



City of Newton, Massachusetts
Community Preservation Committee



MEMORANDUM

David B. Cohen
Mayor

TO: Honorable Board of Aldermen
FROM: Community Preservation Committee
DATE: 29 June 2005
RE: **CPC Recommendation for Funding**

PROJECT TITLE: Newton Centre Playground Pedestrian Access Improvement Plan
CPA PROJECT ID: CPA-FY05-20
CPA CATEGORY: Recreation¹

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant, the Parks and Recreation Department, proposes to hire a design professional to conduct a pedestrian access improvement plan for the Newton Centre Playground. In addition, the request includes funding for a topographic survey. Over the past several months the CPC has shaped the proposal to include additional components and considerations that are detailed in the conditions for approval on page three of this document. The total **\$67,853** CPA request, as revised through discussions with the CPC, includes the requested \$66,500 for the Plan plus an additional \$1,353 for related Law Department costs as requested by City Solicitor, Dan Funk.

FINDINGS

Community Preservation Act (MGL c.44B)

Recreation

The project complies with §5(b)(2), which allows the CPA to fund the creation and preservation of land for recreational use. Both the Department of Revenue guidelines (IGR No. 00-209) and the Community Preservation Coalitions report titled "Potential Uses of CPA Funds" list incidental project costs as allowable expenditures. Specifically, the Coalition states that "CPA funds may be used for site surveys, environmental assessments, historic or housing consultants, architectural and engineering fees, permit processing fees, construction consultants . . . and similar costs associated with and incidental to the development of a CPA project." This proposal for a pedestrian access improvement plan will identify specific construction projects that will create new accessible pathway facilities at this park.

Newton Community Preservation Plan

Overarching Goals

This project meets several of the Overarching Goals including boosting the vitality of the community and enhancing the quality of life for Newton's residents by identifying accessibility improvements, leveraging other funding, as well as demonstrating community support. According to the application, City funds in the amount of \$17,500 have been allocated for construction of a pathway from Bowen Street to the site of a proposed privately-funded handicap accessible play equipment structure; and the *City of Newton Consolidated Plan* (July

¹ Although the application states that this plan has the dual purposes of recreation and historic preservation, the intent of the plan seems to primarily be recreation since it will focus on planning pedestrian access improvements. Therefore, this evaluation treats the proposal as a recreation proposal.

2005 – June 2010) identifies \$95,000 for construction of a handicap-accessible automobile entrance at Centre Street (page 115).

The table below illustrates the comparative costs of other recommended and approved CPA recreation projects (including the recreation portions of multi-category projects, such as Angino Farm).

TABLE: CPA Project Costs (recreation)

<i>Project Name</i>	<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Total CPA Funds (for recreation portion only)</i>
Angino Farm	05	\$487,000
Senior Center Park	05	\$271,210
Forte Park*	03	\$250,000
Gath Pool Enhancements	05	\$120,875
Albemarle Community Classroom	03	\$99,931
Houghton Garden	04	\$90,000
Cabot Outdoor Classroom	04	\$68,270
Newton Centre Playground Plan**	05	\$66,500
West Newton Common Irrigation	04	\$65,968
Wellington Park Improvements	05	\$64,000
Thompsonville/Bowen Ballfield	03	\$56,805
Stearns/Pellegrini Park Renovation**	04	\$30,000
Kayla's Garden	03	\$23,718

* The Forte Park project was awarded a total of \$500K under the condition that \$250K be returned to the CP Fund after reimbursement through a state/federal grant (To date \$105K reimbursement has been received). Therefore, this table represents that only \$250,000 was the CPA funds awarded to this project.

**Denotes projects requesting CPA funds to conduct a study/design in preparation for a larger recreation project.

Recreation Goals

The project meets several of the Recreation Goals including addressing the general needs targeted in the City of Newton Recreation and Open Space Plan 2003-2007, which calls for the assurance that all recreation facilities are designed or modified to be accessible to those who have mobility limitations. Additionally, it serves passive as well as active recreation needs, improves access for disabled residents, and meets the recreation needs of a great number of residents by increasing overall access to the park.

CPC RECOMMENDATION

The proposal is consistent with the CPA criteria and many of the Plan's goals, as described above. Therefore, the Community Preservation Committee voted unanimously to recommend funding this application for the Newton Centre Playground Pedestrian Improvement Plan by appropriating and transferring the requested \$67,853 to be expended under the direction and control of the Commissioner of Parks and Recreation for purposes of this project as detailed in the application (dated 15 October 2004, revised 22 June 2005), subject to the following conditions:

1. The design of the pathways should be viewed not only as facilitating handicapped accessibility but as an opportunity to significantly upgrade the appearance of the park and restore some of its former dignity and grace. Therefore, the design firm that is retained to prepare the plan, shall be instructed as follows:
 - a. The design shall be aesthetically pleasing (and not just functional) in accordance with the historic design intent of the park (e.g., attention should be given to using higher quality materials such as granite).
 - b. The paths should only lead to established use areas in the park, taking into consideration evolving uses of the park.

- c. Current passive recreation areas should be analyzed and recommendations made for restoration and enhancement, with particular attention to the pine grove area.
 - d. The removal of green space to layout the paths should be mitigated to the extent possible, with particular attention to the path from Bowen St (e.g., removing the least amount of green space as reasonably possible and suggesting the addition of trees, shrubs and plantings along the route).
 - e. The impact of the proposed, handicapped-accessible play structure should be mitigated to the extent possible (with the removal of fencing and the addition of screening trees and shrubs).
 - f. Recommendations should be made for appropriate (i.e. Victorian-style wrought iron or comparable) trash receptacles along the paths.
2. Work shall commence no later than 31 December 2005 and shall be completed no later than 31 December 2006 or such other date(s) as may be approved in writing by the Director of Planning and Development. In the event of failure to meet the project start or completion dates as stated herein or as approved by the Director of Planning and Development, any remaining funds in the project account shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.
 3. Promptly after substantial completion of the project, the applicant shall submit to the Community Preservation Committee a final project development cost statement.
 4. Any portion of the grants to the Parks and Recreation Department and the Law Department not used for the purposes stated herein shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.
 5. Consideration of CPA funds for future phases will require the demonstration of a good-faith effort on the part of the applicant to substantially leverage other funding sources; provided, however, the applicant understands and agrees that CPC's recommendation of funding for this design plan does not imply any CPC support for, or any applicant expectation of, a further CPC recommendation for the funding of future project design or construction phases.
 6. As a condition to a possible CPC recommendation of future funding to implement all or any portion of the design plan, the CPC reserves the right to participate in the design review process and require revisions to the final plans.