

Community Preservation Act Application Public Meeting

Thursday, June 29, 2023, 6 PM

26 Court Street, Town Hall / 1820 Court Room

In Person and Virtual Options

In attendance: Bill Keohan, Chair; Russ Shirley, Plymouth Housing Authority; Randy Parker, Conservation Committee; Mike Tubin, Historic Commission; Alan Hemberger, Clerk; Betty Cavacco; John Mahoney, liaison from the Select Board. Via Zoom: Karen Buechs and Birgitta Kuehn, Planning Board.

Public Comment included a number of thoughtful questions, concerns and suggestions:

Connie Melahoures, Pct. 3 Town Meeting Rep: President of the Plymouth Task Force for the Homeless spoke in support of the CPC and their affordable housing efforts working with Habitat for Humanity, the Plymouth Redevelopment Authority, Plymouth Affordable Housing Trust, and local realtors. The biggest problem is finding affordable and suitable land to build low-income housing. She chastised the town for not doing their part in helping with the housing crisis, such as allowing Mount Pleasant School to be sold to a developer for over 55 luxury condos and 130 Court Street being sold cheaply to the Economic Development group who then in a private sale sold it to a developer for millions for over-55 high-end condos.

Peter Brown, President of the Pilgrim Society, David Furlow, Pilgrim Hall board member and Lynn Spencer of Spencer Preservation Group all requested that the CPC look at their re-submitted application for replacing the badly leaking roof at Pilgrim Hall.

Steven Lydon, Pct. 17 Town Meeting Rep wondered why letters of correspondence were preferable over in-person meetings, for the application process. Keohan explained that written information is essential and that applicants are often applying for millions of dollars and communication is always in writing.

Mahoney remarked that a site visit in August to the Gurnet Light House with 7 acres was imperative. This site visit would be a follow up to the letter to the Town of Plymouth and the GSA (General Service Administration) regarding the possible purchase of this site. Town Manager, Derek Brindisi, said the deadline for letter of interest to the GSA is July 14th.

Pat Adlemann, Pct. 12 Chair said she supports Town Meeting voting on all CPC articles and does not like the suggestion that the 10% Affordable Housing share be handed over to the Plymouth Affordable Housing Trust without the approval of Town Meeting.

Derek Brindisi, Town Manager requested that Town personnel, such as from Building Department, the ZBA, Planning Dept. and Department of Public Works be more involved with CPC.

Parker, Conservation Commission suggested the local by-law be changed for 40B's According to Parker, the 40B developer can ignore all local by-laws except for local zoning and wetland controls.

Evelyn Strawn, Advisory and Finance and liaison to the Affordable Housing Trust, suggested that adding the 10% of the CPC funds to the Affordable Housing Trust could be advantageous. We might benefit from looking at the surrounding towns of Duxbury and Kingston and see what they are doing.

Kuehn commented that a developer is required to have 10% affordable housing. Often, they complain it is too expensive to construct and put the 10%-dollar amount into the Affordable Trust Account. Or the developer is building over 55 housing, and MA State law does not allow over 55 communities to build affordable housing, so the 10% money goes into the Affordable Trust. Kuehn said, "you cannot live in a trust."

Kathy Dunn, Chair of the Affordable Housing Trust thanked the CPC for their support in helping construct 55 affordable housing units in the past 5 years, so Plymouth is closer to 6.9% in affordable housing than the previous 4.5%. But the current \$1800 a month for a one-bedroom apartment is not affordable.

Kevin Canty, Select Board, suggested that if after a year the CPC has not been able to use the 10% affordable housing fund that the money be put in the Affordable Housing Trust. It could be a safety net and the CPC would not be criticized.

Cavacco suggested the CPC concentrate more on land for affordable housing (as opposed to open space) and raise the 10% affordable housing allocation.

Kuehn, Planning Board, said the Planning Board is working on an article for Accessory Dwellings. The Board of Health approved the article. This article, if approved by Town Meeting, would provide more affordable housing and relieve some of the obligation of 40B.

Shirley reminded the audience that the Plymouth Redevelopment Authority provides administrative services to the towns of Carver, Duxbury and Kingston who do an outstanding job with elderly affordable housing.

Motion made by Cavacco that all CPC meetings be held at Town Hall, preferably in the 1820 Court Room with Zoom and recording always available. Parker amended the motion by adding that the meeting could be held in alternative places if Town Hall not available provided there is a Zoom link available. Motion passed 7 to 3. Kuehn, Tubin and Shirley voting nay.

For more meeting information watch PACTV recording at Plymouth Government 6-29-23.

See CPC Application on the Town of Plymouth website.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Davis

LWV Observer Corps