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**Happy 10th Birthday, Newton CPA! Community Meeting for
West Newton, Auburndale & Newton Lower Falls (Wards 3 & 4)**

24 January 2012

The meeting was held on Tuesday 24 January 2012 at Warren House, 1600 Washington Street, West Newton.

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) members present: Leslie Burg, Joel Feinberg, Zack Blake, Michael Clarke, Nancy Grissom, Thomas Turner, Jim Robertson. Members absent: Wally Bernheimer, Dan Green. Also present: Alderman Leonard Gentile (for the entire meeting) and Alderman Amy Sangiolo (for the end of the meeting). Approximately 40 members of the public also attended.

Program manager Alice Ingerson served as recorder.

Committee Chair Leslie Burg opened the meeting at 7:05 pm.

PRESENTATION: Happy 10th Birthday, Newton CPA!
Focus on West Newton, Auburndale & Newton Lower Falls (Wards 3 & 4)

Chair Leslie Burg opened the meeting and explained the format: a PowerPoint presentation, followed by audience discussion/Q&A and an "open house" with refreshments and time to annotate the interactive exhibit. She asked everyone to record their attendance on one of the circulating signup sheets, and to consider filling in and submitting a survey, at the meeting or online.

Vice chair Joel Feinberg presented an overview of the Community Preservation Act: a short history of the state law & Newton's adoption of it; fundable resources & actions; the prohibition on using CPA funds for operating expenses, including maintenance; sources of local & state funding; the roles of the Community Preservation Committee and Newton's Board of Aldermen in the funding process; and the currently proposed amendment to the CPA, which would mandate that state funds match at least 75% of the revenue raised locally, and allow for the rehabilitation of recreation land not created or acquired with CPA funds in the first place.

Alice Ingerson then reviewed the work done by Newton's CPA program since fy2002, including sources of funds and the funding forecast for the next 5 years; the balance of yearly and cumulative appropriations among the fundable resources; and specific projects funded in Wards 3 and 4. Ingerson then presented a series of maps and graphs illustrating the idea that "community preservation is making choices about change," starting with historic photos showing how West Newton, Auburndale and Newton Lower Falls have changed since the mid- 19th century, but also

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including: the turnover of real estate around the City from before 1980 to the present, coded by decade; the growth of Newton's village centers and development in those parts of the City outside village centers; current housing values and needs; the distribution of both current buildings by their approximate date of construction and of recent demolition permits in the City; the loss or re-engineering of the City's historic wetlands and streams; the sub-watersheds that link Newton neighborhoods to each other and to the Charles River; and the present distribution of parks, playgrounds and conservation areas.

DISCUSSION

At approximately 7:35 pm, Burg invited audience questions and comments, with a special focus on funding priorities for this part of the City over the next 5-10 years. Speakers are identified here by both name and the title of any previous CPA-funded projects with which they were closely associated, whenever possible.

Jane Sender, President of the Newton Conservators and member of the Newton Conservation Commission, asked whether the CPC had ever considered building a funding reserve for future open space acquisitions. AnnaMaria Abernathy, also of the Newton Conservators, suggested setting aside a specific amount every year strictly for open space.

Burg explained that the CPC currently aimed to maintain a reserve of at least one year's worth of funds (about \$2 million), which could be used for any eligible resource. She noted that this goal would be easier to meet if the pending amendment to the CPA were passed, increasing the state match. She also reminded the audience that, although the proposed amendment would broaden allowable uses of CPA funds, the prohibition on using those funds for maintenance would remain.

Burg and Ingerson noted that the CPC was currently discussing long-term goals based on various citywide plans, some of which had been supported with CPA funds – including the Archives Survey, Archaeology Survey, the next *Recreation and Open Space Plan*, and the City Historic Buildings Survey.

Sender noted that the *Open Space Plan* would not identify the likely cost of any acquisitions. Ingerson thought that the CPC could fund appraisals of any parcels that seemed likely to become available in the near future that were also identified as high priorities in the *Plan*, but thought it was inadvisable to appraise private properties for possible public acquisition in a way that might appear random.

Feinberg explained that the creation of reserves irreversibly restricted to a particular resource, such as open space or housing, required a vote of the Board of Aldermen. Ingerson added that the CPC could set funds aside for a particular resource on its own, but that decision would be reversible.

Lynn Slobodin (Burr School Playground potential proposal) asked how soon Newton CPA funds could be available for refurbishing playgrounds, if that became an allowable use of CPA funds. She felt elementary school playgrounds were used by the entire community and need funding, especially in less wealthy neighborhoods that find it hard to raise private funds.

Ingerson and Burg explained that the next deadlines were July 2012 for pre-proposals and November 2012 for full proposals. Burg explained that pre-proposals provided an opportunity to get feedback from the CPC on potential proposals, but that the CPC would not accept pre-proposals for projects that were not currently eligible for CPA funds. Ingerson explained that the CPC currently holds a single annual funding round, because the amount of funding available is too small to split into two rounds. Feinberg noted that annual funding rounds allowed the CPC to weigh the relative merits and urgency of competing proposals, which would be difficult in a first-come, first-served system.

Ingerson also noted that proposals for City properties, such as school playgrounds, must now be prioritized and submitted via the City's new *Capital Improvements Plan*. Burg emphasized that the CPC was encouraging the City to request CPA funding for an annual "historic resources program," including all City projects for that year, rather than submit multiple proposals that would compete with each other. Slobodin predicted that buildings would probably be a higher priority than playgrounds on the CIP for some time to come. Ingerson agreed, but noted that the only City buildings eligible for CPA funds would be those considered historically significant, so parks and playgrounds might be prioritized on the list of CPA-eligible projects in the CIP sooner than later.

Bob Engler (SEB, Lexington Street housing project) felt that the CPC's current annual deadline, even with the option to request off-cycle consideration, and the length of the time required to approve funding both worked poorly for housing projects, which must respond quickly to market opportunities. He supported an annual deadline and long-term planning for other CPA-eligible resources, but advised the CPC to set a specific amount aside for housing each year, then accept housing proposals on a first-come, first-served basis.

Burg agreed that the lengthy funding process was a challenge for housing projects, though she felt that the CPC's part of the process often moved fairly quickly. Feinberg agreed that site-specific housing projects could not be planned far in advance, but thought the CPC could set long-term priorities for rental vs. ownership housing, or for dispersing affordable housing around the City.

Ingerson said the CPC was using these 10th anniversary meetings to solicit community feedback on the allocation of funds among eligible resources, and on how that allocation should change over time. For example, the next few years might see: fairly high annual contributions to an open space reserve, which could be reduced after that until the reserve was spent; or more funds dedicated to City historic resources until critical needs in the CIP had been addressed, followed by a shift of funding toward housing. Engler felt that this request for feedback would not be useful, because each interest group could argue that its resource should get the most funds, and there would never be enough funds to meet all the needs for any resource. The CPC should simply set the allocations itself.

Ingerson asked the audience how they felt about using CPA funds for City properties in general. In the past, some residents had questioned this use – did people still feel that way?

AnnaMaria Abernathy expressed her opposition to using CPA funds to make up for past neglect or deferred maintenance, either on City buildings or school playgrounds. Ingerson said the CPC and the City Law Dept. had concluded it was not possible to draw a hard-and-fast line between preservation and maintenance. However, second funding requests for a given site would be the acid test: since the CPA requires each CPC to keep good records of past funding, the CPC could decline any second request for a site where the value created by a prior CPA grant had not been adequately maintained. For City-owned sites, in parallel with the new capital plan, the City was trying to restore maintenance funding in the operating budget, after many years of listing maintenance mostly in the capital budget, and systematically underfunding it. Nancy Grissom noted that the private Durant-Kenrick Homestead project had created an endowment for maintenance.

OPEN HOUSE At approximately 8:10 pm, Burg thanked the audience for coming and invited everyone to adjourn for refreshments and continuing conversation.

MEETING MATERIALS Presentation materials from this meeting are online from www.newtonma.gov/cpa.