

Community Preservation Committee
Public Hearing, Thursday, February 22, 2011
Conway Town Hall 7 p.m.

Members Present: Janet Chayes, Marcelle Morgan & David Barten
Press: Bob Dunn, Greenfield Recorder & Kathryn Palmer, Independent
Approximately 24 Conway residents

Proposed Projects

I. Preservation of River Farmland

There were two presentations anticipated, the first about the acquisition of land that had formerly belonged to the Herzigs on the east side of Shelburne Falls road and which is divided into building lots owned by three separate owners.

Rich Hubbard, director of the Franklin Land Trust, explained the complexity of the project. The owners of the lots have first to sign purchase and sales agreements with the Land Trust before the state can be approached about APR (agricultural preservation restriction) funding. Rich said that while the hope had been to have all details of the project finalized in time for the CPC to present it at town meeting in early April, there were still too many elements like dollar figures that were not known. He thought that should the negotiations still lying ahead proceed smoothly, the project might be ready for presentation to the town by late spring or early summer at the earliest. There was prolonged discussion about the project. Two parcels with currently willing sellers total 7.25 acres. The owner of another key lot (3 acres) is not currently willing to sell.

II. Storage Facility for Historic Documents

A climate-controlled vault facility would be constructed near the Boyden school house on town-owned land. Sarah Williams, chair of the Historical Commission, described a two-phase process: a \$16,000 request in the current year for hiring an architect who would prepare plans in enough detail so, should the commission accept, the architect could solicit bids; phase two would be a request in 2012 for \$120,000 to \$150,000 for creating an 800 to 900 square foot structure. The presentation included photos of the Boyden site and statements by the state mandating document storage and the kind of facility required. Two or three old documents were taken from the vault to show what documents pre-dating 1870 were like. Attendees then observed the overcrowding in the vault (in the adjacent Assessors' Office) currently used to house many, though not all, of the old records. A few residents voiced strong reservations to the proposed project due to costs.

The hearing was also intended as a means for residents to voice priorities for CPA funds.

A third discussion centered on low-income and moderate-income senior housing, especially as needed for seniors in Conway. Janet reviewed efforts of the Housing Committee and said that likely projects now might entail renovating existing homes. No such projects have been presented for consideration to date.

The last item, also from the floor, focused on the former Masonic Lodge building, privately owned by a non-resident, but leased to Kate Eugin-Moore and Laurie Vondung, who operate a small coffee-bar, and used book store on the first floor. Laurie described their wish to upgrade the building, which could be done minimally with exterior painting estimated to cost \$20,000, and

maximally with possibly a total rehabilitation including construction of a new septic system, cost unknown. Several attendees spoke favorably of the project, citing the significant contribution Page's was making to the center of town as a small business venture and social center. There was also mention of the historic significance of the Masonic Lodge, and that upgrading the building would enhance Main Street. One resident questioned whether public funds could be used to paint a private residence. If this were the case then he could request CPA funding for painting his 1831 farm house. Chayes said any use of CPA funds for such purposes "must have a clear public benefit." *

The hearing ended at 8:30.

* Subsequently, the following information from the Community Preservation Coalition website was emailed to Committee members.

Question: *To what extent, if any, can CPA funds be used for the historic preservation of privately owned structures?*

Answer: If it is decided by the community that this is a use of the funds that they feel is important, CPA funds may be dedicated to such preservation. The benefit to the private owner, however can only be incidental - the primary goal must be for public benefit. It may be helpful to consider whether or not the proposed improvements will be visible from a public way when determining if there will be a significant public benefit. Note that if CPA funds are used in this manner, a deed restriction must be agreed upon with the owner to protect the public's investment.