

**TOWN OF HARWICH
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE**

Approved February 13, 2025

**Community Preservation Committee Regular Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2024**

*Recording and Taping Notification: As required by law the Town may audio or video record this meeting.
Any person intending to either audio or video record this open session is required to inform the chair.*

I Call to Order

Harwich Community Preservation Committee Meeting called to order with a quorum of committee members present by Chair Dave Nixon at 6:01 PM, on Thursday, December 12, 2024, at the Harwich Town Hall, Donn B. Griffin Room. Present for quorum: Chair Dave Nixon, Vice Chair Kathy Green, Marcy Vigneau, Bob Doane, Emily Brutti, John Ketchum, a new member Art Bodin. Mary Maslowski – joined the meeting in progress.

II Welcome Guests

A. No Public Comment

III Approval of Minutes

A. CPC Meetings – November 14, 2024, and December 5, 2024

A motion was made by John Ketchum, seconded by Kathy Green, to approve the corrected minutes.

Vote: Chair Dave Nixon – Aye; Vice Chair Kathy Green – Aye; Marcy Vigneau – Aye; John Ketchum – Aye; Bob Doane – Aye; Emily Brutti – Aye; Art Bodin – Aye.

Motion passed.

Mary Maslowski – joined the meeting in progress.

IV New Business

A. WIFF

WIFF – the idea the BOS is discussing, redirecting a portion of the CPA funds. Currently the CPA projects are funded with a 3% surcharge from Real Estate Taxes and the State matching funds. If the town wants to establish a WIFF, an infrastructure investment fund, a separate fund dedicated to a wastewater expenditure, the only funding source the BOS is currently discussing is using some of the CPA surcharge instead of raising taxes.

Both BOS Chair Julie Kavanagh and Town Administrator Joe Powers spoke to this subject.

Chair Kavanagh said the BOS is interested in the CPC feedback on this idea.

The idea discussed would be to take a percentage of the levy.

It was offered that any changes to CPA funding will affect income from State matching funds. For example, if we look at dropping 1% of the 3% surcharge, this will also decrease the State matching funds.

It was questioned if this is provided in the Community Preservation Act?

It was offered that using half or all the CPC income wouldn't make a dent of this wastewater project costs.

It was offered Yarmouth has created a WIFF. They can look at the details more closely to see how they retained the 3% surcharge, without reducing the State's matching funds.

The Town of Harwich has benefited from the CPA funds. Projects like exterior painting and restoration of the Brooks Free Library, historic preservation projects at the Chase Library, new foundation at the Brooks Academy, gravestone restoration projects at many of our town's cemeteries, the new playground at the Elementary School, the many recreation fields and courts around the town, the restoration of the Crowell Barn, the restoration of the South Harwich Meeting House, the restoration of the Old Fire House, the many acres of Open Space preserved in town, and working in many ways in many projects to get to the goal of the 10% in affordable housing units. All these projects are important to Harwich.

It was decided no vote will be taken at tonight's meeting on this topic. The CPC will wait to see what the BOS will do.

B. Discussion - CPC Financials with Markum, LLC's representative, Renee Davis

Handout – Financial Report 7.1.2019

Her company was called in to do an in-depth analysis of the CPC accounts over the last five years. She wanted to come to the meeting tonight to hear what the committee's concerns/issues were, to explain how they would go forward, and to see if the committee agreed with the plan.

The financial report was reviewed. Renee offered they thought the committee is OK with the accounts' balances at the end of the fiscal year 2019. The report shows what was reported to the State as of June 30, 2019. So, we begin at the starting balance as of

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July 1, 2019, the balances in the Community Housing Reserve, Open Space Reserve, Historic Preservation Reserve, the Undesignated Fund Balance, and what the encumbrances were at that time.

The plan would be to go forward five fiscal years from June 30, 2019, and see if all was reported properly each year. They will look at the votes from the Annual Town Meetings and to what happened in the general ledger. They need to make sure the Town Meeting approved projects' funds had been accounted for in the encumbrances. They need to make sure the designated Reserves received their 10% annual revenue. They need to make sure if a project's funds were rescinded, that those funds were returned to the correct Reserve/bucket. They need to make sure that what was in the ledger was correctly reported to the State.

They will be able to show us what has been done and make sure the committee is comfortable with the balances going forward, as of June 20, 2024.

Committee comments:

One committee member expressed he was thankful for the straightforward explanation.

Note: The report showed the encumbrances as of June 30, 2019. In the next fiscal year, the encumbrances figures may stay the same, they may change as the projects get closed out or rescinds are made.

Since 2018, the Town's Financial Directors have instructed the CPC of their office's policy for the CPC to use the future anticipated revenue, not the current balances, for the Warrant Articles spending at the Town Meeting. So, following that process, we would be looking at Fiscal Year 2026 anticipated revenues for this year's projects at the May 2025 Town Meeting.

Sometimes we were given financial reports with the current balances and the anticipated revenues. Sometimes we didn't spend all the funds available using this process. We have been concerned with spending enough of the available funds and not overspending, using lowball estimates. The committee will follow the Town's Financial Director's instructions, though using anticipated revenues gets to be very confusing. Have the accounts been trued up annually, making sure the Reserves received the correct 10%, and we spent the correct amounts? Truing up the numbers and to have a proper balance would be a good place to start from.

Renee explained when the State money comes in, it goes into this one account in Harwich. Those State numbers are posted on their website. The only time one would transfer funds out of the account would be for some debt service payments or possibly to the Affordable Housing Trust. They will investigate all transfers.

Other points to investigate:

The CPC received L.A.N.D. Grants, may be one grant in the last five years for \$400,000. Was it recorded correctly in the Open Space Reserve and the project's finances?

Land Bank Debt Service payments. Have the Land Bank Debt Service payments been accurate? One year the Town approved both the CPC, and the BOS, Warrant Articles for the same Debt Service payment. Only one payment was needed. What happened?

Has the CPC received the proper interest on their funds? Is it listed as a separate line item? Is it in a separate account, or, as it has been suggested, in a "trust" account? So, are there multiple accounts?

Renee expects to have the truing up of the numbers by the end of January.

C. FOUR Project Presentations from the 2024/2025 CPA Funding Requests.

Project applications can be found on: <https://www.harwich-ma.gov/1153/2024-2025-CPA-Funding-Requests-for-FY2026>

CH 1 Lower Cape Housing Institute Funding Project

Applicant: Community Development Partnership

Project Managers: CDP, Director of Housing Advocacy Amanda Bebrin

Amount Requested: \$10,000

Presented by Director of Housing Advocacy Amanda Bebrin

The Lower Cape Housing Institute was born in 2017, offering training opportunity to municipal officials and town staff. Creating affordable housing is a tricky thing, specialized knowledge is needed. Originally it was a six week sit down course. Over COVID it was expanded over Zoom. Now, half of the course is housing workshops 101, recognizing and finding resources. The second half is Peer Groups, regionally grouped, allowing a less formal way to talk across town lines. They have advancement coordinators to focus on specialty topics. They have a video library of past workshops available on youtube.com. The Institute is conducted over the school year, pausing in July and August.

Art offered he has attended their workshops and was impressed with how well they are conducted. Marcy also has attended and commented she appreciates how all the towns can come together and exchange ideas.

All eight towns contribute CPA funds to the Institute. Over the last nine years, they have been able to track past participants.

Harwich has had 46 participants. Committee members commented that too few participants come from Harwich; the participation

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numbers didn't change since last year. Amanda offered to attract participants; each town has a designated captain to assist in getting the word

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out. Amanda reaches out via email blasts, a monthly newsletter, and writes letters to new town personnel. Their most successful path is when past participants of committee chairs and town staff recommend the Institute. Working with these partners to be advocates of the program does increase awareness. But Harwich's numbers haven't increased. They cannot force them to sign up. Amanda says she receives many emails each day. She's always open to new suggestions to attract participants. Scheduling has always been a challenge, but by adding zoom meetings and evening meetings, they have been able to change things around. Extra resources are distributed. This year's funding request increased from \$7,500 to \$10,000. This is what our neighboring towns are paying. Costs have risen, but they are trying to keep the prices down.

REC 3 Brooks Infield Replacement Project

Applicant: Town of Harwich Recreation Department, Eric Beebe, Recreation and Youth Director

Project Manager: Town of Harwich Recreation Department, Eric Beebe, Recreation and Youth Director

Amount Requested: \$143,000

Presented by Town of Harwich Recreation Department and Youth Director Eric Beebe

The Highway Dept. maintains the field every year, but the field is at the end of its useful life and is beginning to present a safety concern. They have identified a complete replacement is needed to prevent future injuries and accidents. The replacement of the infield hasn't happened in twenty years. They need to address the drainage issues and attend to the playing field's unevenness. The field is used by the High School, the Rec. programs, youth and adult league teams, and special events (like company picnics in Brooks Park).

This project is for work on the infield. The plan is to strip the turf off to level it up. They will laser grade the base dirt path.

There is no irrigation in the infield. It was questioned how they will reduce nitrogen and lessen the use of herbicides. Could they use a turf product that requires less fertilizer? Eric will speak to the DPW.

They did get several quotes for the project. This is a once and done project, not on going one. There is no maintenance contract. Our Town does the maintenance. But if anything unforeseen comes up, the Rec Dept. will return for additional funding.

The geese problem has improved lately. The Town purchased fake coyotes to discourage the geese, but unfortunately, they are a popular item to be stolen. In Sandwich, a border collie runs the field to keep the geese away.

REC 4 Sand Pond Restroom Additional Funding Project

Applicant: Town of Harwich Recreation Department, Eric Beebe, Recreation and Youth Director

Project Manager: Town of Harwich Recreation Department, Eric Beebe, Recreation and Youth Director

Amount Requested: \$33,000

Presented by Town of Harwich Recreation Department and Youth Director Eric Beebe

This request is to complete a previously funded CPC restroom project at Sand Pond. Originally, they had planned a stick-built restroom, but the bids came in higher than expected. So, they changed the plan to do a precast concrete structure. That project had been approved last year, but the prices increased well over the budget, resulting in this new funding request of \$33,000 to finish the project. The contract will have firm prices, good through next fall. That is when they plan to install. The final cost of this seasonal restroom will be \$200,000.

Precast concrete restrooms are dropped in place. They have an estimated life expediency of 99 years. This restroom is like the Long Pond restroom. The DPW handles the maintenance. It will need to be painted from time to time.

Health Regulations require a hot water tank.

Sand Pond is a very popular beach location during the summer. The current restroom is at the end of its useful life with plumbing problems and rust coming in. It needs to be changed.

The new septic system is in.

REC 4 Veterans Memorial Field Complex Shade Structure Project

Applicant: Town of Harwich Recreation Department, Eric Beebe, Recreation and Youth Director

Project Manager: Town of Harwich Recreation Department, Eric Beebe, Recreation and Youth Director

Amount Requested: ~~\$100,000~~ Now \$90,000 **

Presented by Town of Harwich Recreation Department and Youth Director Eric Beebe

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Handout: A new budget **

The Application request is now reduced by \$10,000 **. The planned 30' x 30' concrete pad will now be a grassy area under the shade sail.

The project is for the construction of a shade structure at the Veterans Memorial Field Complex behind the Community Center. The shade structure would be located behind the baseball field. It is a better choice than a pavilion. The sail can be removed over the winter. Picnic tables will be placed under the shade sail. (The cost of the picnic tables maybe higher than the estimated cost in the handout budget sheet.)

Both Brooks Park and Veterans Park are popular sites in town. Veterans Field hosts the Rec Dept.'s afterschool and summer programs, in addition to the many soccer, flag football, baseball, rugby leagues, and special events use the field. The Rec. Dept. is confident by increasing the site's useable features, users will appreciate the field more.

Committee Comments:

Follow up: The committee requested samples of the sailcloth project used elsewhere. Other options?

The sails have a ten-year warranty. Problems with sails include mildew and long-term maintenance. They aren't cheap and degrade fast. It was noted if the sails are damaged, the Rec. Dept. won't be asking for CPC funds, but they will use their Revolving Fund. It was questioned if other programs, towns, or groups have been asked to contribute to this project? Eric offered that the Harwich Rec. benefits the most from this new idea. He doesn't see others contributing to it. The High School uses this field the most, and it isn't in their budget to contribute. The schools do pay a small user fee, that goes into the Rec.'s Revolving Fund that cover small maintenance projects.

It was asked if the shade would affect the lawn underneath? Is the Highway Department in favor of the shade structure? Are they confident of the lawn underneath?

Follow up: It was requested if the DPW could install the shade structure. That would reduce the costs. Confirm they can remove the sails annually over the winters.

Follow up: Eric will get a quote from O'Brien and Sons.

V Old Business

A. Update: Social Media/Facebook - Update.

Emily has been working on Facebook posts. She did hear back from the Library and Chamber of Commerce. They will support us.

B. Update: Website

John has nothing new to report on the website.

He is thinking about next year's cycle. He will get updated reports from Kathy to put on the CPC webpage.

VI Other

- To receive the truing up financial reports from Renee Davis before we need to vote on the projects, we need another meeting. A motion was made by Bob Doane, seconded by Mary Maslowski, to add a meeting on January 23, 2025.

Vote: Chair Dave Nixon – Aye; Vice Chair Kathy Green – Aye; Marcy Vigneau – Aye; John Ketchum – Aye; Bob Doane – Aye; Emily Brutti – Aye; Mary Maslowski – Aye; Art Bodin - Aye.

Motion passed.

VII Next meeting's Agenda points - Thursday, January 9, 2025, at the Harwich Town Hall, 6:00 PM

- Possible continued discussion on the CPC accounts
- Continued discussion on WIFF

VIII Adjournment

A motion was made by Bob Doane, seconded by Mary Maslowski, to adjourn.

Vote: Chair Dave Nixon – Aye; Vice Chair Kathy Green – Aye; Marcy Vigneau – Aye; John Ketchum – Aye; Bob Doane – Aye; Emily Brutti – Aye; Mary Maslowski – Aye; Art Bodin - Aye.

Motion passed.

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Adjourned at 8:01 PM.