

Community Preservation Committee Fiscal Year 2015 Report

The members of the Shutesbury Community Preservation Committee during fiscal year 2015 have been James Aaron, Leslie Bracebridge, Susan Essig, Rita Farrell, Donald Fletcher, Allen Hanson, Linda Avis Scott, and Michael Vinsky.

The Community Preservation Committee began fiscal year 2015 with its annual review of what was learned during the prior year. The Shutesbury Community Preservation Plan was subsequently revised to include two improvements. The timeline when community preservation funds can be requested was clarified. If a project must be approved with urgency, then applications may be submitted at any time. A Special Town Meeting is required to approve such applications. The Community Preservation Committee Annual Town Meeting warrant articles for FY 2015 were also added to the Appendix.

During FY 2015, the CPC received four applications for funding. The CPC initially voted to confirm its determination that all the proposed projects were eligible to receive Community Preservation funding. After the meeting, a question was raised about the eligibility of one of the projects. The CPC revisited its determination of eligibility. Additional information was gathered. The application whose eligibility was questioned was subsequently withdrawn.

The CPC completed a thorough review of the three proposals. Each applicant completed a detailed application and review process with three open meetings, including a Public Hearing in March during which each of three applicants presented its proposal and answered questions from interested citizens. After completing its review and evaluation, the CPC members voted unanimously on April 2, 2015, to recommend funding the three projects. The CPC determined that each project:

- is financially and administratively feasible,
- has other sources of funding,
- includes significant in-kind volunteer contributions,
- has support from other town boards or committees,
- will provide a positive impact to the community, and
- will be a step toward achieving long-standing priority goals for Shutesbury.

The Annual Community Preservation public hearing also allowed interested citizens to provide input and to hear others' ideas about Shutesbury's needs, opportunities and resources for community preservation.

The total cost of the three projects that were recommended by the CPC for FY 2016 totaled \$34,100, which is less than the estimated Community Preservation Fund revenue projected FY 2016 by more than \$12,000. Annual Town meeting voted to approve all three projects recommended by the CPC.

The Cemetery Commission requested \$25,000 for the preservation, protection and restoration of the historic gravestones in Shutesbury's West Cemetery. There are three parts to the project:

- the removal of seven large pine trees that have been dropping large dead branches and have damaged the historic gravestones. This project has actually been a multi-year effort. Five trees were removed last year. The Town Tree warden supports this plan as being the best approach.
- the repair and restoration by a trained* conservator of approximately thirty of the most severely damaged gravestones (*one who is skilled in the art of restoring important historic gravestones), and
- the training of cemetery personnel and up to thirty volunteers to complete minor repairs and/or cleaning of the stones that have not been extensively damaged.

Letters of support for this project were submitted by the Shutesbury Historical Commission, the Friends of the Shutesbury Historical Commission, the Town Center Committee, and a letter of support was submitted from a descendant of the Spear's family, who were very active in Shutesbury's history and are buried in this oldest and most at risk section of the West Cemetery.

For many years, Shutesbury has had town goals to increase access to Lake Wyola for town residents, to add passive recreation infrastructure, and to increase recreational opportunities for people of all ages. The CPC recommended funding the two projects, in part, because each project moved Shutesbury toward accomplishing these goals.

The Old Town Beach Improvement Committee requested \$5,000 to create a small waterfront park at the old Town Beach. The park will provide a quiet, sheltered area for passive recreation for people of all ages who want to enjoy nature and scenery. Although, the primary purpose of the project is to create infrastructure for passive recreation, the Old Town Beach is Town-owned and currently an underused parcel of land that is also between two important areas for active recreation. Creating the waterfront park is planned to enhance access to Lake Wyola and the South Brook Conservation Area. Expenses are for minor landscaping, plantings in raised beds, a gazebo, and for refurbishing of the storage shed. Volunteers offered labor and plants.

Many Town Boards expressed support for this project. A new oversight group, the Old Town Beach Improvement Committee had been created to, in part, build on the successful kayak loan program.

This project, like the next one, is a step toward achieving all three goals, and it costs only \$5000.

Similar to, and in many ways a compliment to, the planned improvements to the Old Town Beach, the Shutesbury Conservation Commission requested \$4,100. for a project that also represents a step toward achieving Shutesbury's goals. Expenses for the project include a picnic table, fence, construction of a parking area, and planting of perennial and shrubs. The project budget included additional cash and in-kind contributions totaling (\$1,150) and volunteer commitments to plan trees and shrubs, and to install the fence.

The members of Shutesbury's CPC thanked Shutesbury's residents for their votes to approve the three projects.

As the CPC discussed ideas for worthwhile community preservation projects, it recognized that each successful project depends on a group of committed volunteers to organize the project, to complete the thorough application and review process, and to oversee implementation through project completion. In the CPC's annual presentation to Town Meeting, those attending were reminded of the range of worthwhile community preservation projects and that worthwhile projects will require volunteers to come together to develop projects that will meet town goals. During FY 2015, three groups of volunteers devoted their energies and creativity to organize and propose three projects that were endorsed at the Annual Town Meeting.

The Community Preservation Committee thanks the citizens of Shutesbury for its continuing interest, contributions, and support for our community's preservation projects.

Respectfully submitted by,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Donald Fletcher".

Donald Fletcher, Chair, Community Preservation Committee
June 30, 2015