

APPROVED
Community Preservation Fund Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 9, 2008

The meeting was opened at 7:45 p.m. A quorum was determined to be present. Members present — Chair Pete Hubbell, Phil Seymour, Victor Behoriam, Brent Kovalchik and Rich Biazynski. Miriam Latzer and Susan Ezrati were absent.

The members reviewed the minutes of September 4, 2008. Rich made a motion to adopt the minutes. Brent seconded the motion, and all members present voted in favor.

The Committee briefly reviewed materials prepared and submitted by Planner Ted Fink. Victor reported that Supervisor Sue Crane had authorized funds for Ted Fink's time in advising the Committee.

Victor said that the purpose of the Committee was to make recommendations about the appropriation of money from the Preservation Fund. He suggested that the Committee set a limit of 1-2% for administration and stewardship of acquired properties. He went on to say that properties can be purchased with CPF funds but that management and upkeep expenses would be the responsibility of the Town. He noted the success of the Long Island CPF in acquiring land. He said that setting aside 10% would be an invitation to waste or re-appropriation.

Several members agreed that the Committee should be clear in its definition of "stewardship" and then set either a dollar or a percentage limit. Those members also generally agreed that funds should be used for acquisition. They added that the Committee should state clearly what the funds can and cannot be used for.

Brent disagreed, saying that the purpose of the CPF was to implement a plan for the preservation of community character, as required by the law. He said that the Village was not interested in land acquisition but rather might have different community preservation projects in mind.

The Board generally discussed the hypothetical case of the historic brick wall along West Market Street. Victor said that CPF funds could only be used to acquire the wall; then grants and volunteers could be used to repair it. Some members said that funds might be used for a one-time repair after acquisition; then the Town would be responsible for on-going maintenance.

Victor suggested that the Committee go down two paths—one to work with Ted Fink in preparing an inventory of sites, as required by the law, and the other to draft a set of recommendations and interpretations.

Phil noted that Columbia County had preserved thousands of acres without using public funds, relying heavily on donations of land. He suggested that Red Hook could follow that model and encourage people to donate.

Pete said that the current economic situation afforded the Town an opportunity to acquire land at a relatively low cost.

Brent said that the law talks about “preservation of historic places”, not just acquisition of land. He said an applicant desiring funds for any project would include in his application a plan for “stewardship” of that project.

There was further discussion about what CPF funds could be used for. Victor and Rich agreed that while funds could be used to acquire a parcel of land, they could not be used to fix up a house or other structure on that parcel.

Rich and Victor again suggested that the Committee work on a definition of “stewardship” and come up with a percentage or dollar amount.

Victor suggested that 10% of the purchase price of a parcel of land be put into a stewardship account, to provide for monitoring the acquired parcels on a periodic basis. He said that in case the CPF is not renewed in the future, this account would provide funds for monitoring the lands in perpetuity. Pete suggested that the Committee look into setting up a 501C(3) non-profit organization to hold these funds.

The Committee generally discussed how the acquired parcels might be monitored. One suggestion was to team up with Scenic Hudson or a similar land trust, monitoring all the parcels in a combined fly-over. Other suggestions included asking for volunteer monitors or hiring someone. There was some discussion about how much hiring a monitor would cost.

Victor said that things will change as time goes on and that it was up to the present Committee to set parameters and guidelines for the future.

Brent noted that the law can be revised if the community wishes.

Brent suggested that the members keep the Town Board apprised of their discussions and committee work as they go along. There was some discussion about when to report to the Town Board. The majority of members present decided that they would not make a report yet.

The members generally agreed that Ted Fink’s guidance would be welcome and valuable. Pete said he would call Ted to see whether he was available for the next meeting.

Victor said he would call Fred Thiele, from Long Island, to ask about their stewardship model and experience.

Phil noted that the public is very interested in this program and that probably many community members would volunteer to help as needed. Pete said that a Red Hook Stewardship 501(c)(3) non-profit would be able to accept grants and donations.

The Committee discussed a meeting date for November. Rich and Victor may be unable to come on November 6. Brent said there might be a community meeting that evening. The members will e-mail each other about November 13, and Pete will check with Ted about his availability. Phil Seymour will act as chair at the next meeting.

Victor made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m. Rich seconded the motion, and all members present voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted

Paula Schoonmaker
Recording secretary