

Minutes CPC meeting of December 7, 2022 [Approved 1-11-2023]

Recorded by Skip Fournier. The meeting commenced at 7:00 pm at Town Hall

In Attendance: Chair Danielle Barshak, Apple Ahearn, Steve Ball, Steve Freedman, Skip Fournier, Ann Tweedy

Absent: Gail Berrigan

Members of the Public: Toni Cunningham, Carol Heim, Eva Gibavic (zoom), Maria Kopicki (zoom), Bridget Likely, Doug Slaughter, Steve Weiss

Next Meeting: Wed. January 11, 2023, 7:00 pm, Town Hall

Summary of Meeting.

Minutes from the previous meeting (Nov 2, 2022) were approved 6: 0.

Three proposals were discussed with applicants: i) one by the Kestrel Land Trust to acquire and protect 91 acres of open space adjoining Depot Road; ii) another from the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District to augment shared support for renovating and improving its track facility and associated fields, and; iii) a proposal from the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust (for the Town) to shore up and preserve the badly eroded Rattlesnake Gutter Road, a popular hiking and biking destination.

#### Kestrel Trust Application

The goal of this project, called The Heronemus Forest Conservation Project, is to protect open space and recreation land near Leverett center. Bridget Likely spoke on behalf of Kestrel. In addition to its importance as wildlife habitat this land is valued for its recreation potential, with open space close to town center and existing trail networks - including the Robert Frost, Ruth McIntire and Mount Toby trails - as well as Leverett Pond.

The project will partner with the Leverett Conservation Commission. The funds sought from CPC (\$81,000) will match an equal commitment already made by a Conservation Partnership State Grant (dated Sep. 27, 2022). The Leverett Conservation Commission will hold a conservation restriction on the land according to CPA requirements. The land is currently under a purchase and sale agreement with the seller (copy included with the application). The Rattlesnake Gutter Trust documents its enthusiasm for this program with an offer to partner with Kestrel on fund raising.

#### ARHS Track & Fields Application

This proposal, sponsored by the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District, requests CPA funds from Leverett to help support resurfacing and reconstructing the ARHS Track, interior athletic field, and surrounding athletic fields. The supporting towns would include Amherst, Leverett, Pelham and Shutesbury. Several construction options are under consideration. Key variables include: 1) resurfacing the running track in its current location with different performance designs, and; 2) relocating the running track to a different orientation (North/South). If

reoriented, a choice would be made between an interior playing field with natural turf or synthetic turf. The Leverett CPC is aware that use of artificial turf is controversial.

The application was presented to the CPC by Douglas Slaughter, Director of Finance for APRSD. Issues discussed included the reminder that use of CPC funds is constrained (not 'free cash', e.g., not for maintenance; Slaughter and committee). It was suggested that a better maintenance program seems to be needed going forward for the track and associated fields (Ball). Budgetary inflation factors are substantial and a concern (Fournier).

The possibility that artificial turf would be used on the interior fields is a key interest - if the track is to be reoriented in a North/South direction and synthetic turf is selected over natural turf. Reorientation is of strong interest and the project leaders and communities involved will need to choose between natural and synthetic turf. This decision will affect construction details and final cost.

Concerns about artificial turf were aired by Maria Kopicki (resident of Amherst), including costs of maintaining the material, water requirements and potential health factors. She urges additional consideration of such issues.

#### Rattlesnake Gutter Road Preservation

This application describes a two-stage program for evaluating and documenting the condition of this historic road - affectionately known as "The Gutter". This information will be used as a basis for soliciting future proposals for its preservation. The stated overall goal is to "preserve the historic rural character of Rattlesnake Gutter Road and to ensure its continued integrity and use primarily as a hiking and biking destination..." "while allowing limited emergency vehicular use".

Components of the study will include: 1) exploring the potential for cooperation between the town and county in developing the proposed engineering plan (for this county road); 2) completing a detailed survey and report of the conditions of the road, and; 3) completing an inventory of the forest and other plant species along the road, noting effects on the road.

Steve Ball questioned whether CPA funds may be used for work on a county-owned road. Relevant to this Steve Freedman noted the Gutter is clearly a town asset and ownership should not preclude CPA funding.

Adjourned at 8:42 pm