

City of Newton



David B. Cohen  
Mayor

## NEWTON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

FRAN L. TOWLE - COMMISSIONER

70 Crescent Street, Auburndale, MA 02466

Office: 796-1500 Forestry and Maintenance: 796-1530 Fax: 796-1512



October 29, 2002

Community Preservation Act Committee  
Newton City Hall  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Community Preservation Act Committee:

In reference to the Jackson Homestead Museum and the Newton Historical Society's application to the Community Preservation Act, I, as Commissioner of the Parks & Recreation Department, whole heartily approve of their project to restore and to make publicly accessible its three historic burying grounds. The three historic burying grounds consist of the East Parish Burying Grounds, West Parish Burying Grounds and the South Burying Grounds.

Due to a limited budget and resources, the Parks & Recreation Department would do the best it can with our current maintenance program. Anything in addition to our current maintenance program should result in additional funding and resources as well as continued volunteer commitment.

I wish the Jackson Homestead Museum and the Newton Historical Society success in their pursuit for funding from the Community Preservation Act for this worthwhile project.

Sincerely,

Fran Towle  
Commissioner

Cc: David Olson, Director, Jackson Homestead

COMMISSION  
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WARD 2 - JAMES MAHONEY, CHAIRMAN  
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ALTERNATES: MICHAEL CLARKE, PETER KASTNER, JACK NEVILLE, JOHN BOURGEOIS



# CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Department of Planning and Development

Michael J. Kruse, Director

Telephone  
(617)-796-1120  
Telefax  
(617) 796-1142

David B. Cohen  
Mayor

October 24, 2002

Community Preservation Committee  
c/o Planning and Development Department  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

RE: Implementation of the Burying Grounds Master Plan

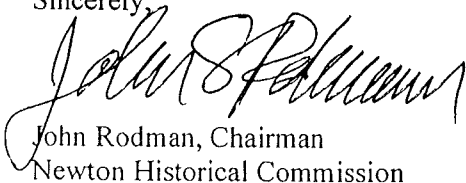
Dear Community Preservation Committee Members:

The Newton Historical Commission would like to express its enthusiastic support for the Newton Historical Society's application for funding to implement the Master Plan for Newton's Burying Grounds. These valuable landscapes are some of the City's most unique and important historic resources and are tangible links to the City's development and history over the last 300 years. Unfortunately, as significant as these sites are to Newton's history, all three are suffering from the effects of age, air pollution, and deferred maintenance. The Newton Historical Commission has long been concerned about the condition of these sites, and is eager to see the damage reversed before important resources are forever lost.

Newton's early burying grounds were developed in concert with the growing community. East Parish Burying Ground, established in 1660, was Newton's first cemetery and contains the graves of many of the City's founding families. In 1983, it was added to the National Register of Historic Places, making it one of the first cemeteries in Massachusetts to receive this honor. West Parish Burying Ground, established in 1778, speaks both to the growth pattern of the City over time and its development through the nineteenth century. South Burying Ground, Newton's first non-sectarian cemetery, was founded by local residents in 1802 and is a key historical reference in understanding the expansion and development of the City's first village and early industrial center. Both West Parish and South Burying Grounds are eligible for listing on the National Register and work is currently underway to complete nominations for both sites.

In short, Newton's early burying grounds are community resources which Newton cannot afford to lose. Their preservation and restoration is important not only to the understanding of the City's history, but also to insure that future generations have an opportunity to enjoy and experience them as well. With this in mind, the Newton Historical Commission reiterates their support for this project and hopes that you will look favorably upon this grant application.

Sincerely,



John Rodman, Chairman  
Newton Historical Commission

Newton Historical Commission  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02459  
Email: lkritzer@ci.newton.ma.us  
www.ci.newton.ma.us

# Citizens for Wellington Park

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October 28, 2002

City of Newton  
Community Preservation Act Committee  
Newton, MA

Dear Members of the CPA Committee,

We fully support the efforts of the Newton Historical Society and the Jackson Homestead Museum in their application for a CPA grant to be used for preservation, restoration, and transformation of the city's historic burying grounds, including the West Parish Burying Ground. We have reviewed the master plan for the burying grounds (for landscape, structural, and stone conservation work) and the five year budget for the proposed work and are pleased with the proposal of work.

The West Parish Burying Ground has been one of the most visible locations in our neighborhood, located at a key intersection of River and Cherry Streets in West Newton. Yet, ironically it is also one of the most invisible locations due to decades of inattention. True enough, the grass is mowed and the fence is mostly intact. However, if you asked most local residents about the graveyard, they most likely would be quite puzzled. The names or backgrounds of those buried there are a mystery to most; in its current state it barely impinges on their consciousness. There is no sign indicating its name or historical significance. The grounds are surrounded by an old period wire fence with some sections replaced inharmoniously with chain link fence. The gate, also of chain link, is, except for mowing or a few ceremonial occasions, padlocked shut. It is a site that, currently, is virtually dead.

*Citizens for Wellington Park* is a local community organization in West Newton in the immediate neighborhood of the West Parish Burying Ground. We have been in existence for approximately four years and were specifically formed to promote the betterment of Wellington Park, a small neighborhood playground park only a block from the West Parish Burying Ground. We were founded in the belief that our park could be a focal point for building a spirit of community and cooperation in our neighborhood and beyond. We maintain a website [www.wellingtonpark.org](http://www.wellingtonpark.org) and circulate a newsletter which reaches many neighborhood households. Our organization encourages its members to be aware of other open space treasures in our immediate vicinity, among them the West Parish Burying Ground.

In order to help bring attention to the West Parish Burying Ground, we plan to disseminate articles about the West Parish Burying Ground in our newsletter, promote historical tours of the site in cooperation with the Jackson Homestead and Newton Historical Society, enlist volunteers for cleanup, and possibly help with other events there in conjunction with holidays such as Memorial Day.

With this proposal under the Community Preservation Act, West Parish Burying Ground, as well as the other two sites, can be revitalized and once again become an important component of the living neighborhood community. We urge the CPA Committee to look favorably on this proposal which revitalizes open space and at the same time provides an important link for citizens to Newton's earliest history.

Sincerely

*Theodore T. Kuklinski*

Theodore Kuklinski, Coordinator  
*Citizens for Wellington Park*

**Mail:** 24 Henshaw Terrace, West Newton, MA 02465  
**Phone:** (617) 969-6222

**Email:** [WellingtonPark@aol.com](mailto:WellingtonPark@aol.com)  
**Website:** [www.wellingtonpark.org](http://www.wellingtonpark.org)

# Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council

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20 Hartford Street, Newton, Massachusetts 02461

November 1, 2002

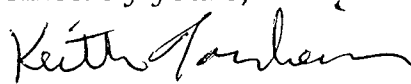
Community Preservation Committee  
c/o Newton Planning and Development Department  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Sirs:

This letter is in support of the application of the Newton Historical Society for funds for needed repairs at the three historic parish burial grounds. It is my understanding that this initial request is for work originally marked urgent in the 1989-90 master plan. This includes tree work (e.g., removing dead trees that pose a hazard to visitors and could damage the tombstones), stone conservation to preserve the historic stones, and repair of structural damage to tombs that currently also poses a hazard to visitors. Ultimately the goal of this project is both to preserve these historic areas and to give greater access to the public. This includes access for the physically handicapped. The latter is perhaps especially relevant to Newton Highlands, in view of the handicapped housing in the former Hyde School that is only about half a dozen blocks from the South Parish Burial Ground on Winchester Street.

This project easily fulfills two of the three objectives of the community preservation funds: historic preservation and preservation of open space. At a time when our modern lives are so hectic, these historic burial grounds could provide important islands of brief refuge for the residents of Newton. There is the link to the past that helps ground us—I remember the excitement of my children looking at such old tombstones and thinking about the lives of the people recorded on them. These tombstones are historic documents, but placed outside. And there is the pause for quiet contemplation and reflection that often comes from visiting such a place. The South Parish Burial Ground sits between the business areas of Newton Highlands and those of Needham Street. A new residential complex for hundreds of people is currently under construction a short distance down Needham Street. The burial ground could thus become important public open space if the repairs and improvements are made to allow safety and access. The East and West Parish Burial Grounds should be similar resources in the north of the city.

Sincerely yours,



Keith Tornheim  
Co-president, NHNAC



*The Newton Highlands  
Congregational Church*

54 Lincoln Street • Newton Highlands, MA 02461-1547  
(617) 527-3898 • (617) 244-0675



The Reverend Kenneth Baily  
Pastor

October 30, 2002

Newton Historical Commission  
Newton, Massachusetts

Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure to learn that the Newton Historical Commission is planning to restore three historic cemeteries in our city. It seems appropriate, furthermore, that Community Preservation Act funds be awarded for this worth purpose. This letter is to support that effort.

The South Burying Ground, also known as the "Evergreen" Burying Ground (not far distant from the Newton Highlands Congregational Church) is naturally of special interest to the ministry and members of this parish. Our parish was founded in 1872 by which time the cemetery, established in 1803, had long been in use. Since we became aware of this plan to restore the cemeteries only a short time ago, it has not been possible to search church records to identify the names of former parishioners who are buried there. It stands to reason, however, that members and friends of our church have found their final resting-place in this plot of land on the edge of Winchester Street. Therefore we support its preservation.

In addition to bringing attention to its historic importance, the proposed renovation of the South Burying Ground with a new fence and forestry improvements would create an oasis of quiet for our Newton Highlands community. We hope that you will look upon this project with favor, and will be happy to answer any questions that we can.

Very truly yours,

The Rev. Kenneth Baily

JOSEPH DYER

73 WADE STREET  
NEWTON HIGHLANDS, MA 02461-1714  
617-527-6403  
JOSEPH.DYER@UMB.EDU

October 31, 2002

Community Preservation Committee  
c/o Newton Planning and Development Department  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Members of the Committee:

I learned from a chance conversation that the Newton Historical Commission is planning to apply for Community Preservation Act funds to rehabilitate three historic cemeteries in Newton. I voted for the establishment this fund, and it seems to me that this project represents a very suitable use of the money.

My first twenty-one years were spent in Philadelphia, where I lived only a half block from a cemetery established by a sea captain (we were only a few blocks from the Delaware River) in 1732. During the forties and fifties the property was entirely neglected—graves (many of them Civil War veterans) were overgrown, and the cast-iron fence around the cemetery was gradually destroyed by the old trees that fell during storms. Fortunately, this was an age before random vandalism, so the Palmer Cemetery did not have to suffer this indignity. I learned that local residents and the city finally took the initiative to turn this situation around in the seventies.

The South Burying Ground (a name recently learned, even though we have lived in Newton Highlands since 1975) on Winchester Street bears all the marks of similar neglect, save for the fact that the grass is cut. There are many dead trees, and chain-link fence has begun to rust. The rock-wall foundation on which it rests is in bad shape. Now is surely the time to address the most serious preservation issues at this cemetery and the others. Do we not also have a moral responsibility to rescue from so shabby a state the burial place of Newton residents who have preceded us?

In addition to bringing attention to its historic importance, the proposed renovation of the South Burying Ground with a new fence and forestry improvements would create a place of quiet for our Newton Highlands community. If a proper gate were provided, I am sure that the cemetery would be visited not only for its historical significance, but also as a site of natural beauty adjacent to a frantic traffic thoroughfare. I belong to a group of Newton Highlands residents presently organizing a "Friends of the Newton Highlands Playground," and I am certain they would support this initiative.

Very truly yours,

