

Holliston Community Preservation Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Holliston Town Hall, Room 014
7:30 Monday, September 24, 2012

The Meeting was called to order at 7:30 P.M.

Attending: Sam Tyler, Chair. Chris Bajdek, Frank Chamberlain, Tom Dumas, Rachel Kane, Melissa Kaspersn, Mike Pelon

Review of CPA Proposals for October Town Meeting

The CPC received no proposals for land purchase, affordable housing or historic preservation to review for the October 29, 2012 Town Meeting.

There were two proposals, both taking advantage of the new amendments in the FY '13 state budget that allow recreational facilities and equipment to be funded by CPA funds. The two proposals totaled \$406,452. One proposal was submitted by the Miller School Playground Committee requesting \$106,452 to complete funding for replacement of the playground equipment at the school site. The second proposal was received from the Parks & Recreation Department, for \$300,000 for resurfacing, repair and added lighting for the tennis courts and basketball court at Goodwill Park. This proposal could break down into three distinct parts if necessary. Sam Tyler provided an Excel table with a summary of the two proposals.

Presentation of the Miller School Playground Committee

Representing the Playground Committee were: Donald Gray, Chair of the Miller School Playground Committee and School Committee member; David Keim, Principal of the Miller Elementary School; Heather Scaringella; Neela Patel; and Joan Sousa, President of HEPO. Michelle Johnson, of the Finance Committee was present to observe.

Mr. Gray related the history of the playground which was built in 1992 with an expected life of 12 years. The equipment is now 20 years old, and has safety and accessibility problems that have required dismantling portions of the structure. The Playground Committee is a diverse group of individuals who are working to replace the playground to expand its capability for active recreation for children from pre-K through fifth grade and to bring it up to ADA compliance. The Committee considers the playground an “outside classroom,” an intervention into the trend of childhood obesity, and a resource for the community. The total estimated cost of the equipment and set-up is \$215,452. According to Mr. Gray, the Committee has sponsored events that have raised \$98,000 in fiscal 2012 to fund the effort so far with an expectation that an additional \$11,000 will be raised in fiscal 2013. That leaves a balance of \$106,452, which is the request to the CPC. Mr. Gray and Ms Sousa described actions taken by the Committee to raise funds for equipment replacement such as road races and soliciting grants from local companies. Sam Tyler stated that the CPC looks for support from multiple sources, and asked for a list of funding sources, which was provided.

Mr. Tyler recommended that the School Department, with the largest town budget, might consider this kind of project as part of its capital improvement budget. Mr. Keim explained that the playground equipment expense had been included in past budget requests but was not adopted by the School Committee due to other priorities. Mr. Gray stated that the Committee had joined school officials in discussing the need for a new playground with the Finance Committee but without success.

Frank Chamberlain asked about how long the proposed new materials would last, and how maintenance would be handled. Mr. Gray reported that the new structure is expected to last for 25 years, especially the new surfacing, which would be padded and wheelchair accessible. As for maintenance, he explained that there is a line item for playground maintenance in the school budget.

The rendering of the playground design was distributed. The structure is more varied in activities for children and colorful, and it abuts a full-size field and conservation land, with a “Native American Trail.” The

footprint will be the same as the current space. Mr. Keim detailed the high cost of ramping to integrate wheelchairs. After consulting with occupational and physical therapists, therapeutic features include the sensory slide, donated by the Autism Walk; the octagon and the Evos climber; hand pedals for arm strength. Three different vendors were consulted to understand the full range of equipment available.

Ms. Kaspern noted that from her experience with the renovation of Goodwill Park, she felt the plan was well designed and interesting. She felt that there is a general sense around town that the public is not allowed to play on the school playground equipment after school hours. If that is not the case, she suggested that there should be a good marketing campaign to make it known that these playgrounds are open to the community after school hours and on the weekends.

Discussion then focused on the phasing of the timetable for funding and for demolition and construction. The deteriorating structures will have to be taken down, the materials should be purchased before December to lock in this year's price, and then in the Spring the excavation and construction will occur. Actual installation should take place within a three-week window. The expectation is that O'Brien and Sons will be selected to install the structure. This is the same company that installed the playground equipment at Goodwill Park. Asked if they plan future purchases, the Committee members said they have everything they need on this plan, although a shade pavilion might be considered at a later time.

The amount requested includes engineering and stamping of the plan, and is all-inclusive this year, and for that reason should be presented to the October Town Meeting. Mr. Tyler asked to have a complete breakdown of prices, including equipment, shipping, installation, surfacing and maintenance estimates. When representatives of O'Brien and Sons come to Holliston to check the Placentino and Goodwill Park playground equipment, they will check Miller too. Parks & Recreation and Mission Possible may provide important experience to help the Miller group plan and maintain the playground.

Finally, Mr. Tyler raised the question of working with a parents' group rather than a town department. There is currently no consideration in the Schools' district wide budget for any playground items. Mr. Gray agreed to make a presentation to Town Meeting.

Review of Reserve Status

Mr. Tyler circulated spreadsheets with the CPA's current balance.

Discussion

The Committee agreed that the fundraising the Miller School Playground Committee will achieve, raising 50% of their total goal is impressive. The CPC decided that it would meet with the Finance Committee to propose that 15% of the cost of both proposals be funded through the Capital Expenditure Fund to signify a joint responsibility of the Town and CPA funds, and that it would be worthwhile for them to make a case to the Finance Committee for town funding for capital expenses related to recreational facilities and spaces. The Committee felt it was important to include in its presentation at Town Meeting the point that these playgrounds are a public resource for all appropriate age children in Holliston to enjoy after school hours.

Schedule of Meetings and Public Hearing

The next meeting will be Monday, October 1, 2012, which will also be the date of the required public hearing. At that meeting, the Parks & Recreation Department will present its proposal for resurfacing, repair and added lighting for the tennis courts and basketball court at Goodwill Park at an estimated cost of \$300,000.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Woodrow

Approved November 8, 2012