



City of Newton, Massachusetts Community Preservation Committee



MEMORANDUM

David B. Cohen
Mayor

TO: Carol Schein, Parks & Recreation Department
FROM: Douglas Dickson, Chair, Community Preservation Committee
DATE: 7 April 2005
RE: **CPA Funding Request for Accessibility Plan for Newton Centre Playground**

CC: Fran Towle, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation
Community Preservation Committee

On March 30, the Community Preservation Committee voted to hold consideration of the request for CPA funding for an Accessibility Plan for Newton Centre Playground until the scope of the proposal is revised and resubmitted to the CPC. After discussing the proposal at both the March 3 and March 30 meetings, the CPC concluded that, consistent with its obligation to assess the resources, needs and possibilities of open space and recreation facilities, the proposed scope of work is too narrow and should be expanded to include a look at the broad context in which accessible pathways are being proposed. This broad look would include planning for future as well as current uses of the Newton Centre Playground and the manner in which the various elements of the park, including accessibility improvements, work together as part of a coherent whole. In particular, the CPC would like to ensure that the new, handicapped accessible playground equipment that is being generously donated by a private party is located in the most appropriate area of the park.

We believe that the principal aims of the planning study should be to determine the following: 1) the current and future active and passive recreation needs of the community through a process that includes public input; 2) the most appropriate locations for particular recreation uses (both existing and proposed) with consideration of functionality, circulation, access, relationship to surrounding uses (including current and proposed uses at nearby facilities, such as Mason Rice School), preservation of sight lines and passive recreation opportunities; and preservation and/or restoration of the park's historic character; 3) design principles for "hardscaping," equipment materials and other components; and 4) plan for accessible pathways that provide access to the park as it currently exists and as it is envisioned for the future.

We recommend that the Parks and Recreation Department revise the proposed scope of work as described above and submit an amended application that includes a new cost estimate and a new timeline for the expanded scope of work. We invite resubmission of this proposal at the point at which these factors are addressed.

The CPC has been pleased to support past projects proposed by the Parks and Recreation Department and looks forward to continuing our partnership on other projects in the future. If you would like to contact me, I can be reached during the day at 617-624-3138 or ddickson@newdirections.com.