

City of Newton



David B. Cohen
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Community Preservation Committee

MEMORANDUM
REVISED 4/7/03

TO: The Honorable Board of Aldermen
FROM: Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
DATE: 19 February 2003
RE: **CPC Recommendation for CPA Funding**

PROJECT TITLE: RESTORATION OF NEWTON'S HISTORIC BURYING GROUNDS

CPA CATEGORY: Historic Preservation, Recreation, & Open Space

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicants, The Jackson Homestead Museum and Newton Historical Society, request \$188,277 for phase one of a three-phase restoration of three historic burying grounds: East Parish, West Parish, and South burying grounds. The primary intent of phase one is to stabilize the burying grounds to make them safe for future work and includes: 1. Removal of trees and other vegetation that obscure gravestones, make areas impassable, and are causing damage to historic gravestones; 2. Removal of dead trees; 3. Repair and clean the most at-risk gravestones; and 4. Repairing eroded grades at entrance and perimeter of East Parish Burying Ground.

FINDINGS

Community Preservation Act

This proposal meets the criteria established under MGL c.44B for the following reasons:

1. The East Parish Burying Ground is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the West Parish and South burying grounds are eligible for listing on the National Register. Therefore all three sites comply with the definition for historic resources which requires listing on or eligibility for the State Register or a local determination of significance (National Register determinations automatically translate to the same State Register determination).
2. The burying grounds also comply with the definitions for recreational use, which includes passive recreational use, as well as the definition of open space, which includes land for recreational use.
3. In accordance with §5(b)(2), the project will preserve and restore historic resources, and preserve open space and land for recreational use.
4. Since the proposal does not include any acquisition of real property or real property interest, no permanent deed restrictions are required.

Newton Community Preservation Plan***Overarching Goals***

1. Contribute to the preservation of Newton's unique character, boost the vitality of the community and enhance the quality of life for its residents.	Yes
2. Serve more than one CPA category.	Yes
3. Demonstrate the highest cost/benefit value relative to other proposals.	See below
4. Leverage other public and/or private funds.	Yes, see below
5. Preserve a resource or opportunity that would otherwise be lost.	Yes, see below
6. Create incentives for other private projects to occur.	No
7. Show that a project is the most reasonable available option to achieve the objective.	Yes, see below
8. Demonstrate strong community support.	Yes, see below
9. Serve to equitably distribute CPA funds throughout the City.	See below

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal #3: Projects received during this funding round include a high CPA cost of \$850,000 and a low CPA cost of \$24,780. This CPA cost for this project is \$188,277. The relative benefit for this project is the preservation and restoration of three important historic resources for continued enjoyment and use.

Goal #4: The applicant is proposing to apply for matching funds from the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (administered by MHC) and may also apply for funds from Massachusetts Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program (administered by DEM).

Goal #5: The burying grounds are clearly at risk of being lost as a result of centuries of deterioration and decades of inadequate resources for restoration.

Goal #7: Since the burying grounds are City-owned and the restoration needs go far beyond maintenance, it is reasonable and necessary to undertake a multi-phased restoration project to preserve the sites for public use, enjoyment, and education.

Goal #8: The project has strong community support as detailed and documented in the application. No opposition has been voiced.

Goal #9: As presented at a recent CPC meeting, this round of applications is geographically distributed throughout the City; the three burying grounds are located in West Newton, Newton Upper Falls, and Newton Corner.

Historic Preservation Goals

1. Support the preservation and restoration of privately-owned properties that are on the National or State Historic Registers, or that have been landmarked or found to be "preferably preserved" by the Newton Historical Commission.	No
2. Support the preservation and/or restoration of municipally-owned resources that are on the National or State Historic Registers, or that have been landmarked or found to be "preferably preserved" by the Newton Historical Commission.	Yes
3. Encourage protection of resources that retain their historic integrity, in terms of location, context, design, style, workmanship, and materials.	Yes

4. Enable access to the resource by the public.	Yes
5. Support the objectives and priorities of local historic preservation organizations, such as the Newton Historical Society, the Jackson Homestead, local historic districts, and other such organizations within the City of Newton.	Yes

In addition, using CPA funds for the restoration of local burying grounds was specifically mentioned in the “Possibilities” section of the Historic Preservation chapter of the Plan.

Recreation Goals

Since this project primarily relates to the open space goals in terms of its relation to recreation, this evaluation will only include the specific recreation goals identified in the Plan as follows:

1. Address the needs targeted in the <i>Recreation and Open Space Plan</i> and take advantage of other opportunities to meet the recreation needs of the residents of the City.	Yes, see below
2. Meet the recreation needs of the greatest number of residents possible.	Yes, see below
3. Meet the greatest variety of recreation needs possible.	No
4. Serve passive as well as active uses. Finding ways to balance the range of recreational opportunities and serve the diverse recreation needs of the community is a priority of the CPC.	Yes
5. Preserve sight lines consistent with open space. . . . Decisions about scale and placement should be made with the objective of enhancing or enabling open views.	NA
6. Access for disabled residents should be included in plans wherever possible.	Yes, see below

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal #1: Although the restoration of these specific sites is not discussed in the *Recreation and Open Space Plan*, the Plan identifies the general importance of creating facilities for passive use recreation, which, as stated in the Plan, has been secondary to that for active facilities until recently.

Goal #2: Since this proposal includes three separate burying grounds (located in West Newton, Newton Upper Falls, and Newton Corner), the proposal will improve the passive recreation resources available to residents in those various areas, thus serving a greater number of residents by virtue of location.

Goal #6: Although the proposal does not include specific improvements targeted to comply with the needs of disabled citizens, the removal of trees and other vegetation that are currently making sections of the burying ground impassable will improve safe passage.

CPC RECOMMENDATION

The proposal is consistent with the CPA criteria and many of the Plan's goals, as described above. However, since the severe deterioration of the burying grounds is, in part, due to lack of maintenance resources, the Community Preservation Committee is concerned that ongoing maintenance may not be funded appropriately in the future to maintain the proposed restoration work. Despite these concerns, the Community Preservation Committee, in a 7-0 vote, recommends funding this application for the phase one restoration of Newton's Historic Burying Grounds by appropriating and transferring the requested \$188,277 to be expended under the direction and control of the Director of Parks and Recreation in consultation with the Executive Director of the Jackson Homestead for purposes of funding costs for phase one (years 1 and 2) of the *Master Plan for Newton's Historic Burying Grounds* as detailed in Attachment C of the application (dated 1 November 2002), subject to the following conditions:

1. Phase one restoration work shall commence no later than 31 December 2004 and shall be completed no later than 31 December 2006 or such other date(s) as may be approved in writing by the Director of Planning and Development. In the event of failure to meet the project start or completion dates as stated herein or as approved by the Director of Planning and Development, any remaining funds in the project account shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.
2. Prior to consideration of funding requests for future phases of this work, a definitive maintenance plan shall be in place that identifies the nature of the maintenance work needed, a schedule for that work, and funding sources.
3. Any portion of the grant not used for the purposes stated herein shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.