory. He said that the Town needs to have someone working on it who knows how to get grants. He noted that he used to chair the SRA, adding that the Town now has an active CPC. He also said that the Police Chief was enthusiastic about giving the Armory to the SRA.

SRA member Roberta Harback stated that her committee met with then-Town Manager Grimm, Paul Giffune, Mr. Mokrisky, and the Chief and Deputy Chief of Police last May, and discussed splitting the Armory 50/50 with Recreation. She said Mr. Cauchon liked the idea of having a basketball court that was not dependent on whether the schools were using it. The cost to develop was estimated at \$3 million. She said she has all the information from a 2018 proposal to do that, showing the work needed, including asbestos removal and roofing. She said that option would solve multiple problems.

Mr. Carrara reiterated that he supports having only the Police at the Armory. He said you cannot share a site between the Police and another use, as the proposal would include a shooting range. He said that the Armory would be able to house the Police Department for years to come, as there would be room for expansion. He also noted that the SRA needs a financial return in order to invest in something, which would rule them out. Mr. Zamanian stated that the SRA, which he chairs, would need to turn a profit, which means that it couldn't be solely dedicated to municipal use. He noted that if the property is shared with the Recreation Department, the CPC could fund a portion of the cost as allowed under the CPA.

Ms. Harback stated that the proposal did not include a new shooting range, as that would have added another \$2 million to the cost. She stated that the Police Chief is aware of that fact. She would not want the SRA to take over the property. Town Manager Calter disclosed that he is currently in discussions to bring the Norfolk County 911 Combined Dispatch Center to Stoughton. That would take up less than one-third of the space in the Armory, and the Police Department could take the remainder. He asked to table this discussion for thirty days until a decision is made on the dispatch center option. He said Stoughton joining Norfolk County 911 would save the Town \$1 million in dispatch costs.

Mr. Calter said that he believes there are two opportunities here. One is to sell the building to a private developer, and the other is to use it for 911 County Dispatch. He stated that the County has plenty of funds to develop the building if Stoughton could house its Police Headquarters there as well. He asked for thirty days to work with the County. Mr. Nunnally of the SRA supports giving him those thirty days, and would like the SRA to have a chance to discuss this at its own meeting. Mr. DeMusz of the Planning Board stated that he believes that the Town cannot legally sell the Armory for

non-municipal use, as that was one of the conditions when it purchased it for \$1. Mr. Cavey stated that he believes that the condition from the sale is that the Commonwealth gets Right of First Refusal, adding that it should be easy enough to check what the actual conditions of the transaction were.

Ms. Roberts also supports allowing for the thirty days Mr. Calter has requested.

Mr. Zamanian stated that he feels that this has been a productive meeting.

**4. Adjournment: MOTION: Mr. MacKerron moved to adjourn the CPC meeting within the Select Board meeting; seconded by Mr. Morton, and so voted unanimously, 6-0, at 10:24 pm: Mr. Morton, Aye; Mr. Barrett, Aye; Mr. MacKerron, Aye; Mr. Terry, Aye; Mr. Linehan, Aye; Mr. Zamanian, Aye.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Barry Kassler  
Program Administrator, Community Preservation Committee

*Approved on March 1, 2023*

