

➤ Article 9C: CPC – Mount Pleasant

Bill Keohan, Chair of the CPC, presented Article 9C. Article 9C asks Town Meeting to appropriate \$1,028,000 to fund a grant to the Plymouth Housing Authority for the construction and/or renovation of Mount Pleasant School for senior affordable housing. This would be contingent on 4 things: a) the transfer of the property to the Plymouth Housing Authority for no consideration, b) any alterations to the façade must be approved by the Plymouth Historical Commission, and c) preservation of access to the park known as the “Hollow” containing 2 acres and to the children’s play area, both areas to be permanently accessible to the public through an easement and d) Plymouth Housing Authority to grant the town a permanent affordable housing restriction dedicating the property to senior affordable housing. The school just vacated the building in August. The town should look at all options including selling or affordable housing. The Town had a similar Senior Affordable housing agreement with the Plymouth Housing Authority with the successful Cherry Hill II project. This money is being set aside so the Housing Authority can leverage it and raise more funding to see if this is a viable project. The project will be handled completely by the Housing Authority and not by the Building Committee or Procurement.

Questions:

- How does this project compare with the Slmes House? (H Helm) It doesn’t. The Housing Authority would have complete responsibility for the project, not the town. The Housing Authority has proven success in raising funds and completing building projects within the budget.
- What is the rush? (P O’Brien) There is another article on the Town Meeting warrant to transfer the property from the School to the Board of Selectmen. The CPC wants people to know that affordable housing is an option for that building, before the Board of Selectmen sell the building.
- How many affordable housing units would fit into the 14,724 square feet? (J Moody) Senior units must meet state requirements. Housing Authority architects saw the space and think that 8 units would work best, six 1-bedroom units and two 2-bedroom units.
- Any idea of the total cost it would take to complete the project making 8 affordable senior housing units? (J Moody) The architects estimated \$1.4 million plus a \$200,000 contingency bringing the total to \$1.6 million including an elevator, so on average \$200,000 per unit.
- When was the building built? (J Moody) 1904 but it has been kept up to date as far as heating, windows, ventilation and some asbestos abatement.
- Would the units be rentals or purchased? (J Moody) Rentals.
- The Housing Authority wouldn’t have direct access to these funds, correct? (J Moody) Correct, CPA funds are completely controlled by the Town, expenses are signed off by CPC and Finance Dept.
- Project cost is \$1.6 million, that leaves only \$572,000 for the Housing Authority to raise? (J Moody) Yes and the Housing Authority may or may not move forward after further studies.
- Have you received quotes on the cost to rehab the park? (P O’Brien) No, we are not proposing to do anything with that now. That would be a discussion later for the town to decide what to do with it.

Public Comment:

- Steve Striar believes it is too early for this article to move forward. The other article is not to sell the property but to shift the care and custody from the school to the Board of Selectmen. The \$1,028,000 has been accumulating for 4 years. It should remain in the Affordable Housing reserve fund and add 10% of approximately \$700,000 each year. We are being asked to pre-fund a project with very little detail. This is an attempt to move the process in the direction of affordable housing instead of letting the Board of Selectmen consider all of the options. They may decide to sell the building to a developer and add significant dollars to the tax base. He urged the committee to not recommend this article to Town Meeting.
- Everett Malaguti, Precinct 1 Town Meeting Member, said that this article is far from complete and he

knows that Advisory & Finance likes complete packages. The article is based on opinion and not numerical figures. We should keep Mount Pleasant in the hands of the Selectmen. Senior housing is needed but this is not the best bang for the buck. He urged the committee to not support this article.

- Donna Curtin, Precinct 3 Town Meeting Member, said that this topic has had lively discussion in her precinct. The neighborhood is densely populated and she would like neighbors to be consulted for their feel on the topic. This article is offering an option, an opportunity for discussion, it is not unreasonable to put this on the table, the building could maybe continue to be a part of town history.
- Bill Keohan reiterated that the money was going to be placed in an account to allow the community to have a discussion.

Question:

If this opportunity does not work out will the money return to the CPC Affordable Housing reserve fund?
(S Sheridan) Yes.

Sheila Sheridan made a motion to recommend Article 9C to Town Meeting. Robert Cote, second.

Discussion/Comments:

- I do not like the idea of giving clearance to over \$1 million to get the ball rolling. Why not \$200,000? Why 65% of the total project cost at this point? (E Kusmin)
- I feel the project is going to cost a lot more than \$1.6 million. The park being overgrown is an extreme understatement. I can't support this as this article asks us to go down a road we have gone down before. (H Helm)
- Once invested, if a new expense comes up, we will have incentive to throw more money at the project to protect the investment already made. There are too many unanswered questions so I do not support this article. (K Canty)
- They are asking to use funds to leverage discussion. This will help the elderly in town. There is a huge need for affordable housing in this town. The Housing Authority has a successful track record. I support this article to let Town Meeting have the discussion. (M SIRRICO)
- They are asking for this article to be on the table simultaneously with the other Mount Pleasant article transferring care to the Board of Selectmen. (S Sheridan)

The motion fails (4-7-1). Sheila Sheridan, Robert Cote, Betty Cavacco, and Marc SIRRICO, in favor. Judith Fitzgerald, abstained.