



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

**City of Newton, Massachusetts**  
Department of Planning and Development  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone  
(617) 796-1120  
Telefax  
(617) 796-1142  
TDD/TTY  
(617) 796-1089  
[www.newtonma.gov](http://www.newtonma.gov)

---

**Community Preservation Committee**

**MINUTES**  
24 July 2013

Candace Havens  
Director

The meeting was held on Wednesday 24 July 2013 at 7:10 pm in City Hall Room 222.

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) members present: Leslie Burg, Jim Robertson, Nancy Grissom, Joel Feinberg, Tom Turner, Dan Green (arr. 7:20 pm).

Also attending from the City of Newton: City Clerk David Olson, City Archivist Nancy Kougeas, Jackson Homestead Director Cindy Stone, Chief Planner for Long-Range Planning James Freas, Senior Planner Amanda Stout, Public Buildings Director of Project Management Adam Gilmore, Public Buildings Project Manager Miriam Tuchman, and Director of the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs Linda Plaut.

Program manager Alice Ingerson served as recorder.

## **PRE-PROPOSALS**

### **City Archives Strategic Plan (historic resources)**

David Olson and Nancy Kougeas summarized the pre-proposal and introduced Cindy Stone, who was also attending to support the project. Olson felt that the CPA-supported City Archives Survey, conducted by Kougeas as a consultant, had led directly to the creation of a part-time City Archivist position in the fy13 budget, for which Kougeas was then hired. As Archivist, Kougeas will work with the Library and Historic Newton to plan for the next 10-15 years of archival preservation, including the consolidation, storage, and cataloguing of records. The proposed strategic plan is the first step.

In response to questions from Jim Robertson, Tom Turner, and Leslie Burg, Olson and Kougeas explained that the \$20,000 cost in the pre-proposal was based on the number of hours estimated by a consultant who has done several such plans. They also believe that the plan can be completed in the 4 elapsed months listed in the pre-proposal, by interviewing all departments and meeting with the Public Buildings Department to identify possible archival storage spaces.

Burg wondered if it might be more efficient to hire a consultant to handle some of Kougeas's routine work, so she could do the strategic plan directly, drawing on her experience with the original survey. Olson explained that Kougeas needed to continue the work she had begun in identifying records that can now be discarded, based on state and federal records retention requirements. The resulting increase in available space has shown many City departments the practical benefits of having a City archivist. For the strategic plan, Olson felt it was best to bring in an outside consultant with an objective perspective.

In response to Burg, Joel Feinberg and Robertson, Olson agreed that the strategic plan was likely to recommend some spending on capital facilities, as well as other preservation options. In response to a question from Nancy Grissom, Olson explained that the plan would include the Engineering Division archives. Kougeas explained that the Engineering Division often consults historic records for its daily work. Many of these records are maps or plans, which must be stored flat and kept at City Hall, unless digital copies are adequate for the division's work. Olson also noted that digitization is not a perfect

solution, because digital records may need to be migrated to new formats every 10- years, so they will remain accessible as hardware and software evolve.

Grissom and Burg agreed that, although the CPC often looked for leverage, it would be appropriate to consider funding this plan completely through the Community Preservation Fund. However, Robertson and Feinberg noted that the CPC might not be able to recommend full CPA funding, or perhaps any CPA funding, for any capital investments recommended by the strategic plan.

Ingerson and Dan Green asked Olson about the 2004-05 National Historical Publications and Records Commission grant received by the City for an interdepartmental archival catalog. The City eventually had to return this federal grant because at the time it had no staff available to manage the project. However, Olson thought similar funding sources might still be available for future cataloguing on a city-wide, interdepartmental basis. He clarified that staff time for cataloguing the records preserved through the CPA-supported, interdepartmental "City Archives – Combined" project had been covered by the Library's general fund budget, rather than by CPA funds.

Burg suggested that the full proposal for this project should list more supportive community contacts from outside City government.

**VOTE** A motion made by Grissom and seconded by Green to consider a full proposal for this project in the regular fall 2013 fall funding round was adopted by unanimously, 6-0.

### **City Hall Veterans' Wing Historic Artifacts (historic resources)**

David Olson also summarized this pre-proposal. He explained that significant historical materials had been discovered during the recent renovation of City Hall's first floor to accommodate the Health Department. Nancy Kougeas returned to private veterans' groups materials that belonged to them. In response to Ingerson, Kougeas felt that these groups probably had a limited capacity to preserve or provide public access to historic materials.

The City had retained other historic materials found in the Veterans' Wing, including Civil War prints donated to the City by the veterans' group the Grand Army of the Republic. Several of these prints had been displayed temporarily in the hallway next to the City Clerk's office several years ago. Other items dating from the Civil War through the Korean and Vietnam wars had not been touched since they were first donated or put into display cases. Assessing the options and potential costs to restore these will require hiring specialists in textiles, in arms and armor, and in wax dioramas.

Ingerson noted that any full proposal for this project should include the attachments required to demonstrate that historic resources are CPA-eligible, probably by having them declared locally significant by the Newton Historical Commission. Robertson suggested offering the CPC a tour of the displays. Kougeas noted that the dioramas are significant in the national history of museum displays. There had been one unsuccessful attempt to assess and restore these, about 20 years ago. If the artifacts are restored, the displays would be redesigned as a self-explanatory museum, with conservation-appropriate lighting and climate control.

Robertson was concerned that CPA funds spent to assess this material would be wasted if full restoration proved too expensive to justify, or if restored materials or displays were not maintained. In response to Feinberg, Olson estimated the cost of restoring the artifacts and redesigning the displays as much larger than the \$19,000 cost of assessment in the pre-proposal. In response to Green, Olson acknowledged that adding climate controls to the display cases would have limited benefits as long as City Hall itself lacks central air conditioning. In response to Burg, Olson noted that

the City's Veterans Agent, whose office is now physically part of the Health Department, is responsible for this "museum" within City Hall but currently has no budget for maintaining it.

Robertson and Green wondered whether funds could be raised for the project privately, especially if the materials were transferred to a nonprofit or a regular museum. Burg, Grissom and Green all doubted that CPA funds could support the full cost of restoration and new displays but thought that private veterans' groups might be willing to donate funds to the City for this purpose.

Olson explained that these displays were designed as an integral part of City Hall for its 1932 opening, and as an expression of civic pride. The ultimate goal would be a better display, but Olson could not say whether that goal was practical at this point.

**VOTE** A motion by Green, seconded by Grissom, to consider a full proposal for this project in the regular fall 2013 fall funding round was adopted unanimously, 6-0.

### **Needham Street Open Space Plan (open space, recreation)**

James Freas and Amanda Stout summarized this pre-proposal. The City has been focusing on the redevelopment of Needham Street for several years. South Meadow Brook, which now runs in culverts under the street's buildings and parking lots, might be brought back to the surface to improve water quality and provide flood control, recreational spaces and wildlife habitat. Stout noted that this proposed project was consistent with the creation of the Upper Falls Greenway, already underway on the bed of the former Charles River Railroad, parallel to Needham Street. Stout explained that a planning class at MIT had done much of the basic research for the project.

Burg and Grissom felt that the pre-proposal as submitted did not explain clearly and concretely enough how CPA funds would be used or what its final products would be, making it hard for the CPC to know what they might be voting to consider through a full proposal. Feinberg felt that the clearly CPA-eligible work in the pre-proposal seemed almost like an afterthought in a project driven primarily by other factors and funding sources. Freas acknowledged the Law Department's conclusions that parts of the pre-proposal as submitted were simply not eligible for CPA funding, but stated that if the CPC agreed to consider a full proposal, that proposal would have a more detailed scope of work that clearly identified specific CPA-eligible tasks and costs. In response to Burg, Freas explained that the \$70,000 cost in the pre-proposal was based on his past experience with consultant studies.

Feinberg and Grissom both asked for a clearer explanation of what any future CPA-funded work would contribute to the overall redevelopment of Needham Street. Freas explained that the Needham Street Master Plan to be completed in the fall of 2013 will cover urban design, zoning, transportation improvements, and the corridor's natural environment. The proposed CPA project falls under that fourth heading. Freas acknowledged that the proposed project might produce mostly a set of principles for creating open space along Needham Street, but could also identify site-specific opportunities similar to the public pocket park included in the Avalon Bay apartment complex.

Grissom, Robertson, Green and Turner all asked for concrete evidence of both political and financial support for the project from the businesses and private landowners along Needham Street. As an example, Robertson cited private support from both sports leagues and abutting businesses for the Newton Highlands Playground pre-proposal presented by the Parks and Recreation Department at the June CPC meeting. Green thought that the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce was invested in improving and expanding open space along Needham Street. Robertson and Turner

suggested that an association of business owners, a business improvement district, or a Main Streets program specific to this particular street might be helpful.

Freas explained that the City has received a strong positive response from businesses along the street, including all the major property owners and many individual business owners, and has scheduled a breakfast meeting with the Chamber of Commerce. The maintenance of any public open spaces created would be critical, and something like a business improvement district could help with that. Stout explained that Newton's Economic Development Commission was also supporting the project. Freas also said the Planning Dept. would pursue other funding sources this fall, with or without submitting a full CPA proposal.

By sense of the meeting, the CPC requested submission of a revised, expanded pre-proposal that more clearly specifies the project's CPA-eligible costs and expected outcomes, which the CPC could use as a basis for deciding whether and when to consider a full proposal. Freas and Stout said they would decide whether to submit a revised pre-proposal for the CPC's September meeting after debriefing from tonight's meeting.

#### **City Hall – War Memorial Auditorium Accessibility & Acoustics** (historic resources)

This pre-proposal was summarized by Adam Gilmore and Miriam Tuchman. Tuchman and Linda Plaut explained that if the War Memorial Auditorium's acoustics and wheelchair accessibility could be improved, the space would be in almost continual demand for both the City and private groups. The current acoustics work well for choral groups but make it nearly impossible to understand speakers, both in presentations and at meetings.

Tuchman explained that City and federal (Community Development Block Grant) funds had paid for consultant studies for both access and acoustics. The acoustical study included general improvements, without which hearing aids would only amplify the room's "bath" of sound but would not make speakers understandable. Public Buildings is working with the City's Information Technology Department and NewTv on how to make the room work for Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids. Feinberg asked Ingerson to request an opinion from the Law Department on whether acoustical improvements that benefit the general public as well as those with hearing impairments would be CPA-eligible.

The recommended option for wheelchair access is a new elevator in the west lobby, along with other minor modifications to provide the shortest feasible path to that elevator from the circular drive with parking in front of the Auditorium. In response to Green, Tuchman and Gilmore noted that the current narrow ramp to the Auditorium from the Aldermanic Chamber falls far short of ADA and safety standards. In response to Robertson, Tuchman explained that the elevator would stop on the first and second floors. A geotechnical consultant is doing soil borings and monitoring wells to assess the feasibility of extending the elevator to the basement. This may be either impossible or very costly, since the site was originally a wetland and has a very high water table.

In response to Feinberg and Grissom, Tuchman said the Planning Department's preservation staff had reviewed the impact of these possible changes on the building's historic fabric. Ingerson noted that Newton's CPA ordinance used City Hall as an example to define the "primary spaces" that must be preserved when using CPA funds for work on City-owned historic buildings, and suggested that the Public Buildings Department look at that ordinance. Grissom thought that both the Newton Historical Commission and the Massachusetts Historical Commission would need to approve designs or plans for City Hall before construction began.

Grissom suggested that a full proposal reformat the summary budget to make it clearer how much in non-CPA “matching funds” had already been spent on planning and design. She also pointed out the requirement to include a 10-year operating budget in any full proposal.

Since this pre-proposal was originally prepared by the former Commissioner of Public Buildings, Burg suggested that current staff confirm the pre-proposal’s list of “community contacts” and perhaps widen that list. She noted that one person (Jay Walter) was listed as a community contact for three different and potentially competing current pre-proposals. Ingerson suggested Plaut’s expanded public programs in the War Memorial Auditorium as a source of additional community contacts.

In response to Grissom and Ingerson, Tuchman confirmed that this proposed project does not include repair or restoration of the Auditorium’s exterior stairs. Ingerson noted that the CPA-supported recommendations for those stairs had been completed in 2007 and would probably need to be updated for any future proposal. However, she thought improving the Auditorium’s usability might increase community support for restoring these stairs.

Burg and Grissom agreed that Newton needed more fully accessible public event spaces, and that this proposed project was appropriate for CPC consideration.

**VOTE** A motion by Grissom, seconded by Robertson, to consider a full proposal for this project in the regular fall 2013 fall funding round was adopted unanimously, 6-0.

### **City Hall – Historic Windows** (historic resources)

The CPC had requested an update on the status of this potential proposal. After discussing a pre-proposal in the summer of 2012, it had voted to consider a full proposal in the fall of 2012, with a preference for using CPA funds only to preserve and restore the building’s large arched windows. To date, no full proposal has been submitted.

Tuchman said the Public Buildings Department had re-started its assessment of City Hall’s windows in the fall of 2012. After the first contractor recommended replacing all the windows, the City had engaged a new architectural team that specialized in historic windows, and that had worked on the preservation of Trinity Church in Boston and other similar projects. By April 2013, after looking closely at all the windows in City Hall, this team recommended a series of “prototype projects” to test the cost and feasibility of preservation, restoration and replacement windows of different shapes, in different locations, and with different levels of deterioration. The design documents will be completed as if the project would include all the windows, but work will be bid only on a small number of “prototype” windows, including some of the arched “monumental” windows.

Tuchman thought that repairing, restoring or appropriately replacing all of the building’s historic windows might cost between \$1.5 and \$2 million. Gilmore thought any future proposal to the CPC would probably request phased funding over multiple years. In response to Grissom and Burg, Tuchman estimated the likely cost of preserving or restoring the arched “monumental” windows at about \$5-7,000 each, or about \$140,000 total.

The Committee then discussed the issue of matching funds. Robertson and Turner felt that all work on this building must meet historic preservation standards, so the work would be done in the same way whether with CPA funds or funds from other sources, such as general capital bonding. Grissom felt that the windows were an appropriate use of CPA funds. Green believed the CPA was probably the only available funding source for the project. Robertson and Grissom encouraged submission of a

funding request for the cost difference between minimally functional window repairs or replacements and meeting CPA-required standards for historic preservation.

VOTE Grissom moved, and Green seconded, a commitment to consider a full proposal for this project in the next regular annual funding round after the “prototype project” described by Tuchman has been completed. The motion was adopted unanimously, 6-0.

### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Beryl Gilfix introduced herself as Grissom’s pending successor, for the Mayor’s appointment representing historic resources and wards 3 or 4. She had been very impressed by the quality and professionalism of the CPC’s questions and discussion at tonight’s meeting.

Ingerson distributed a proposed meeting schedule for the remainder of 2013 and all of 2014, with regular meetings on second Thursdays but extra meetings on fourth Wednesdays in January and February, as needed to accommodate public hearings on the new full proposals. Feinberg felt that the Committee should not plan to hold public hearings for more than three proposals at any given meeting. After a brief discussion, the sense of the meeting was to keep the published schedule for 2013, reserving the option to cancel any of these meetings that were not needed, and to approve the proposed 2014 dates, for which Ingerson should try to find fully accessible meeting spaces.

Green proposed and Grissom seconded approval of the minutes for the 11 July 2013 meeting, with correction of one typographical error. The minutes were approved as corrected by a vote of 6-0.

After a motion by Robertson, seconded by Green, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.