

MINUTES OF MEETING COMMUNITY
PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
February 6, 2023
Location: Online Meeting

The Community Preservation Committee (the “CPC” or the “Committee”) convened a regular meeting, duly noticed, on Monday, February 6, 2023, at 7 p.m. via the videoconferencing platform Zoom. CPC members present were Steve Ober, Chair; Nathalie Thompson; Steve Wagner; Marcy Dorna; Neil Levitt, Barry Tubman; Leslie Glynn; Nina Danforth; and Glenn Butcher. Also in attendance were Finance Committee member Bharath Venkataraman; Chair of Affordable Housing Trust Sarah Rhatigan; Recreation Director Christopher Fitzgerald, Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee Chair Melissa Crocker, Michael Harray, Elly Pendergast, Ben Polimer, Julie Hyde, Patrick Maguire of Activitas Inc., Weston Media Center videographer Jim Tremble, and CPC Administrator Cheri Amour Mahan.

Steve Ober read a statement explaining the need for a meeting conducted by remote participation in light of the emergency orders issued by Governor Baker in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, noted that the meeting was being recorded, and invited public comment.

Public Comment

None.

Mr. Ober welcomed Glenn Butcher from the Conservation Commission as a new CPC member.

Mr. Ober advised the Committee that three applications would be heard.

Applications for FY2024 Annual Town Meeting:

Weston Affordable Housing Trust/Select Board – \$42,000 for Support of Community Housing (Regional Housing Services Office & Housing Trust Staff Support)

Sarah Rhatigan, Weston Affordable Housing Trust (“WAHT”) Chair, introduced herself. Ms. Rhatigan reminded the Committee that this was an annual request to fund support from the Regional Housing Services Office (“RHSO”) for all the Town’s affordable housing needs. Ms. Rhatigan noted that the Town has contracted with the RHSO to provide housing expertise since 2011. Liz Valenta (a Weston resident, former Trust member, and former RHSO employee) has provided that expertise since 2011 and has moved on to another position. Christine McKenna Lok has been hired and will help the Town and the Trust generally, including monitoring and maintaining the Town’s existing affordable housing units and answering the Select Board’s and Town Manager’s technical questions.

Questions/Comments:

Steve Wagner asked what the request was last year and if the increase relates to an increase in salary. Ms. Rhatigan said that last year's request was \$39,000, and the increase is to cover an increase in the related salary.

Rhododendron Garden at the Case Estates

Michael Harrity said the request is for \$20,000 for a feasibility analysis to determine the design and cost of rehabilitating the Rhododendron Garden at the Case Estates. The funding would be supplemented by \$5,000 from the Weston 300 Fund.

As CPC members, Leslie Glynn and Nina Danforth work on the Rhododendron Garden at the Case Estates. Ms. Glynn and Ms. Danforth have taken the advice of the Town Manager, Leon Gaumond, to refrain from voting on the project.

The relevant section of Case Estates is approximately 1.25 acres adjacent to the Legacy trail, protected with a permanent conservation easement. Parts of the Rhododendron Garden were initially planted by the Case sisters in the early 1920s and then replanted and expanded in the 1980s by the Massachusetts Rhododendron Society and the Arnold Arboretum. The proposal calls for rehabilitating the garden for passive recreation and educational information on native woodland plants, allowing visual access to the historic Louisa's Wall. A preservation restriction would be put in place.

Questions/Comments:

Mr. Ober asked if Ms. Glynn or Ms. Danforth had anything to add to Mr. Harrity's presentation. Ms. Danforth believes that the Garden can be brought back reasonably easily. Ms. Danforth mentioned that the Weston Plant Pollinator Alliance "WPPA" and the Tree Advisory Group "TAG" are interested in participating in the project.

Mr. Wagner asked if the Rhododendron Group took their plants with them when they left Weston. Ms. Danforth indicated that they had taken some of the plants, but plenty of plants remain at the Rhododendron Garden at the Case Estates. Mr. Wagner indicated that the Historical Commission will take a vote on this project at the Historical Commission meeting on February 7, 2023.

Bharath Venkataraman of the Finance Committee asked about the budget for the Rhododendron Garden at the Case Estates and if they had any plans for private funding. Mr. Harrity said the best estimate at this point is for \$350,000. Mr. Harrity mentioned that would like to start an endowment fund for longer-term maintenance for the Rhododendron Garden at the Case Estates.

Mr. Butcher asked about what work can be done through volunteering vs. being contracted out. Mr. Harrity indicated that they need to have the environmental report from the Engineer before asking anyone to volunteer.

Mr. Harrity mentioned the possibility of bringing in the maintenance of Louisa's Wall as part of the overall maintenance program. Mr. Wagner asked if both sides of the walls are finished. Mr. Harrity indicated that both sides are finished.

Neil Levitt brought up that some repair had been done to the Wall and the contribution that a neighbor whose property is on one side of the Wall had made toward that repair. Mr. Harrity explained that it cost \$23,000 for the repair, paid for initially by the neighbor, although ultimately the cost was split with the Town as it was discovered that the Wall is entirely on Town land.

Pickleball and Tennis Courts

Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee Chair Melissa Crocker presented a PowerPoint slide deck for the pickleball and tennis court requests. Ms. Crocker highlighted the benefits of having dedicated pickleball courts for the community as follows: it adds another recreational option for residents; eliminates conflicts with tennis players whose courts are currently shared with pickleball players; allows for the use of properly-sized courts and nets (rather than having to use other facilities, e.g., tennis courts); makes more adult programming possible; better accommodates increasing pickleball demand; and dedicated pickleball courts were a primary goal in the Recreation Master Plan based on surveys and resident feedback. Ms. Crocker discussed that as of June 2022, 121 people have signed up for pickleball clinics, representing 85 unique residents. These numbers exclude players who have picked up the sport elsewhere, i.e., in other towns, country clubs, or private racquet clubs.

Ms. Crocker mentioned that the numerous cracks at the tennis and basketball courts have become too wide and deep to resurface at Burchard Park. Ms. Crocker mentioned that the benefits of doing basketball and tennis courts while on site to build pickleball courts will include: cost savings, reduced disruption to the area, and ease in lining up a contractor for one big project than two smaller ones. The planned use of post-tensioned concrete to replace the basketball and tennis courts will result in a considerably longer life span and will require less maintenance.

Ms. Crocker noted the following items:

- The public input session was on January 8, 2023
- Conservation Commission heard the project on January 21, 2023, and the RMPSC is waiting for a determination on February 14, 2023
- 68 trees will be removed, which include trees that are dead or in decline
- Trees will be replaced: 34 trees, 36 shrubs, ground cover, and grasses will be planted

- Cost estimate of just under \$1,500,000, assuming all of the work (including the basketball and tennis courts) is done at the same time

Questions/Comments:

Ms. Danforth suggested that if you combine all the projects and do the work at the same time, none of the site would be usable for some period of time. Patrick Maguire of Activitas indicated that some portions of that site would still be usable during that time.

Mr. Levitt asked about the budget, specifically about the costs for site preparation. Mr. Maguire provided additional detail about the cost numbers and how they relate to the pickleball courts vs. the non-pickleball portions of the project.

Ms. Glynn asked about the lighting plans for the site. Ms. Crocker said that the RMPSC has yet to have a lighting conversation.

Marcy Dorna is concerned about where the pickleball courts are located on the site. Chris Fitzgerald indicated that they have spent much time on the site and looked at three or four parts of the site as alternate locations, and currently-proposed location is the best place for the pickleball courts at Burchard Park. Mr. Levitt stressed the need to have a conversation with the neighbors at the Campion Center to ensure they have no issues with the proposed project relative to the location of their cemetery. Several other CPC members echoed this course of action.

Ms. Danforth wondered if the new courts might be flooded with people from neighboring towns, given the location of the courts and the popularity of the game. Mr. Fitzgerald explained that the RMPSC and the Recreation Commission have yet to come to a resolution about that issue. He described how the property was bought with a State grant and, as a result of the State grant, anyone can use the site.

Mr. Ober highlighted how the current application combines the anticipated work on the pickleball, basketball and tennis courts. Mr. Wagner articulated his view that the combined proposal could make it more difficult to get it passed at Town Meeting. Barry Tubman described the importance of being able to articulate the cost savings of doing all of the work at one time. Mr. Maguire described the contemplated plans for bidding the project, with the pickleball courts as the base bid, then to bid the tennis/basketball courts as an alternate. They are also contemplating a second scenario with the tennis/basketball courts as the base bid and pickleball courts as the alternate secondary bid. Mr. Maguire explained the manner in which public contract bids have to be structured.

Mr. Ober, based on his conversation with the Community Preservation Coalition (the “Coalition”), confirmed that the proposals for pickleball, basketball and tennis courts all fall under the rehabilitation of recreation land. The Coalition said the Weston CPC has total discretion on what it approves and allows to go to Town Meeting. Mr. Ober asked if the projects should be submitted together or as separate projects.

Mr. Ober stated that if bids are desired before Town Meeting, it may only be with the projects together.

Mr. Levitt asked if all soft costs are included in the budget. Ms. Crocker indicated that all soft costs are in the budget.

Mr. Ober asked for the group to return at our next meeting on February 27, 2023, with updates.

Other Committee Business

Mr. Ober explained that Select Board member had contacted him about the Ash Street walkway, three weeks after the application deadline. The CPC addressed the application deadline and late applications several years ago, and had concluded at that time that the CPC would consider a late application if there was a particular urgency to the application. After some discussion, CPC members agreed that there is no urgency for the Ash Street walkway application, and it will not be accepted in this cycle.

Mr. Ober spoke about Ms. Glenn and Ms. Danforth voting on the Rhododendron Garden at the Case Estates project. This matter will be discussed further before the Public Hearing on March 13, 2023.

Mr. Ober explained that the Rhododendron Garden at the Case Estates and pickleball/basketball/tennis courts projects should come with an update to the CPC on Monday, February 27, 2023.

Minutes of the January 23, 2023, Meeting

VOTE: Mr. Ober entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 23, 2023. Nathalie Thompson made the motion, seconded by Ms. Glynn. The motion was approved unanimously by roll call vote with one abstention.

CPC Next Meeting

The CPC meeting scheduled for February 13, 2023, is being canceled.

The next CPC meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 27, 2023, at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

The CPC Public Hearing is scheduled for Monday, March 13, 2023, at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned at 9.47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheri Amour Mahan, CPC
Administrator

Appendix A
CPC Meeting
February 6, 2023
Document List

- 1) CPA Applications for FY 2024 Annual Town Meeting:
 - a. Community Housing Support/Regional Housing Services Office
 - i. Application

 - b. Rhododendron Garden at the Case Estates
 - i. Application
 - ii. PowerPoint

 - c. Pickleball and Tennis Courts
 - i. Application
 - ii. PowerPoint

Minutes of the January 23, 2023, Meeting (votes anticipated)