COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

Minutes of Meeting
April 16, 2008

Present:	Paul Siegenthaler –Chairman, Jane Howard – Vice-Chairman, Janet Bernardo, John Comando, Bruce Eisenhut, Brian Nadler, Sheila Pransky, Sandy Tobin
Town Staff:	Patricia Carey, Staff Liaison Nikki Witham, Recording Secretary
Guests:	Dave Davison, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Finance Moe Handel, Citizens for the Preservation of Town Hall Carol Boulris, Chairman of the Historical Commission

The meeting convened at 7:35 PM in the Newman Conference Room.

Draft Financial Plan: Mr. Siegenthaler asked the CPC to support adjusting the meeting agenda to allow for a discussion with the Assistant Town Manager Dave Davison on a revised draft of a facility financing plan dated April 15, 2008. The draft outlined the first ten years of financing Town Hall with estimates of the surcharge revenue and state match funds. Mr. Siegenthaler noted that the draft assumed 70% from the state, but that the CPC had been given indications that it was more likely to be 65%. Mr. Davison will alter the estimates to reflect 65%. The chart removed the state funds from the annual collection as well as 35% to cover the three "buckets" and administrative costs. Mr. Davison was asked to reflect 11% "buckets" rather than 10%. The chart finally provides an estimate on debt service, and additional funds that remain for other projects. Mr. Davison's proposal assumed that $7,385,817 would be funded for Town Hall from cash and $7,000,000 from debt.

Mr. Comando asked if the draft plan was relevant to the current proposals. Mr. Siegenthaler stated that the CPC needed to be prepared to give an estimate of what funds would remain for other projects should all of the proposals be funded. Mr. Davison will adjust the draft financing plan after the CPC votes on the current proposals, as the draft reflects all five projects being approved by Town Meeting.

Chairman's Comments: Mr. Siegenthaler agreed to alter the order of discussion on the proposals, leaving Town Hall as the final discussion. He has received calls from proponents and opponents of the Town Hall proposal since last night's public hearing and he will share some of those thoughts during that discussion.

<u>Minutes of March 26, 2008:</u> Mr. Nadler made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2008 meeting. Ms. Howard seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

<u>FY2008-2 Purchase of Hearthstone Farm:</u> The proponents have requested this project be withdrawn as an agreement has not been reached with the owners at this time. Negotiations will continue and the proposal will likely return in the future. **Mr. Comando made a motion to withdraw Article 26 on the Town Meeting warrant. Ms. Bernardo seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.** Mr. Siegenthaler suggested that the project remain on the draft financing plan as it was likely to return as a request in the near future.

<u>FY2008-5 High Rock Trails:</u> The proponents have requested this project be withdrawn so that more time can be spent on the details of the project. It will likely return as a proposal in the future. **Mr. Eisenhut made a motion to withdraw Article 27 on the Town Meeting warrant. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion.** Ms. Pransky noted that the Housing Authority had met last week, and still supported the creation of the trail, but felt that more information was needed to determine the actual costs. Mr. Siegenthaler suggested that the project not remain in the draft financing plan as the estimate will likely be much lower than the original estimate, and would not be difficult to fund if approved in the future. **Mr. Siegenthaler called for the vote and the motion was unanimously supported.**

<u>FY2008-4 Preservation of Trails and Access to Municipal Land:</u> A discussion was held on the appropriate "bucket" for funding this project. After a review of information provided by the Community Preservations Coalition, it was determined it should come from General Reserves. **Ms. Howard made a motion to recommend the appropriation of Article 28 in the Town Meeting warrant for $5,500 from the Community Preservation General Reserves. Ms. Pransky seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.**

<u>FY2008-3 Appropriation to Conservation Fund:</u> The CPC discussed the information that had been gathered on the fund. The appropriation has been supported by the Town Manager, and the Assistant Town Manager had noted that the Town's Reserve Fund was for emergencies and not a likely funding source for the Conservation Commission needs. Ms. Howard noted that any expenditure would need to be approved by the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager, and that the only CPA requirement is that the funds could not be used for maintenance. **Ms. Tobin made a motion to recommend the appropriation of Article 29 in the Town Meeting warrant for $25,000 from the Open Space Reserve. The motion was seconded by Ms. Pransky.** Ms. Howard stated that the Conservation Commission will likely come back for future appropriation requests. Ms. Tobin stated her support for this funding request from CPA funds. Mr. Comando wanted to make an amendment to appropriate $100,000 so that the Conservation Commission would not have to return annually. Mr. Siegenthaler noted that the warrant article could not be amended to a higher amount. **Mr.**

Siegenthaler called for the vote. There were 6 votes in favor, one opposed, and one abstention.

FY2008-1 Town Hall Historic Preservation Design: Mr. Siegenthaler stated that the CPC did not have to vote at this meeting, but that the committee deliberation should be held and the vote taken if ready. He noted that some of the discussion would revolve around philosophy, including the role of the CPC as well as a decision on whether the proponents had done their due diligence on the proposal and provided the needed information for a decision.

Ms. Howard asked how the CPC could determine community support, wondering if there were more people in support who did not feel the need to speak up, and Mr. Nadler said that many might just be concerned about other issues and not have an opinion on the Town Hall project. Ms. Pransky said that if 91% of the cost of the renovation was coming from CPA funds, it was important for the CPC to feel the use was legitimate. Mr. Comando stated that it was not the role of the CPC to make policy, but to consider recommending funds for projects the CPC deemed worthwhile. Ms. Tobin asked if the CPC's role was to just "rubber stamp" and accept proposals as submitted, or to insure proper usage of the funds. Mr. Siegenthaler noted that the discussions with proponents and deliberations were important when making decisions, but that it wasn't up to the CPC to tell proponents that they had to review options that they had already reviewed and not chosen. Mr. Comando said that the CPC had historically taken a position since its creation that it would not propose projects on its own, but would evaluate proposals and encourage that further review be given. Mr. Nadler stated that the question before the CPC tonight was whether to approve design funds.

Mr. Eisenhut noted that the CPA legislation highlighted the need for discussions with the local historic board, and that the Needham Historic Commission should be the one determining the historic value of the proposal. At this time, that board does not agree with the proposal from the Selectmen. Mr. Siegenthaler noted that the Historical Commission had voted to support Option 3 prior to the Selectmen's vote, but that he had not heard an opinion stated on the aspects of Option 1, even when he asked the Historical Commission at their meeting he attended on behalf of the CPC. Ms. Tobin did not feel the Historical Commission had been asked to participate, and that she was concerned they were not asked to have a seat on the committee making the decision on the proposal. Mr. Eisenhut asked if Historical Commission Chairman Carol Boulris could respond. Mrs. Boulris said that the Historical Commission voted to support Option 3 in January, as they felt the preservation of the hall was important. They were not aware that there were other options beyond the Town Hall parcel, and would now consider that at their next meeting held later in April. Mr. Siegenthaler stated it was important to hear the Historical Commission's evaluation of Option 1, as the CPC did not have an official role on other concepts under review. Mrs. Boulris felt that the Historical Commission's opinion of Option 1 was implied in their January vote and subsequent letter.

Ms. Tobin was concerned about spending CPA funds for offices and wondered about its legality. Mr. Siegenthaler noted that the CPA allowed for the funds to be used to bring historic structures to modern standards. Mr. Eisenhut did not feel there was a legal reason to challenge the use of the funds, but the question remained whether the proposal made was the right one for Needham. He stated that the Planning Board voted in support of the restoration of the hall, with four votes in favor and one abstention, and that the restoration of the hall was relevant to the recommendations being made in the downtown study. The Planning Board felt that the civic and community activities that would be held in the hall would be an economic catalyst to the downtown. Mr. Nadler noted that the Park and Recreation Commission voted unanimously to support the Selectmen's proposal.

Mr. Nadler suggested that the CPC look at the warrant article wording and note that the CPC is being asked to fund $1 million in design funds. The wording does not state a specific option, and the process allows anyone with interest to continue to provide input during the design. He suggested that Town Meeting needed to be given a role in the discussion.

Mr. Eisenhut asked if the CPC feels the office walls on the second floor would destroy the historic aspects of the hall. Ms. Tobin was concerned that the article did not include the word "preservation" in the text. She read a description of "preservation" from the Secretary of the Interior's website and did not feel the proposal met that standard. Ms. Pransky stated that she was trying to determine if it was appropriate for CPC to vote to recommend allowing Town Meeting to be part of the deliberation or if CPC should vote not to support the proposal if it did not feel it was the right use of the funds.

Mr. Nadler made a motion to recommend the appropriation of Article 25 in the Town Meeting warrant for $1,000,000 for design funds for the renovation of Town Hall. The motion was seconded by Ms. Howard. Mr. Eisenhut asked if the CPC should wait to vote, as some discussions were still underway. Mr. Nadler stated that the CPC owed other boards and Town Meeting a decision, and Ms. Tobin noted her agreement that the deliberation should move to Town Meeting. She also restated her opinion that it was not appropriate to use CPA funds for office space.

Mr. Comando called the previous question and Ms. Howard seconded the motion. There were 2 votes in favor and 6 votes opposed, so the motion failed and discussion continued.

Ms. Bernardo stated that she had attended the PPBC meetings related to the Town Hall study, along with Ms. Howard, Mrs. Boulris and Mr. Handel and each was able to provide input during the study. She felt that compromises had been made, and if the CPA funds were not approved for design, what would happen to the project? Ms. Tobin felt that if it was determined that the use of CPA funds was not appropriate, the Selectmen would have to find another source of funds if they want to fund the proposal. **Mr. Eisenhut made a motion to postpone the CPC vote until the April 30, 2008 meeting. Ms. Pransky seconded the motion.** Ms. Pransky stated that if the CPC voted to recommend the design funds at tonight's meeting that there would not be any reason or opportunity for the proponents and opponents to continue to seek a resolution to their differences. Ms. Howard felt that moving the question to Town Meeting might help with dialogue.

Each member of the CPC shared their thoughts on the proposal. Mr. Nadler stated that the proposal was an appropriate use of CPA funds and met the guidelines. It revealed the hidden historic features for all to see and was a building that served the residents. Having a fully restored hall would be nice, but it was not a necessity for Needham. Mr. Eisenhut stated that a price tag could not be placed on civic pride and aesthetics. He did not feel it was the best policy to support funding the project if there were better uses for the funds. Mr. Comando stated that the proposal was an appropriate use of CPA funds consistent with the CPA statute and national guidelines. He was pleased to see the effort put into preserving features on the exterior and interior. Mr. Siegenthaler felt that the proposal was an appropriate use of CPA funds, and that the improved aesthetics were positive for civic pride. The renovated building would have more space for civic and government uses. Funding the proposal would be a giant step forward towards preservation and future use of the full hall was not eliminated for the future. Ms. Pransky did not question whether it was an appropriate use of funds and that historic features would not be destroyed, but the question in her mind was whether an appropriate process had been followed to reach the conclusions. She felt that Town Meeting needed to be part of the deliberation. Ms. Tobin felt that the appropriateness of use of the CPA funds was based on the opinion of the architect who had been hired by the proponents. She did not feel that creating offices in the assembly hall was a minimal change and that she did not feel comfortable funding an office building. Ms. Bernardo stated that the proposal was an appropriate use of CPA funds and that the renovation is needed internally and externally. The majority of the building renovation would qualify for CPA funds and the hall could be restored to full use in the future. Ms. Howard agreed with the statements made by Ms. Bernardo.

Mr. Siegenthaler called for a vote on the motion to postpone the vote on the Town Hall proposal until April 30, 2008. There were 2 votes in favor of the motion, 5 votes in opposition, and 1 abstention. The motion failed.

Mr. Siegenthaler called for a vote on the motion to recommend the appropriation of Article 25 in the Town Meeting warrant for $1,000,000 for design funds for the renovation of Town Hall. There were 5 votes in favor of the motion and 3 votes in opposition. The motion passed on a majority vote.

<u>Adjournment:</u> Ms. Tobin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 PM. Ms. Pransky seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nikki Witham
Recording Secretary