

Community Preservation Act Committee Proposal Request Form for FY 2014

Date: December 11, 2013

Submitting Entity: Amherst Historical Commission

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CPA funding category

Check all that apply

- Community Housing
- Open Space
- Historic Preservation
- Recreation

Overview of Proposal:

The Amherst Historical Commission requests \$70,000 for the preservation and stabilization—new roof, replacement of siding, doors and windows, possible structural improvements and partial demolition—of the barn located at 332 West Street. As one of the few original barns remaining along Route 116 in South Amherst, the barn is a landmark and an integral component of the community's landscape.

Describe how your request meets the CPA criteria:

1. Description of funding needed including:

a. Documentation of cost estimates

Cost estimates were generated by comparing the feasibility report prepared for the barn at the North Amherst Community Farm. The cost estimate of \$70,000 would include cleanout, new roof, new siding and doors, new windows and improvements to the timber frame. The work may also encompass the removal of the milking shed on the south side of the barn as this appears to be in sharp decline and was added later to the tobacco barn. The Historical Commission has yet to secure estimates from a contractor, but is working with the owners of the property to have contractors and consultants on site to develop more detailed cost estimates.

b. Other sources of funding, e.g., grants, self-funding, fund-raising

The owners of the structure have acknowledged that they have limited resources to preserve the barn even though they would like it to remain on the property. The Historical Commission, through the demolition delay process, indicated that the barn is eligible for CPA funding. The Historical Commission, through town staff, inquired about the barn's use by Grow Food Amherst and other local farmers, and is awaiting a final response.

c. Timeline on how CPA funds, if awarded, would be spent

The funds would need to be spent expediently because: 1) the insurance company is pressuring the owners to demolish the structure since they see it as a liability, and 2) the barn's roof and siding may not withstand an additional New England winter. The owner, with assistance from the Town and Historical Commission, would work with a contractor

to begin work in Summer 2014 with the expectation that the project would be completed by July 1, 2015 if the work cannot be completed during the winter months.

d. Timeline for spending funds; expectation for spending over multiple years

It is not expected that this project will require more than one year to complete.

2. Urgency of the Project, if any

The owners applied for a demolition permit in October 2013 and were issued a 12-month demolition delay that expires in October 2014. The Historical Commission issued the delay because they found the structure to be historically significant and because the owners admitted they would rather preserve the barn than tear it down, but felt as though there were no other alternatives. During the delay the Commission agreed to help the owners research funding and other options for preserving the barn.

The major issue is trying to assuage the owners' insurance company who has stated that they want the barn removed because of liability and safety issues. Even during the demolition delay, the Commission is concerned that the owner's may need to find new insurance.

3. Estimated timeline from receipt of funds to Project completion

See answers above. A majority of the preservation and stabilization of the barn would occur in summer/fall of 2014 to prepare it for winter. This would include the new roof and sheathing. Any remaining work would be completed by July 1, 2015.

4. Acquisition or preservation of threatened resources

During the course of the public hearing, the Commission heard testimony from the owners of the property and from town staff. The information presented confirmed that barn, silo and associated farmhouse is one the last intact assemblages of agricultural buildings in South Amherst. The barn's prominent location on West Street (Route 116) has reminded passer-byes for decades that Amherst was once a thriving agricultural community. The Commission found that the barn is historically significant: it has character, interest or value as part of the development and heritage of the Town; it exemplifies the cultural and social history of the community; it embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type; and because of its location, is an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood and town.

The structure was originally built as a tobacco barn in the 1900's and was then converted to a dairy barn, with the addition of a milking shed on the south, a hay loft and track inside the barn, and the silo. By the mid-20th century, the barn was no longer used for active farming, but remained an important part of the landscape and used by the owners for storage. The interior frame of the main tobacco barn remains in stable, dry condition.

5. Population(s) to be served by the Project

The visibility of the barn from Route 116 and its location adjacent to Town Conservation land would continue to remind the community of Amherst's agricultural past. It can be seen and appreciated by many Amherst residents and visitors alike. Although it is too early to speculate about possible future programming or uses, the owners have indicated a willingness to discuss options for storage and events by local farmers and agencies.

6. How the Project is prioritized by requesting Town committees or commissions

The project has not been prioritized by the Historical Commission.

7. Other information regarding the Project deemed necessary for CPAC.

Mary Steigner, co-owner of the barn with Anne Lowell, donated the 2 acres surrounding the barn to Town of Amherst for conservation purposes in 1991 (a value of \$67,100). Ms. Steigner recognized the value of the land for protection of natural and watershed resources, and has said she would like to preserve the barn for future generations.