



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)

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**Community Preservation Committee**

**SELECTED MINUTES**

10 October 2013

Candace Havens  
Director

The meeting was held on Thursday 10 October 2013 at 7:15 pm in the Principal's Conference Room at Newton North High School, 457 Walnut Street, Newtonville.

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) members present: chair Joel Feinberg, vice chair Jim Robertson, Leslie Burg, Beryl Gilfix, Thomas Turner, Dan Green, and Don Fishman. Member Mike Clarke was absent.

Also attending from the History and Social Sciences Department at Newton North were faculty member William Joiner and chair Jonathan Bassett.

Staff program manager Alice Ingerson served as recorder.

**Site Visit**

The group began with a site visit to the location where the main panel of the WPA mural will be displayed if it is restored, in the corridor outside the cafeteria known as "Main Street." This panel portrays Newton residents and students in the 1930s. "Main Street" already displays a mural portraying Newton North High School in the 1990s, completed in 2000 by Elli Crocker and intended as a companion piece for the 1930s mural. The school also hopes to display the restored side panels of the 1930s mural, which portray factory and dock workers, near the current career and vocational education classrooms. ...

**PRE-PROPOSALS**

**WPA Murals (Newton North High School)**

During the site visit and the first part of the meeting, William Joiner and Jonathan Bassett summarized the proposed project, to restore a large, three-part mural painted by Maurice Compris under the auspices of the federal Works Progress Administration in the late 1930s for the library of the original Newton High School, on the site of the current Newton North High School. The central part of the mural represented Newton as a community, particularly its schools, and the two wings represented steel mill and dock workers. The mural was dedicated Stafford Leighton Brown, Newton High School class of 1915, who volunteered in World War I prior to America's entry into that war, but died in an aviation training accident before seeing active service. His mother, Mrs. Eugenie Stafford Brown, also set aside a scholarship fund of \$50,000 to be awarded "on the basis of character, leadership, scholarship, and need to boys who are graduates of Newton High School."

When a new Newton North High School was built in the 1970s, the mural's main panel was installed in the cafeteria, where it was protected by a large plexiglass panel attached directly through the canvas to the frame. The two side panels were never displayed at the 1970s school. All three panels, currently stored at Newton South High School, require significant restoration as well as remounting.

Art conservators have advised leaving the panels rolled until they can be laid flat for the actual restoration. The cost estimates in the pre-proposal were therefore based primarily on information

provided by the company that removed the main panel from the 1970s school and put it into storage. These estimates also excluded the cost of a climate-controlled workspace large enough for the restoration.

Joel Feinberg, Jim Robertson and Leslie Burg asked the presenters to clarify the project timeline and how CPA funds would actually be used. Joiner thought the work would take 10-12 weeks to complete, once the murals were unrolled. The main use of CPA funds would be to employ a professional art conservator and restorer. The school's carpentry program will build the new frames and duplicate the carved caption that hung under the mural when it was originally installed.

Robertson applauded the school's faculty for taking on this project but wondered who would be the actual project manager. Feinberg, Burg and Ingerson felt the faculty did not have enough time available to write the scope of work for public bidding, or to hire and oversee the professional conservator. Bassett agreed. Ingerson suggested including the cost of a project manager with these skills in the project budget.

For a workspace, Bassett and Joiner said school staff had considered various options, looking for spaces where the public could watch the restoration process, but had not identified a space that could be used at no cost. Joiner noted that the project's timeline was too long to use any school space during the summer vacation. Robertson suggested adding the cost of an appropriate workspace to the full proposal.

Burg asked that the community needs section of the proposal form, citing needs identified in previously published Newton plans, be completed more fully than in the pre-proposal. Ingerson offered to help with this.

In reviewing the list of required attachments for a full proposal, Ingerson noted that to be eligible for CPA funding, the project needed the Newton Historical Commission to declare the mural significant to Newton's local history. A more detailed summary of Joiner's background historical research than had been included in the pre-proposal would be helpful for this.

Robertson also noted that the CPC looks for at least some community fundraising in all projects. In this case that leverage could include in-kind contributions, such as the carpentry program's work. Dan Green and Joel Feinberg suggested asking the PTO for support. Green and Ingerson thought Newton parents might help to find an appropriate workspace that could be contributed, through connections to the Museum of Fine Arts or a private restoration. Gilfix suggested asking Newton artists to donate work for sale to support the project. Turner suggested looking to alumni for support. Bassett thought support might also come from a graduating class gift contribution.

Green noted that more people, and especially young people, were likely to see this project's results than those of most CPA-supported projects in Newton. Gilfix suggested involving students in interpreting the murals and educating the public about the WPA more broadly.

Feinberg and Ingerson suggested that getting these different constituencies involved in the project would not only demonstrate current support, but would also help to ensure that the mural would be maintained in the future, since CPA funds could not be requested for this.

**VOTE** After a motion by Dan Green, seconded by Leslie Burg, the committee voted 7-0 to consider a full proposal for this project if one is submitted in the fall 2014 funding round. ...

... The meeting was adjourned by committee consensus at 8:50 pm.