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Community Preservation Committee

MINUTES

11 September 2014

James Freas
Acting Director

The meeting was held on Thursday 11 September 2014 at 7:00 pm in Room 209 of Newton City Hall.

Community Preservation Committee (CPC below) members present: chair Joel Feinberg, vice chair Jim Robertson, Beryl Gilfix, Don Fishman, Jane Sender, Tom Turner. Members Laura Fitzmaurice and Mike Clarke were absent.

Community Preservation Program Manager Alice Ingerson served as recorder.

PUBLIC HEARING on CPC *Funding Guidelines & Proposal Requirements*

Alice Ingerson gave the attached slide presentation about the current *Guidelines*, which are organized around four basic principles: 1. Use community-wide plans to guide funding decisions; 2. Balance the allocation of funds across all CPA-eligible resources and allowable uses; 3. Require proven capacity for project management & long-term maintenance; and 4. Evaluate results to ensure accountability and improve future projects. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes. Ingerson also noted that written suggestions and comments would be accepted through 16 October 2014.

Given that nearly all members of the public present were PTO members interested in the possibility of CPA funding for outdoor play structures, Ingerson also noted that all funding for public parks and playgrounds in Newton must be appropriated to the Parks & Recreation Department. She showed a slide summarizing the department's current criteria for prioritizing its proposals to the CPC. Those criteria currently exclude play equipment or safety surfacing. Although these criteria were submitted at the CPC's request and accepted by the CPC, they are not a formal part of the CPC's *Guidelines*. The dept. could therefore propose changes to its own criteria after the CPC's October 16 deadline.

Public Comments & Questions

All public comments focused on the issue of CPA funding for outdoor play structures, especially at elementary school playgrounds.

Sami O' Reilly (249 Watertown Street) said there was no greater CPA-eligible need in Newton than playgrounds. The percentage of the City's population that would benefit from CPA funding of these sites is higher than for any other type of CPA-eligible project. The Parks & Recreation Dept. recently told the Underwood PTO that their playground structure would have to be taken down in a year or two. The current playground at Horace Mann School is in equally poor condition. She believes that at least 5 or 6 playgrounds in Newton will need to be replaced between now and 2016. The estimated cost of a new playground is \$200,000, and Newton PTOs simply cannot raise this much money on short notice. As a member of a committee for Stearns Park, she saw costs for that playground

website www.newtonma.gov/cpa

contact Alice E. Ingerson, Community Preservation Program Manager

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quadruple between the start and completion of the project. Costs have tripled since the late 1990s. She feels that legislative requirements and Newton's tree ordinance have both contributed to cost increases. O'Reilly noted that the City of Newton does not budget for playground structures in its *Capital Improvement Plan*. She hoped the CPC would persuade the Parks & Recreation Dept. to adopt new criteria.

Todd Symonds, David Levine, and David Wiborg all spoke about the same issue on behalf of the Horace Mann PTO. Symonds noted that this school's current, wood play structure was built in the late 1980s for about \$65,000, primarily using funds raised by the PTO. Based on the PTO's hope to keep the structure at least partly wheelchair-accessible, and on meetings with Parks & Recreation staff about adapting the structure to the site, two Horace Mann current parents, both architects, got estimates for a replacement structure ranging from \$120,000 to \$200,000. The PTO has been raising funds for the past 15-18 months but still has a long way to go. Some fundraising techniques that worked in the past are no longer effective. The City has explained that the PTO cannot offer sponsorship or naming rights at the playground.

David Levine explained that the Mann PTO had raised only \$11,000 from the schools' children and their families since October 2013 and now has a total of \$20,000 in the bank. A fundraising appeal to 50 Newton businesses was unsuccessful, even though many of these businesses had donated to the previous playground, and the children of many of the business owners use the playground. The PTO raised only \$100 in donations through a half-page, full-color ad in the *Newton Tab* that cost \$2,500. About 10,000 people come to the playground and the surrounding park for Newton's Fourth of July celebration, but the PTO cannot raise funds at that City event. Overall, PTOs are not effective playground fundraisers, at least not in this part of Newton.

David Wiborg explained that the Mann PTO had surveyed Newton parents and kids about both aesthetics and safety, as part of planning their replacement playground. He acknowledged that many playgrounds built in the late 1980s and early 1990s now need replacement. Materials cost much more for new play structures, but the expected lifespan of these new structures is at least 20 years. The PTO had positive conversations with both Mayor Warren and the Parks & Recreation Commissioner, but had not been allowed to raise funds during a City-sponsored "playgrounds day." In comparison with other parts of Newton, the neighborhood around Horace Mann has a diverse population, with many moderate-income families and recent immigrants. The school also serves many MetCo students. He feels that as a meeting place for youth and families, and a point of pride for Newton as the Garden City, school playgrounds should receive more public funds.

Lauren Zucker-Siff said she had been asked to help with fundraising for a new Memorial-Spaulling playground because of her prior success in raising funds for a playground at a private synagogue nursery school. At Memorial-Spaulling, parents and children had repeatedly taken down the caution tape installed by the City. She wondered how to manage this situation, and how playgrounds were supposed to be repaired or maintained. Ingerson thought the Parks & Recreation Department could answer these questions.

As PTO Council co-president, Karen Manning reported that multiple neighborhoods are currently trying to raise funds to replace older playgrounds, including Bowen (Thompsonville), Underwood (Newton Corner), Horace Mann and the Newton Preschool Program (both in Newtonville), Burr (Auburndale), and Memorial-Spaulling (South Side). Many PTOs have had minimal success so far in raising funds. A few others, including Pierce (West Newton Hill) and Williams (Auburndale) have recently succeeded in replacing their playgrounds, through a combination of fundraising and

volunteer labor (“community builds”).

In response to the public comments, CPC members acknowledged that play structures are now an allowable use of CPA funds; discussed whether this was an appropriate use of those funds; emphasized using CPA funds to leverage funds from other sources; and raised concerns about project management, based on experiences with past CPA-funded projects at playgrounds.

Joel Feinberg noted that Community Preservation Act funds were intended to protect very long-term or permanent capital assets, such as open space or permanently affordable housing. In the past, CPC members had expressed some misgivings about funding playground structures because even the most durable ones must be replaced regularly, every 20-25 years.

Jane Sender and Jim Robertson noted that even if the Parks & Recreation Dept. decided to request, and the CPC recommended, CPA funding for playground structures, the Committee would still want these CPA funds to leverage other funds.

Ingerson explained that for some past projects, CPA funds had been provided as a “matching grant,” that is, the CPA funds were committed to but could not be released for a particular until all other funds needed to complete the project had been raised. Wiborg felt PTOs were still willing to raise funds. Levine believed that that being able to tell potential donors that their contributions were needed to release already committed CPA funds would be helpful. However, O’Reilly felt playgrounds should be funded publicly, without PTO fundraising or private partnerships.

Feinberg, Robertson and Ingerson explained that for projects on any City site, CPA funds must be appropriated to and managed by the City department responsible for that site. The City Law Department has consistently advised the CPC that CPA funds cannot be granted directly to private organizations, such as PTOs, for projects on City-owned sites.

Manning reported that the Parks & Recreation Department had told the PTO Council that a single department staff person, Stephanie Lapham, would manage all playground projects. Ingerson and Robertson believed that the department needed to add additional project management capacity. They felt that some past projects funded through the Parks & Recreation Dept. had proceeded slowly, in part because of the staff project manager’s many other, competing responsibilities.

O’Reilly asked about the suggestion in the CPC *Guidelines* to combine multiple, similar small projects into one “program,” then using CPA funds to hire a shared, non-staff project manager. Ingerson noted that the Board of Aldermen had questioned this idea because they felt it might lead to funding less-worthwhile projects simply because they were bundled with more-worthwhile projects.

Ingerson also noted that the Parks & Recreation Dept.’s current criteria for its proposals to the CPC encouraged using standardized parts and equipment, to achieve economies of scale both in purchasing and in training staff for repairs and maintenance. Levine acknowledged that this was a reasonable concern. Manning said the PTOs had agreed to order only from the department’s fairly short list of approved vendors.

Don Fishman and Jane Sender encouraged advocates of CPA funding for playgrounds to share their views not only with the CPC and the Parks & Recreation Dept., but also with the Parks & Recreation Commission, which makes policy for the department. Fishman said this issue was new to him as a member of the Commission. He also noted that the goal of leveraging CPA or other public funds raises difficult questions, since some PTOs are wealthier than others.

Robertson encouraged the PTOs to lobby for increases in the Parks & Recreation Dept. budget, so it

could include playground equipment in addition to the many other needs it was already stretched to cover. He noted that there were also multiple demands on Newton's finite CPA funds, so even if the Parks & Recreation Dept. requested CPA funding for playgrounds, and the CPC and Board of Aldermen supported that request, available CPA funds might not be sufficient. Feinberg cautioned that a proposal for \$200,000 of CPA funding for each of 6 playgrounds, with matching PTO funds of only \$10,000 per playground, might be seen as daunting and discouraging rather than effective.

With no one else requesting to speak, Feinberg then closed the public hearing. He thanked the PTO members for coming and particularly for bringing some of their children to see government in action, listening to people. The meeting recessed briefly so members of the public interested only in the playgrounds topic could leave.

CPC members then discussed other aspects of their current *Funding Guidelines*, particularly the use of existing, City- and community-wide plans to identify funding priorities.

Beryl Gilfix asked, for example, whether the Committee would not recommend funding for a housing project simply because it did not fit the priorities in the *Consolidated Plan* and *Comprehensive Plan*. Ingerson noted that the City's current *Consolidated Plan* includes as a priority every aspect or type of housing that is CPA-eligible, so it was not a restrictive filter. The *Comprehensive Plan* is a bit more specific, in supporting more housing in transit-oriented village centers, where residents of that housing could spend less of their income on cars. Feinberg noted that housing is opportunistic, wherever real estate becomes available. To date, the CPC essentially never had to choose between simultaneous, competing housing projects based on how well each one fit these plans.

Feinberg and Robertson explained that, while the CPC continues to request information from the City's overall *Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)* for City proposals, the public, the Aldermen and the Committee and the Aldermen have generally agreed that CPA funding is most appropriate for City projects that will never be highly ranked in the *CIP*, which assigns greater weight to the asset's role in delivering core City services or protecting public health and safety than to CPA-relevant criteria such as historic significance or community character.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Ingerson noted that Newton's CPA ordinance requires the Committee to elect officers annually. Feinberg and Robertson explained that in recent years, the CPC has elected a team of chair and vice chair for two years, after which the vice-chair steps up to chair, if willing. Since fiscal 2015 will be Feinberg's second year as chair, next fall the Committee will need a new vice chair. Robertson estimated that officers spend 8-10 hours a month between CPC meetings, including attending the meetings of Board of Aldermen committees that review CPC funding recommendations. Non-officers may represent the CPC at some of these meetings, but some Aldermanic committees expect the CPC chair to attend.

VOTE Fishman nominated to serve for a second year, Joel Feinberg as chair and Jim Robertson as vice chair. Gilfix seconded the nomination of Feinberg, and Sender seconded the nomination of Robertson. The nominated slate was elected unanimously, 6-0.

With corrections as noted, Feinberg moved and Robertson seconded approval of the minutes for 5 August 2014 as submitted. The minutes were also approved by a vote of 6-0.

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 8:30 pm.

Funding Guidelines

Newton, Massachusetts
Community Preservation Program
www.newtonma.gov/cpa

Originally presented 29 November 2012
Re-presented 11 September 2014

What is the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act?

- state law 2000, Newton adopted 2001
- funds for affordable housing, historic resources, open space & recreation land
- local property tax surcharge 1-3% (1% in Newton)
- state match from deeds fees, up to 100%



Wabasso Street –
Flowed Meadow



Angino Farm



Cabot Outdoor
Classroom



Crystal Lake



Cambria Road

Newton, Massachusetts
Community Preservation Program
www.newtonma.gov/cpa

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What can be funded through the CPA?

Newton Corner Library



- 4 resources
- 5 actions/treatments for those resources
- funding process – state requirements
- funding process – local requirements

% for each resource covered at the end of this presentation ...



Kessler Woods

What resources can be funded?



COMMUNITY HOUSING

affordable to households with low (below 80% of area median) or moderate incomes (below 100% of area median), including seniors



Land for RECREATIONAL USE

for active or passive recreational use including, but not limited to, community gardens, trails, noncommercial youth and adult sports; and use as a park, playground or athletic field but not for horse or dog racing or for a stadium, gymnasium or similar structure

% for each resource covered at the end of this presentation ...



HISTORIC RESOURCES

a building, structure, vessel, real property, document or artifact that is listed or eligible for listing on the state register of historic places or has been determined by the local historic preservation commission to be significant in the history, archaeology, architecture or culture of a city or town



OPEN SPACE

including but not limited to, land to protect: well fields, aquifers, recharge areas, and watersheds; farms, grasslands, fields, forests, and wetlands; ocean, river, stream, lake and pond frontage; beaches, dunes and other coastal lands; scenic vistas; wildlife or nature preserves; and land for recreational use

**NOT EVERY ACTION
for EVERY RESOURCE**

What actions can be funded?

	Community Housing	Historic Resources	Open Space	Recreation Land
ACQUIRE	YES	YES	YES	YES
CREATE	YES	NO	YES	YES A
PRESERVE	YES	YES	YES	YES
SUPPORT	YES B	NO	NO	NO
REHABILITATE/ RESTORE	YES C	YES D	YES	YES

A. convert land never used for recreation, or not used recreationally for a very long time

B. including funds for an affordable housing trust

C. ONLY IF the housing was acquired or created with CPA funds in the first place

D. projects must use National Park Service guidelines

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**NOT EVERY ACTION
for EVERY RESOURCE**

What actions can be funded?

ALWAYS

capital improvements – changes that

- materially add to or appreciably prolong the useful life of real property
- are permanently affixed so that removal would cause material damage
- are intended to remain for an indefinite period of time

NEVER

- maintenance or routine operating costs
- artificial turf

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How do projects get funded in Newton?



Funding Guidelines

adopted by Newton Community Preservation Committee
14 November 2012

1. Use community-wide plans to guide funding decisions.
2. Balance the allocation of funds across all eligible resources and allowable uses.
3. Require proven capacity for project management & long-term maintenance.
4. Evaluate results to ensure accountability & improve future projects.

% for each resource covered at the end of this presentation ...



33 Comm (Covenant Residences)

Funding Guidelines

adopted by Newton Community Preservation Committee
14 November 2012

1. Use community-wide plans to guide funding decisions.

- *Comprehensive Plan*
- CPA-funded surveys of eligible resources: archaeology, City archives, City & non-City historic buildings, heritage landscapes, ...
- *Consolidated Plan for Housing & Community Development*
- *Recreation & Open Space Plan*
- *Ramping Up: Planning for a More Accessible Newton* (more than legally required minimum accessibility, where appropriate)
- for assets owned or proposed for ownership by the City of Newton: listing in *Capital Improvement Plan*
- other plans created in the future ... ?



Crafts
Street
Stable

Funding Guidelines

adopted by Newton Community Preservation Committee
14 November 2012

2. Balance the allocation of funds across all eligible resources and allowable uses.

encourage
planning & phasing

maintain a flexible reserve
for responding to unpredictable opportunities
(usually involving real estate acquisition)
– to minimize debt financing

*% for each resource covered
at the end of this presentation ...*



Lexington Street

Funding Guidelines

adopted by Newton Community Preservation Committee
14 November 2012

2. Balance the allocation of funds across all eligible resources and allowable uses.

all projects

public benefits & access

leverage non-CPA funds

historic resources

both already regulated

& previously unprotected

*% for each resource covered
at the end of this presentation ...*



Archives

housing

both rental & homeownership

expedite funding through a trust

open space & recreation land

improvements for sustainability
& ease of maintenance

Funding Guidelines

adopted by Newton Community Preservation Committee
14 November 2012

3. Require proven capacity for project management and long-term maintenance.

Process

- Use pre-proposals to screen & strengthen proposals.
- Accept most proposals in an annual funding round, to help evaluate their relative costs & benefits ...
- ... but consider proposals that involve real estate acquisition on a rolling basis, upon request.



Brigham House

Funding Guidelines

adopted by Newton Community Preservation Committee
14 November 2012

3. Require proven capacity for project management and long-term maintenance.

Major Requirements

- address broad community needs & seek community support
- qualified, available project manager – group small projects into combined management contracts?
- financial transparency & capacity – development & 10-year operating budgets, summary of assets & liabilities (private & public)
- professional designs & cost estimates (to minimize supplemental funding requests)



Houghton Garden

Funding Guidelines

adopted by Newton Community Preservation Committee
14 November 2012

4. Evaluate results to ensure accountability & improve future projects.

- require regular progress reports
- release final funds only *after* final report to the CPC
- monitor after completion – which projects perform best over the long term, and why?
- when reviewing new proposals, consider the sponsor's past record of project management & maintenance

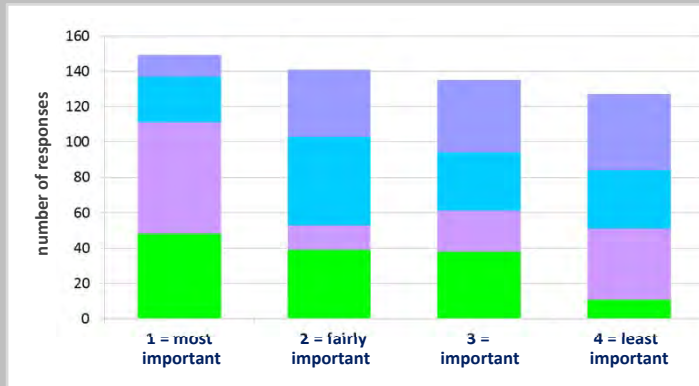


Elgin Street –
Cohen & Webster
Conservation Areas

Funding Ranges

2011-12 Community Survey

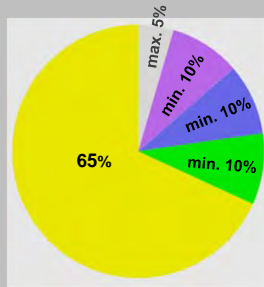
Forced Ranking	average rank (descending order)
open space	2.1
affordable housing	2.3
recreation land	2.5
historic resources	2.9



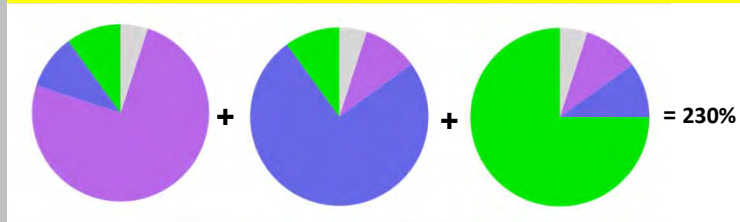
Funding Ranges

State Requirements

no minimum, but
now counts toward
10% for open space



The "general" 65% can be spent on any resource ... but not on every resource!



Funding Ranges

Funding Guidelines

adopted by Newton Community Preservation Committee
14 November 2012

Past		10-yr averages	
program administration		4%	
affordable housing: development		31%	
historic resources: all purposes		22%	
open space & recreation land: acquisition		36%	
open space & recreation land: rehabilitation		7%	
	total	100%	

Future			
		flexible ranges	
		min.	max.
program administration		3%	5%
affordable housing: development		25%	40%
historic resources: all purposes		15%	20%
open space & recreation land: acquisition		20%	30%
open space & recreation land: rehabilitation		15%	20%
	total	78%	115%

Newton, Massachusetts
Community Preservation Program
www.newtonma.gov/cpa

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Funding Guidelines

endorsed by Newton Community Preservation Committee
February 2013

For sites owned by, or proposed for ownership by, the City of Newton proposals must be submitted by & funds appropriated to the City department responsible for the site.

Criteria submitted by Newton's Parks & Recreation Department for projects at public parks & playgrounds:

- significantly restore or extend the site's useful life, while also providing ecological benefits
- professional scope of work & design
- widest possible range of users – both ages & abilities
- leverage non-CPA financial resources
- long-term stewardship within Department's maintenance budget plus, if relevant, resources from private partners
- should not include play equipment or safety surfacing



Plans for Newton Highlands & Upper Falls Playgrounds

Newton, Massachusetts
Community Preservation Program
www.newtonma.gov/cpa

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