



Town of Watertown
Community Preservation Committee
Administration Building
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Committee Members
Elodia Thomas, Chair
Jonathan Bockian
Jason Cohen
Bob DiRico
Dennis J. Duff
Mark Krackiewicz
Allen Gallagher
Maria Rose
Susan Steele

Meeting Minutes: Monday, August 31, 2020, Remote Zoom Meeting 7:00 PM

Committee Members Present: Elodia Thomas, Chair; Jon Bockian, Jason Cohen, Bob DiRico, Dennis Duff, Allen Gallagher, Mark Krackiewicz, and Susan Steele.

Others Present: Lanae Handy, CPC Coordinator; Vincent Piccirilli, Town Councilor; Leo Martin, Chair of the Conservation Commission; Patrick Fairbairn, Conservation Commission; Deborah Peterson; and Susan Falkoff.

1. **Call to Order**, Elodia called the meeting to order at 7PM and presented information about the governor's order to suspend some provisions of public meeting law to allow remote meetings. Attendance was taken through a roll call.

2. **Acceptance of 8-20-20 Meeting Minutes**

Motion: Dennis moved to accept the minutes with the attached written amendments submitted by committee members and Jon seconded the motion.

Vote: A majority was in favor.

3. **Draft Community Preservation Plan Revisions and Completion, Fall Schedule**

Goldson Termination Notice

As part of moving forward, Elodia spoke about the termination of convenience of the Goldson contract and the letter of notice being issued by the Town. The Town Manager requested the CPC officially vote on the termination. The notice of termination spells out the items requested from Goldson, including work product documents in Microsoft Word form and transfer of the Bang the Table subscription to the Town, naming Lanae as the contact person.

Motion: Dennis moved to terminate the contract with JM Goldson. Susan seconded the motion.

Vote: All present were in favor.

Plan Revisions

Elodia asked how to proceed with the plan revision work. Dennis commented that other consultants may be hired as needed at an hourly rate, while Susan saw the work on two levels—writing and graphic design. She suggested a graphic designer and will pass her name on. Jason will forward names of graphic designers who do freelance work.

Bob asked if the work could be performed by subcommittees to clean up the document. In the following discussion, members concluded there were good examples in the plans from other cities and towns. Through working groups some of the plan could be salvaged and the remainder could be rewritten. Notably, some of the following items would be addressed: present the fact sheets more cleanly and clearly as prose with better graphics, generally clean up narrative, add potential projects, and add process diagrams in the application manual.

Jon pointed out there were two models proposed, one hiring professional help and the other having committee members to take on different sections of the plan. Susan proposed forming groups to work on sections and by CPA category of expertise, followed by a third party review. Lanae reminded committee members that Stuart Saginor offered to review a draft of the plan. Susan further noted completing the plan would require a graphic designer to perform layout and design graphic elements. Mark asked about a scope for a graphic designer and the contracting requirements. Elodia reported Raeleen Bandini informed her and Lanae that such an expenditure under \$10,000 involved an easier procurement process and did not require a contract.

Elodia stressed she is trying to accomplish this work as efficiently as possible without overwhelming anyone. In considering the working group model, Councilor Piccirillo clarified that working groups of up to three could meet informally to edit and review material if they were not deliberating or voting. Revised material could be mailed to the full committee via Lanae for review. He further noted the informal groups must maintain one-way communication by only sending information to Lanae for distribution to the full committee. Other committee members could not comment until the regular CPC meeting with the full committee present.

As the next steps: Jason, Jon and Susan will work on the application manual. Elodia and Mark will work on the housing section as well as the introduction section. Leo Martin, Maria, and Patrick Fairbairn will take on the Open Space. Bob will review the Recreation section. Susan will finalize comments on the historic preservation section. Lanae will coordinate with everyone on all sections of the plan.

Deborah Peterson stated she was gratified with energy committee members are willing to bring to fix things and wondered what could be learned from the letter to move the process forward. Councilor Piccirilli pointed out the Goldson letter should be attached to the meeting minutes.

Fall Schedule

Elodia emphasized the calendar moving forward depended on how much the committee can contribute. In the interest of time, giving the application manual group time to work on revisions, Lanae will find a meeting date later in the month of September.

4. Increase of CPC Coordinator Hours to 3 Full Days

Elodia introduced the idea of increasing the Coordinator position to 3 full days. As a side note, Jason asked how much remained unspent in the Goldson contract. Lanae responded Goldson didn't bill for \$27,470 of the total \$60,000 contract. Elodia explained the CPC has begun its new budget cycle and that the last Goldson invoices were paid out of the FY2020 budget. The only administrative expenses paid from FY2021 were the Coordinator salary and the Community Preservation Alliance dues.

Motion: Dennis made a motion to increase the CPC Coordinator hours to 3 full days. Allen seconded the motion.

Vote: All present were in favor.

5. Approval of Hiring a Graphic Designer

Elodia stated the need to discuss the hiring of a graphic designer as well as continue to compile a list of potential designers, develop a simple scope of work and obtain some pricing. No one objected to moving forward with these tasks.

6. Adjournment

Motion: Dennis moved to adjourn the meeting and Bob seconded the motion.

Vote: Members unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 PM.

Proposed amendments to 8/20/20 CPC Meeting Minutes

Mark Proposed:

1} Page 2, paragraph 4 - Mark who has a background producing economic development strategies and environmental reports found the plan lacks some fundamental elements. He noted the absence of identification of problems, analysis of data, and, from that, recommendations for priorities or programs. Only in the open space section was there even a bit of a problem statement and analysis about the dearth of open space in Watertown; other sections showed little analysis or logical conclusions. The housing section suffered from confusing masses of demographic and other data and failed to put together a rational narrative.

Jon Proposed:

2.) When "other present" is a town official, state their title. E.g., in these minutes, I think that would be Leo, as chair of the Con Com, as well as Larry.

3.) In the paragraph at the bottom of the first page, in the first sentence, change "approved" to "improved."

4.) In the same paragraph, second sentence: change to "He said the application manual includes materials interpreting the guiding principles and goals statements the CPC approved at its last meetings, and the committee should take care to discuss and vote on these interpretations before the manual is published."

4.) Include Susan, Jason, Maria, Mark and Jon submitted written comments on the Goldson drafts prior to the meeting, append those comments, as they were sent to the committee as meeting materials.

25 August 2020

Watertown Community Preservation Committee
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472

RE: Requesting Termination of Community Preservation Plan Services Contract #2020.027

Dear members of the Community Preservation Committee:

It is with great sadness that I write to you today. I have learned from Ms. Handy and from watching your 8/20/20 CPC meeting that you are unhappy with our services. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to explain my point of view. I appreciate your openness to hearing from me and the opportunity to have worked on this important project for the Town with you.

As I watched the video, I was first astonished because I was quite proud of the work products that we submitted this month and felt we had worked very diligently in service to you and the project. However, what I realized as I watched was that there may have been some technical problems that I believe contributed to your poor evaluation of our work that I will explain briefly.

But, more importantly, I think there were bigger underlying issues that outweigh any of these technical problems, which I will describe in more detail. I will also describe my regrets regarding this project and what I would have done differently in retrospect. I will conclude with my recommendations and intentions regarding next steps so that you can still have an effective project.

Technical Problems

As I watched the video, I heard you talk about formatting issues including inconsistent margins, text over photos, and yellow text headers. I suspect it is possible that your version of our work products may have been compromised in a few possible ways.

I believe that we may have given you an unstable PDF (one that does not preserve formatting on all operating systems, or all programs/apps used to view the file). This could account for some of the unsatisfactory formatting issues you spoke of at the meeting (such as text over photos). These formatting issues do not show up on our version of the PDF.

When Ms. Handy printed the documents, she was likely not able to account for the full bleed we had designed. In order to print a full bleed properly, a professional print shop prints on slightly larger paper then trims each page to account for the design. This is one reason that the hard copy's margins may not have seemed consistent. In addition, it sounds like the colors of the hard copies were compromised in the printing process.

Due to these technical issues, I don't believe you had the benefit of the true colors or design we had intended. We were under the impression that CPC members would have access to the digital version of these documents as well as the hard copy. Perhaps you did, but it seems from the video that you were primarily referencing a poor-quality hard copy.

Note also that the colors in the plan were intended to tie to your CPC logo colors that represent each CPA category and to follow color schemes used on the project website. These can be easily modified, though, if you determine that you would rather not use those colors.

However, even with a high-quality print and a stable PDF I believe you still would have had trouble with legibility, particularly with some of the colors and contrasting. I am sorry for this oversight. I take responsibility for this.

In my multiple reviews of these first drafts, I was primarily focused on factual-accuracy, content, and writing style. I was not as focused as I might have been on font, colors, or the size of the photos. We could have addressed these concerns in your second draft.

Three Bigger Underlying Issues

Although we certainly could have improved on the above-mentioned technical issues, I believe there are three bigger and related underlying issues that have existed from the very beginning of this project and have only grown with time to culminate in your dissatisfaction of these draft deliverables: challenging management style; limited CPC-consultant communication; and timing/scheduling of the project.

1. Challenging Management Style

My team and I found it unusually challenging to establish a productive working relationship with Chairwoman Thomas. Early on and throughout the process, members of my team came to me expressing deep concerns for the lack of boundaries and lack of professional communication by Chairwoman Thomas. My initial response was to ask my team to have more empathy for our client and to try to be flexible to establish a good working relationship with her.

However, I now realize that I should have immediately intervened and protected my staff by setting strong boundaries and clear standards with Chairwoman Thomas. This is my fault that I did not address this early. By the time I began pushing back, a pattern had already been established and we were not able to improve upon it.

2. Limited CPC-Consultant Communication

The second big underlying issue that caused many challenges was Chairwoman Thomas' insistence that we have no communication with CPC members or town staff (other than Ms. Handy) and they have none with us, outside of public CPC meetings. This is highly unusual – in fact, in my 25 years as a planner I have never come across this type of limitation on project communications.

This disconnect resulted in unnecessary miscommunication, lack of clarity and direction, and inefficiencies which ultimately hampered our service to you.

In a typical project, when we produce deliverables, we fully expect and encourage feedback and suggestions from every member of the CPC. It is then our job to compile all of that feedback and address the comments for further review to determine if more revisions are warranted. We also find it helpful to initiate one-on-one communications with CPC members between meetings as needed to obtain further clarity about their comments and to ensure that we are responding in a way that is most satisfactory.

However, for this project, Chairwoman Thomas insisted that she and Ms. Handy be the liaisons and sole communicators between my team and the CPC, collecting all feedback from the CPC and choosing how to present that information to us. We often did not have the opportunity to see the CPC's direct feedback and at times felt that what we did receive from Ms. Handy and Chairwoman Thomas was inconsistent with the conversations we had ourselves with the CPC members during their meetings.

Integrity of our work is very important to me as a certified professional planner and these restrictions on communication created many tense moments in my team's discussions with Chairwoman Thomas and Ms. Handy, and ultimately jeopardized a sense of trust amongst all parties. I fully believe that if we had been given the chance to have normal communications with CPC members, we would have been able to clarify expectations and satisfy the CPC with how we incorporated their thoughts and suggestions, including Ms. Steele's expectations for the historic resources profile.

Strong and open communication is a key element of success to every project and helps to produce a better project by encouraging collaboration. Unnecessarily constrained communication is one of the biggest reasons this project did not go as we all hoped.

3. Timing/Schedule of the Project

Despite an almost two-month delay due to the Covid-19 health crisis, we worked diligently to stay on the project's schedule in accordance with the CPC's wishes. The tight schedule was further exacerbated by changes and delays in the CPC's meeting schedule due to Town limitations on the airing of remote meetings. This further condensed our time to create the deliverables for you – we had only nine business days to produce these documents for you after receiving guidance at your 7/28 meeting.

I assure you that my team and I did all we could to turn around a complete first draft in this condensed time. I am proud that my team was willing to put in extra effort to meet this aggressive schedule and worked very long hours to ensure that you had all of the draft products in-hand on 8/11 to review prior to your 8/20 meeting.

My Regrets

I have two primary regrets. I believe that, in retrospect, if I had handled these differently, I could have made our service to you more effective.

1. I feel that you have been led to falsely think that my team and I are not responsive, competent, or professional. I can see, given the limited information that you had at your disposal, how most of the CPC members could come to this conclusion, however it is not true. One thing I could have approached differently to avoid this misrepresentation was to insist that we compile all comments and do all revisions ourselves so that we could more effectively demonstrate our competence and our ability to listen and collaborate effectively.

The second thing I could have done differently to avoid misperceptions was to insist on complete and open access to communicate with the CPC members and town staff. I was too yielding on both of these important points in my attempt to cooperate with the Chairwoman's wishes.

2. I was so saddened to hear that you felt I did not care about this project. This couldn't be further from the truth. I am so impressed with this Committee – you all have such a commendable commitment to your community and to this project and stuck with the work even through some very difficult committee dynamics. We also view Watertown as a very special community with a unique mix of historic resources; beautiful parks, open space and natural resources; and a strong vision for the future.

I started my consulting career after creating Newton's new CPA program, one of the first in the state. CPA is close to my heart. This is work I love and assisting you with your planning effort has meant a lot to me. I deeply regret that I fell short of making my feelings unquestionably clear to you.

Again, if I had insisted on open access to CPC members and town staff then I know we would have been able to build a trusting, respectful relationship and you would not have had any reason to question my feelings or commitment.

Recommendations

I would like to leave you with some recommendations for moving forward in this difficult time. I want this project to be successful for you – to give you the final products that you need to begin a strong CPA program in Watertown.

This project was never about me. I view my work as a service to the Town and it is in that spirit that I offer these final thoughts to you:

1. Before you address the text revisions on the reports, take time to get clear on the policy choices. Mr. Bockian was very observant when he said that we probably put the reports together with certain policies specified only as a way to facilitate CPC discussion and not as a way for us to in any way make decisions on your behalf. This is absolutely correct.

This is the CPC's plan and application manual – it was never ours. Chairwoman Thomas and the CPC requested that we put together as complete an application manual and plan as possible. After discussing some of the most important high-level decisions at CPC meetings over the last few months, we did our best to honor this request and the project's schedule. As I'm sure you remember, these discussions around key policy and process choices can be very detailed and take time. We find that at a certain point, it is most effective to provide concrete material from which the CPC can launch discussion and make informed decisions. We had fully planned to facilitate a discussion with you at your next meeting regarding the significant policy and procedural choices embedded in the documents as well as the voice of the documents.

2. Please allow Ms. Handy, as your professional staff, to take on the bulk of the text revisions, rather than relying on subcommittees and your volunteer efforts. This is the purpose of having paid and qualified professional staff and will help you take this process to closure so that you can open the first CPA funding round.
3. After Ms. Handy has completed the text revisions, I recommend that you contract with a qualified graphic designer to honor your vision of how you want these documents designed. Be aware that a designer will likely want to bring the report into InDesign or another desktop publisher so it will be best to complete all the substantive revisions in the Word document

before focusing on graphics and design or even working with the designer. Also, if you can provide the designer with examples of other report designs that you particularly like, then that can be very helpful to give direction and ensure your expectations are clear.

4. My most important advice to you for going forward is to let your future consultants have free and open access to the CPC and staff. Trust them. Talk to them. Build a relationship with them. Only then can they really understand where you are coming from and can they give you their best work.

Closing

I wish these last 10 months had been different. I wish we had been able to establish a healthy, trusting working relationship with you. I wish we had been able to shine for you and give you a final product that was everything you had hoped it would be. I wish this with all my heart. Unfortunately, this cannot happen now.

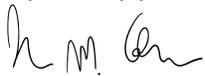
It is not that my team or I am unwilling to continue to work hard for you. But I can clearly see that the critical relationships needed to make the project successful are too weak. From what I observed on the 8/20 video, I now believe these relationships are beyond repair. I am deeply disappointed by this and want you to know that my team and I still hold this CPC and your staff in high esteem and only wish you well as the next chapter of this important project unfolds.

In conclusion, I respectfully request an amicable termination of convenience per our contract terms. This will be mutually beneficial to both parties. We will provide you willingly with all original editable documents so that you can use our work to bring the project to conclusion.

To demonstrate our regrets over how our service is concluding, I wish to donate our services for the month of August to the Town at no cost. According to our records there should be \$27,470 remaining in the project budget after earlier outstanding invoices are paid. This should give you ample ability to hire a graphic designer and to support additional community engagement during your first application round.

I hope this gesture helps you so that you can bring this project to a successful conclusion and have an effective program launch.

Respectfully yours,



Jennifer M. Goldson, AICP