Town of West Tisbury

Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

Meeting Minutes – March 23, 2022, 5:30 pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Cheryl Lowe, at 5:33 pm.

Present: Bea Phear, John Rau, Doug Ruskin, Ted Jochsberger, Cheryl Lowe, Jefrey DuBard, Mary Sage Napolitan, Angela Luckey

Others: Sara Fuschetto, Administrative Assistant

Old Business:

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the February 23, 2022 meeting. Cheryl Lowe asked if the Committee had any changes or corrections to the minutes. On a motion to approve made by Ted Jochsberger and seconded by John Rau, the Committee approved the minutes as amended. Doug Ruskin and Mary Sage Napolitan abstained.

New Business:

The Committee addressed the first agenda item regarding the voter’s handout for Town Meeting. Phear said that last year the Committee voted to not provide a handout and advocated we save paper as the information is redundant. The Committee agreed to do the same this year.

The liaison chart retained the existing Committee members for their ongoing projects. Lowe will stay with the Campground, Napolitan will continue with Aidylberg III, and Phear will continue with Harbor Homes. DuBard will continue with the West Tisbury Affordable Housing Project and Island Autism. Dubard added the Old Mill Building Feasibility Assessment, the new Martha’s Vineyard Garden Club project. Jochsberger will continue with the Dukes County Housing Authority. Representation is not needed for Scott’s Grove as it is a debt service. John Rau will liaison with the new Red Arrow project with Island Housing Trust. Fuschetto has been in touch with present projects to confirm they have representation to speak at the Town Meeting in case questions arise, but CPA liaisons should be present as a backup.

Ruskin said he will not be renewing his term with the Finance Committee. He is currently the liaison for the West Tisbury First Congregational Church. Lowe said the Finance Committee will need to appoint a replacement who will then continue with the WTFCC. Lowe expressed she would be sorry to see Ruskin go.

Phear has asked Tara Whiting about representation to be reappointed with the Planning Board. When confirmed, she can continue with the CPC as the Planning Board liaison. Phear said since Rau is newly on the Planning Board and is also on the Parks and Rec committee, he can continue with the CPA as representation with either board based on need with the CPA. Phear gave this circumstance as an example for Ruskin, if he wishes to continue representation with the CPA.

Jochsberger confirmed he would be available for questions on rental subsidies at the Town Meeting.

Lowe moved to the next agenda item of the Grange Hall denial letter inquiries. DuBard had reached out to Gary Conover of the Martha’s Vineyard Preservation Trust on December 23, 2021. DuBard has also texted Conover and has records of both requests for follow up and financial information. DuBard has texted with him in the past, so he confirmed the contact information is reliable. DuBard said he is happy to provide a screenshot. Lowe asked DuBard to pass this information on to Fuschetto to send to Nevette Previn.

Lowe moved to the next item of Open Meeting Law. She reminded the Committee that we can confirm our meeting attendance, but we cannot express opinions via email. Napolitan asked if that included changes to the minutes, and Lowe confirmed yes. Lowe asked everyone review the handout as we have new people on the board. Ruskin added that there is new attention to this issue with the Town and Fuschetto should be copied with all discussions so it could be on the town server. Rau asked about email requests to add items to the agenda and Lowe said that was fine. Phear said we can also send material out and request it be read prior to the meeting for discussion.

Nevette Previn joined the meeting. Lowe updated Previn that the Committee had already discussed the Grange Hall and how DuBard’s outreach of voicemail and text message to Mr. Conover regarding financials had not gotten a response. Previn said Tammy Gregorio was actually the application contact. DuBard said he is happy to share his outreach with Previn. Previn said the correspondence from DuBard didn’t come from an official source, such as an email instead of text or phone. She continued that it was Conover’s name on the application but Gregorio’s email contact. DuBard said with all due respect, these items should correlate on Previn’s end. Previn said they are highly disappointed. DuBard shared that there were a number of questions during the meeting, such as whether the West Tisbury resources were profit generating for the Preservation Trust and how that compares to resources in other towns. DuBard said having the financials would not have changed his opinion. Previn said she would have been open about sharing those resources and the losses the buildings incur. Previn said the MVPT does not have a sustainable financial model, this being the reason why the Trust needs to seek grants. DuBard said he would have been interested in understanding how those losses correlate with different properties. Previn asked whether a historic commission should be considering how to preserve these buildings for public use instead of how to go after the money and digging through the books. Ruskin responded that the CPA represents the taxpayer; has fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayer and must make best use of the funds available. The CPA does not have an excess of funds compared to the requests and the CPA must triage the requests. DuBard agreed with Ruskin and said he was interested in seeing the financials with the understanding that the MVPT is running at a deficit. If the West Tisbury CPA is running at a positive income and subsidizing other towns who are running at significant deficit, DuBard said he doesn’t believe the West Tisbury CPA should be burdened with subsidizing those other towns. Ruskin said the MVPT has come under scrutiny with financials from another preservation committee in the past. He emphasized that while Previn was not part of that history, it is reason for increased attention and review. Previn agreed that they need to build trust. Lowe said the CPA would look forward to the Preservation Trust’s application in the next round.

Lowe spoke about the possibility of an in person meeting or a hybrid meeting. Jochsberg said he could possibly meet in person with reluctance, given the COVID presence. Rau is in favor of in person meetings. Phear is in favor of an in person meeting. The Committee said they would wait to understand more about the hybrid model and how COVID evolves in the next month.

Lowe announced that the May meeting will be her last meeting as Chairperson of the CPA, after two years of serving the Committee. She said a one to two year term is ideal, even though a rotating six month term was something that has been done historically.

With no further business, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 6:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Fuschetto

Administrative Assistant