

Oak Bluffs CPC Meeting
03/14/2008
Oak Bluffs Library 2nd floor conference room

Members Present: Stephen Durkee, Chairman. Alison Shaw, Peter Martell, Joan Hughes, James Westervelt, Cheryll Sashin.

Also Present: Rich Combra, John Breckenridge, Liz Durkee

The meeting began at 9:05 am.

Liz thanked the Committee for getting together on such short notice. She talked about the part of the retaining wall that had collapsed down at "Pay Beach". She said the Conservation Committee has under its purview a responsibility to protect the Town's natural resources. She said the Commission has been working with the Parks & Recreation department on devising a strategy to fix the wall that has collapsed at the beach. Richie said the application to the CPC is sponsored by both the Park and Highway departments.

-Liz talked about a prior application to the CPC looking to fund engineering studies for the Town's beaches fronting Ocean Avenue. That requested funding was instead approved at Town Meeting with free cash and has been used to get an idea of what shape the beach walls are in. Based on an engineer's report, the town departments are ready to move forward with an overall rehabilitation of the public area but first need to stabilize the emergency section of the wall that has collapsed. Liz said they could have a state matching fund for the work to be done but only if the town demonstrates that it has money of its own to use and what amount it would be. Liz pointed out that the seawall restoration involves public safety, environmental protection, recreation and appearance for the downtown community.

-Joan talked about the money needed for the beach. She said it would probably cost 200K to stabilize and fix the embankment. In talking with state officials, different types of solutions were discussed but many were not affordable. The goal the ConCom had would be to put back all the elements of recreation that were there before the bank slide occurred. She said they have one bid currently that was 60K + a lot of available sand from the Highway Department. She also said the Marina manager would be dredging a slip and would also have available sand to help redo the wall and the beach around it.

-Joan said that having in kind help from different departments will go a long way to keeping costs down. She told Members that the state had different ideas of how to accomplish the repairs that didn't go well with what the town could provide. The goal is to retain local control of the project while still getting the needed help from the state without them taking over. She said they plan on coming back next year with a more comprehensive plan that will address all the beach area the town has.

-John added that there are different solutions based on what the collapsed wall is defined as. Peter asked is it a seawall or a coastal bank? They looked at the different concepts that define the beach area, from the jetty that is the breakwater for the harbor all the way down to Farm Pond.

-John said what is proposed is a soft solution that protects the road as well as the sidewalk area by the beach's bank. He said they have worked with coastal geologists as well as other experts to identify how a new footing and a "two over one" bank will work. Joan identified the three areas that need reconstruction so that concrete and sand and vegetation will work to fix and keep in place the new embankment. Joan talked about a past history of how the town dumped sand in certain areas that has helped to build up the beach.

Alison asked where the emergency dune would go on the embankment. Joan said there had to be placement of the right materials to make the short term solution work.

-Committee members talked about the past history of the beach. Joan talked about long term plans so that the beach can have more amenities down the road.

-Peter asked about the seawall and how it can't be replaced. Joan said there are different definitions of what a seawall is. Peter talked about how the seawall is unprotected from beach erosion that has been lost by storms. Joan stated that the state does not permit "beach replenishment".

-Peter and Joan had a lengthy discussion about the different types of sand that can be used on the beach and the plan for future work. Joan said the proposal is about money needed to hire the right people to evaluate the current problem and be able to draft a solution and pay for its implementation.

-James expressed his concern that the soft solution that's proposed is not what the Beach to Boardwalk Task Force would be arguing for and why both committees aren't working together since they both have a vested interest in the area.

-Joan asked for the money that's available in reserves for open space. With that the ConCom will hopefully get some matching funds from the state while still maintaining control and then once the immediate problem is fixed work towards obtaining other monies for future work on the beaches.

-Cheryll thought there should be a stabilization fund that would be just for the beaches. John said what is on the table is for an emergency situation and that there should be more long term planning and saving money for that purpose.

-Stephen said the issue is where the cave in has occurred and how much it will cost to fix. Joan gave the numbers for different work to be done. She said they need 72K to get what she thinks will be all the work to be done.

-Stephen asked if everyone had read the letter submitted by Nancy Phillips from the Beach to Boardwalk Task Force that does not support ConCom's efforts to fix the damaged embankment. Alison shared James sentiments that this other community group feels like it's out of the loop. Joan said she has made them aware of what ConCom is trying to accomplish.

-James asked if the application fits in the open space category of the CPA. Stephen stated that town counsel had reviewed the proposal and had found it acceptable to be recommended.

Restoration v. preservation was discussed. Members discussed the language of the CPA and how it is already evolving with every fiscal year.

Peter made a motion to recommend the project as presented for seventy two thousand dollars. Alison seconded.

James clarified that it was for engineering. Joan said matching money from the state will also be for engineering.

The Committee voted 5 – 1 to recommend seventy two thousand to ConCom for the open space restoration of the seawall embankment at Pay Beach.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 am