CPC Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 12, 2021

ATTENDEES: Suzanne Brennan, Ann Burbine, Jill Caffrey*,* Skyler Chick, Mike Connor, Dan Fennelly, Penny Scott Pipes, Doug Smith, Meg Stillman

Additional Attendees: George McGoldrick, Marla Minier, Darryn Campbell, Andrew Gallagher, Tony Vegnani, Andrew Goodrich, Karen Canfield, and several members of the community

Meeting was opened at 7:00 pm

Acceptance of Agenda – Mr. Fennelly made a motion to accept the agenda for July 12, 2021; Seconded by Ms. Burbine; unanimous vote (9-0).

Acceptance of June 14, 2021 Minutes – A MOTION was made by Mr. Fennelly to accept the minutes from May 10, 2021 as presented; seconded by Ms. Brennan; unanimous vote (9-0)

**APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS:**

Application for Land Acquisition on Border Street, Gulf River Assn ($1M) - George McGoldrick, Marla Minier – *Application for $1M to purchase and protect a 17.8-acre bucolic farm, known as East Field, situated along Border Street; an additional amount of $250,000 needs to be raised for a total cost of $1,250,000. (Note: Owners have accepted an offer of $2.35M from a developer)*

Mr. McGoldrick reviewed the history of the Bleakie farm, which was purchased in 1936. The Gulf River Assn (GRA), formed 50 years ago by Scituate and Cohasset residents to preserve the river, used to meet at the house. Although there were efforts to get Eleanor Bleakie to make plans for the property prior to her death, she never did.

At one point, the Trustees of Reservations were interested in the property but they eventually turned it down because the property was split up: A member of the GRA purchased a 5-acre parcel known as Lion’s Head for open space; the Bleakie house by the river was purchased; and an additional 17 acres also was purchased with plans to build a house by the river and keep the rest of the West Field in Chapter Land.

The GRA then turned to public and private fundraising as an option for the East Field.

At the time that the GRA submitted the CPC application for the July 1st deadline, they had a verbal offer in front of the family for $1.25M towards the $2.5M appraised value. It was proposed that this would allow the family to offset taxes on the other property sales. However, the family said no and has accepted an offer of $2.35M for the East Field, contingent on six developable lots.

Even though it is not on the river side, the GRA is hoping the Town will use it’s first right of refusal for Chapter Land to prevent development and preserve the property.

Mr. Fennelly said that he personally supports the proposal but has concerns about the cost and what the Town would have to pay for the property. He noted that, in the last 17 years, CPC has purchased 18 properties and paid an average of $17,000/acre. There are two exceptions: the Town voted to purchase the Mordecai Lincoln and Sunset Road properties at significantly higher prices per acre ($160,000 and $127,000 respectively) due to the intrinsic value of these properties. East Field would be approximately $56,000/acre. He agreed that having access to Hubble from the East Field across the privately-owned land would increase the value.

Mr. McGoldrick noted that the owner of the acreage between the Hubble preserve and the East Field has been contacted. The hope is that they can purchase enough land to link the two properties or have an easement going across as a way to join them together.

Mr. Fennelly suggested that the Board fund an appraisal for open space use, adding that they cannot pay more than an appraised amount for land. Mr. McGoldrick confirmed that private donations could make up the difference. It would be owned by the town and would have conservation restrictions. Ms. Canfield said that the entire property was appraised in December 2020.

Ms. Brennan asked what the Town would use the property for beyond open space. Ms. Minier said that, if they can connect across the private parcel, they would create trails between the East Field and Hubble Preserve which would add passive recreational use.

Ms. Scott Pipes asked the applicants how they plan to raise the additional money. Mr. McGoldrick confirmed that they could raise a few hundred thousand, but probably not the whole amount in the timeframe allowed. Ms. Scott Pipes voiced concern about the price and what this says to the property owners who sold developable land at a lower price in the past; CPC paid Hubble $14,000 an acre.

Ms. Burbine suggested to the Board that they review each property on its own merits. She suggested to the applicants that they create a major fundraiser like Hingham did to save World’s End. It will need to be a Town-wide effort.

Mr. Chick asked why the Trustees backed out. It was explained that they were originally looking at the whole property and creating a cultural center at the house. Once pieces of the property were sold, their vision for the property was lost. Mr. Chick confirmed that there is a verbal agreement with the owners to maintain the fields, i.e. haying. He said that, in his view, preserving this unique agrarian landscape is valuable to the cultural history of the Town. He likened this property to the Mordecai Lincoln and Sunset Road properties as having a unique value to the Town.

Mr. McGoldrick reminded the Board that the Town has 120 days to respond as to whether or not they want to exercise their right of first refusal, then they have 90 days to close. There was an additional discussion about the various scenarios with this kind of proposal and Ms. Canfield noted that they need to review this with counsel, adding that the Select Board has not discussed this yet. There was also discussion about meeting the timeline for the Special Town Meeting in October.

Mr. Vegnani said he likes the property and thinks it’s beautiful but they also need to consider the other side of the argument. The Town would receive a tax benefit to having the six parcels, plus ten years of back taxes. He also noted that there will always be another parcel of land to be purchased and CPC can’t purchase every nice parcel that may be developable.

Mr. Goodrich agreed there needs to be more Town buy in as it is an expensive property.

Mr. Fennelly noted that the Town has a lot a support for this project due to the large amount of emails that were received during the day

Application from Scituate Little League - $200,000 – Darryn Campbell – *Application for $200,000 to re-establishment of a JV baseball field at the southern end of Central Park to provide a second venue for the 10+ teams that currently share the Varsity Turf field at SHS, and to address the current Title IX issue, combined with a potential Toll Brothers amount of $400,00 for a total cost of $600,000.*

Mr. Campbell said they are proposing to re-establish a JV baseball field on the southern end of Central Field, as the town is down to a single 90’ field. The turf project re-established a JV softball field at the high school, thereby giving the Town three softball fields while there is only one full sized baseball field.

Mr. Vegnani said the Select Board is looking at the best location for the field. He agrees with Mr. Campbell that Central Field is the most logical place but there are many people involved in this decision and they are planning to meet. He also noted that the Select Board has to vote on how to allocate the Toll Bros money. It was originally ear-marked for fields.

Mr. Chick referred to the cost estimate and asked if they had an itemized list. Mr. Campbell said it is a ball park amount because Activitas only had three-day’s notice to get the application in on time. He also asked about the location and Mr. Campbell said that there are very few properties that can support a full-sized field. Also, JV baseball and JV softball would be able to share batting cages and storage, etc., which is a benefit. Mr. Campbell is not adding lighting to this application due to the proximity of abutters.

There was additional discussion about a change in CPA rules that now allow funds to build fields; what CPC has spent on fields in Town over time; and whether or not there is an imbalance between girl’s and boy’s JV fields.

The Board suggested that the application be amended to come from Scituate Recreation Commission, rather than Little League, who receives federal funding.

Application for Appleton Community Garden, Conservation Commission ($62,000) – Andrew Gallagher – *Application for funding for fencing, well installation and ADA accessible plots that will allow the space at the Crosby Preserve on Clapp Road to be used for personal gardening, food pantry donations and education.*

Mr. Gallagher said that, historically, Appleton Field has been an agricultural field. Recently, access and options to use it have changed because the town invested in a driveway and a parking lot. Last spring, the Select Board approved the plan to use it for a community garden. They already have eight plot holders and have partnered with Holly Hill Farms to offer educational workshops. The landscape allows for ADA compliant raised beds, estimated at $3,000. There will be an 8’ high x 100 x 200’ fence estimated at $42,000 and they need to build a well estimated at $15,000.

Mr. Fennelly said they need to come back with an itemized budget and add 15 percent contingency.

Ms. Burbine expressed her opinion that community gardens are more beneficial in the city and her concern that this seems to benefit just a few people in Town. Ms. Scott Pipes said that the gardens benefit people in condominiums or those who don’t have a yard for a garden. They also donate a lot of food to the Food Pantry.

Mr. Chick confirmed that the fence will be chain link and noted that the price seems low and to make sure prevailing wage is considered. He also asked about the ultimate vision and goals for the garden, noting that they have eight gardeners signed up this year, and plan to recruit 10 to 20 more next year. Mr. Chick asked about the ultimate goal and how many plots CPC is being asked to fund. Mr. Gallagher said they could have up to 100 in the space but they have to see how it goes with parking and water needs.

Mr. Chick would like to see more clarification on the vision and the need in the application based on the language in the application about having to recruit gardener’s vs filling a need for 50 people waiting to sign up. Mr. Gallagher said that, at this point, the garden is hard to visualize. He believes that once it is done people who are new to gardening will see how it works and will sign up. They do expect the demand to be there.

Mr. Fennelly would like more information on the benefit to the Food Pantry and the percentage of food that will be donated. Mr. Vegnani said that there is something written in the lease for that.

Ms. Brennan said that she sees a need for seniors who are in retirement communities and likes the education programs for children.

The Board suggested Mr. Gallagher add additional funding and more detail to his request.

Discussion/Vote – Chair and Vice Chair appointment.

A MOTION was made by Ms. Burbine to nominate Dan Fennelly as chair and Skyler Chick as vice chair; seconded by Ms. Scott Pipes; all in favor (9/0)

New Business:

A MOTION was made by Ms. Burbine to fund an open space appraisal of East Field not to exceed $5,000; seconded by Ms. Scott Pipes; all in favor (9/0)

Mr. Fennelly welcomed Andrew Goodrich, who is the new Select Board CPC liaison.

**Adjournment** - The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m. by unanimous vote (9/0).

*Submitted by - Mary Sprague*

*Documents submitted*

*- East Field Application*

*- JV Baseball Field Application*

*- Appleton Field Community Garden Application*