

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

**Minutes of Meeting
January 16, 2008**

Present: Paul Siegenthaler –Chairman, Jane Howard – Vice-Chairman,
Janet Bernardo, Brian Nadler, Bruce Eisenhut, Sheila Pransky,

Absent: John Comando, Sandy Tobin
Patricia Carey, Staff Liaison

Town Staff: Nikki Witham, Recording Secretary

Guests: Lisa Standley, Chair, Conservation Commission; Kristen Phelps,
Conservation Agent; Terence Noonan, Member, Needham
Housing Authority

The meeting convened at 7:33 PM in the Newman School Conference Room.

Minutes of January 2, 2008: Ms. Pransky made a motion to approve the minutes of January 2, 2008. Mr. Eisenhut seconded the motion and it was passed with three in favor and two abstained. Mr. Siegenthaler was not present for the vote of the minutes.

Review of Proposals: Meeting with Proponents:

FY 2008-3 Transfer of Funds to Conservation Fund- Brian Nadler, liaison to this project introduced Conservation Commission Chair Lisa Standley and Conservation Agent Kristen Phelps. Mr. Nadler reviewed the questions and answers that he had asked of them, and also talked a little about the law enabling towns to have a Conservation Fund. Dr. Standley explained that the requested funds would assist in building the Fund to a quarter of a million dollars. Having the funds enables the Conservation Commission to move quickly on land acquisitions. A question was asked if land was purchased with money from the fund then would Town Meeting then have to vote to approve the purchase of the land? Dr. Standley informed the Committee that yes, Town Meeting would need to vote to approve the purchase. Another question was about the history of the \$125,000 that is already in the fund. Dr. Standley stated that the fund had not been used during her tenure on the Commission. Ms. Phelps told the Committee that she had been inquiring with the Treasurer's office to get a clearer picture of the money that is currently in the fund. Mr. Siegenthaler asked if there was a parcel of land over by Ridge Hill that Conservation tried to acquire, but couldn't? Dr. Standley told them that there was some land where Charles River St. and Grove St. cross that they were trying to acquire, but because they didn't have the funds, the Conservation Commission lost the opportunity to purchase it. Mr. Nadler's notes are in Appendix A.

FY 2008-4 Preservation of Trails/Access to Municipal Land- Dr. Standley updated the Committee on the Trails project and said that the Master Plan for the Trails should be completed in March. The Trails Committee and the consultants are listing some areas to be purchased as easements. The purpose of the proposal is to purchase signs and kiosks to house trail maps, as well as trail markers to define the Town's existing trail system. Mr. Eisenhut stated that there are many different design standards for signs and wondered if the Trails Committee had chosen one yet. Dr. Standley told the Committee they are working on choosing a standard. Another question was whether or not the sign system had to coordinate with the Department of Conservation and Recreation system. Dr. Standley stated it was not a requirement but was under review as an option. The Trails Committee is also considering recommending a contest for students to come up with a logo for the trail signs. All of the signs will have the same uniform sign and be numbered with a trail junction, which will coincide with the numbers on the map. Other questions included what will the kiosks look like, about how many markers will be used, and how long will it take to put up the markers. The Trails Committee is thinking of something simple for the kiosks. An example would be what is used in Wellesley. The markers would hang high up on the trees. The Conservation Commission had submitted the request on behalf of the Trails Committee, and requested funds for 1,000 markers. It is hoped that the markers will be placed by volunteers. The Trails Committee is looking at different materials for the markings, but are considering aluminum signs. The kiosks will likely be built from wood. Mr. Siegenthaler asked if there were any kinds of recycled materials that could be used, and Dr. Standley stated that it would be reviewed.

FY 2008-5 High Rock Trails- Terence Noonan from the Needham Housing Authority was present to speak about the High Rock Trails proposal. He started off by telling the Committee that he had met with the Trails Committee and they will be incorporating the trails onto the Master Trails plan. They have also met with the Park and Recreation Commission who voted to support the project, but also gave good advice and suggestions. The Housing Authority would like to formalize the internal trails, and renovate the sidewalks that are a component of the trails. The surface of the trail will be appropriate for the natural setting. A goal is to have the neighborhood and other residents of the town be connected. Mr. Siegenthaler asked who owned the land. Ms. Pransky explained that the Needham Housing Authority owns the land but it is funded by the state. Another question was whether or not any research has been done on ADA compliance. Mr. Noonan replied that they had not looked into it, but would do some research. The Committee then had a brief discussion on which reserve the money for this project should come from. Ms. Pransky suggested getting an opinion on the matter from Stuart Saginor from the Community Preservation Coalition or a legal opinion from Town Counsel. Mr. Siegenthaler will request some feedback from Mr. Saginor.

Chairman's Comments: None presented.

Review of Fund Balances: The discussion on the Fund Balances was tabled until the next meeting.

Other Business: There was a brief discussion about the Town Hall project. There was concern that if the Town Hall project gets all of the money from the General Fund reserve, then there will not be enough money to fund other projects. The Committee is also in agreement that once an option for Town Hall is selected, then that is what the Committee as a whole has to focus on, and not worry about the other options because it isn't up to the Committee to decide which option is selected but to look at whichever option is brought to the Committee for review.

Upcoming Meeting Dates: The Committee expressed concern that the Newman Conference Room may not be large enough for the January 30th meeting. Ms. Witham will look into alternative meeting places. The Committee will also meet on February 13, 2008.

Ms. Howard made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 PM. Ms. Pransky seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nikki Witham
Recording Secretary

Appendix A

- How much is in the Conservation Fund now?
Currently there is a balance of \$125,000.00. The town used to make an annual appropriation to the land acquisition fund, however no appropriations have taken place since prop 21/2.
- Does CPA render the fund unnecessary? With CPA, why do we need the Fund? Money can't be spent without TM approval anyway.
The main advantage to this fund is the ability to move quickly as a potential land acquisition comes to market. Con Com has this war chest built up and can move timely to fund the due diligence piece of the project. Money in this fund can be spent without TM approval. The Con Com only needs a simple majority to approve spending.
- There are 3 Open Space projects this cycle. Is there enough money to do all three this year?
Further discussion amongst CPC
- Ultimately, how much is ConCom looking to raise for this fund?
Other towns that utilize the fund in this way are Duxbury, Lincoln and Stowe. They typically want to maintain a balance of \$150K-\$250K
- How will ConCom insure that the funds would be spent under CPA regulations?
This will be done by an accounting procedure by the Town Treasurer. This is how the other towns meet this guideline. The Conservation Fund can be used for Land Acquisition, Development Rights or the purchase of easements. The Town Treasurer would have any funds transferred by CPC set aside with Open Space guidelines attached to it.
- What opportunities have been lost because there wasn't money available?
To be further discussed at the meeting, Kristen has only been with the Con Com for three years. In those three years there have been no opportunities missed. The last use of the fund was the Wiswold parcel
- How is the Fund monitored?
Town Treasurer
- What is the process for using the Fund?
Information is brought to the Con Com and they would put it on their agenda for discussion. A simple majority is required for any expenditures