

Community Preservation Committee

Fiscal Year 2012 Report

The members of the Shutesbury Community Preservation Committee during all or part of fiscal year 2012 have been Leslie Bracebridge; Susan Essig, Secretary; Rita Farrell; Donald Fletcher, Chair; Allen Hansen; Susanne Personette; Linda Scott; and Al Springer.

The Community Preservation Act became law in 2001. It added a \$20 fee for deed filings to create a State Trust fund to 'match' funds raised for Community Preservation (CP) by Towns that choose to add a property tax surcharge of between 1 and 3%. Shutesbury joined in 2009. We added a 1½ % surcharge to property tax bills, with exemptions for the first \$100,000 of valuation and for low-income residents. As more towns have joined, the state match for Shutesbury has declined. It is estimated at 22% for fiscal year 2013.

The Community Preservation Act requires that Towns transfer 10% of its estimated annual Community Preservation revenue to each of three designated accounts – Open Space, Historical Resources, and Community Housing. The almost 70% that goes to the Community Preservation fund balance can be used in any of those areas and also to create recreation resources. Shutesbury's by-law created a Community Preservation Committee with nine members. Seven represent groups with related interests –Planning, Finance, Open Space, Historical Commission, Conservation, Recreation, Housing and two at large members.

The State's Community Preservation Act establishes both strict requirements and a strong role for Community Preservation Committees. Only Town Meeting can approve funding for Community Preservation Projects, but only if recommended by the Community Preservation Committee. Shutesbury residents interested in more information about Shutesbury's Community Preservation Committee minutes of our meetings, our Community Preservation Plan, and other documents are on the Town's website. More information about the Community Preservation Act and initiatives throughout the Commonwealth go to www.communitypreservation.org/

During fiscal year 2012 the Community Preservation received applications for two Community Preservation projects. Both were determined legally eligible to receive CPA funds. A well-attended public hearing was held in March to gather input about community preservation and the proposed projects. The CPC recommended funding for only one. The other was a proposal requesting funding for a privately owned historic building, the South School House. Our committee realized that there are rare and irreplaceable historic buildings in town that we hope are preserved, but that the Community Preservation Committee needs more input from Town residents to refine our committee's evaluation criteria.

Each year the CPC reviews and revises our Community Preservation Plan based on what we have learned during the year. Between June and October 2012, we will develop evaluation criteria for recommending funding for significant historic buildings that are privately owned. During our 2012 Town Meeting presentation the CPC invited town citizens and committees to share their thoughts. We asked, “Under what circumstances and with what conditions should Shutesbury’s Community Preservation Funds be used for privately owned buildings?” And, “should we consider CPA funding for projects only where there will be public access and when the town funds only a minority % of a total project?” The CPC will decide answers to those and other questions and include new evaluation criteria in our fiscal year 2013 Community Preservation Plan.

The CPC recommended and the 2012 Town Meeting approved two standard annual budget warrant articles, and an third article which added \$8,000 funding to the \$15,000 approved by Town Meeting in 2011 for the West Schoolhouse Sill Project.

For FY 13 Annual Community Preservation Revenue from the property tax surcharge and the Trust Fund Match was conservatively estimated at \$45,000. The annual Community Preservation warrant article allocated 10% of the estimated fiscal year revenue, i.e. \$4,500, to each of the designated accounts for open space, historic resources and community housing, as required; and 65% to a budgetary reserve. The second annual budget article allocated 5% for Community Preservation Committee expenses, which will be used only if necessary.

Article 3 recommended and Town Meeting approved \$8,000 of Community Preservation funding to restore the West Schoolhouse sills and related work. This \$8,000 was in addition to \$15,000 approved at the May 2011 Town Meeting The CPC endorsed the Historical Commission request because the original cost estimate was too low. The project had been put out to bid multiple times before the Historic Commission concluded and requested the additional funds. Town Meeting approved the additional \$8,000 needed to complete the restoration during fiscal year 2013.

Respectfully submitted by
Donald Fletcher, Chair
Community Preservation Committee
June 30, 2012