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## Community Preservation Committee Funding Recommendation for CITY ARCHIVES STRATEGIC PLAN

date: 23 February 2015  
from: Community Preservation Committee  
to: The Honorable Board of Aldermen

### PROJECT GOALS & ELIGIBILITY

Building on the 2011 project, supported with CPA funds, that produced *The City of Newton: A Survey and Inventory of its Historical Records*, the proposed *City Archives Strategic Plan* will evaluate and prioritize Newton's options for meeting both its legal and cultural obligations to preserve its irreplaceable historical records and make these records accessible to future residents, researchers and City staff.

Two factors have created an urgent need for an interdepartmental, strategic approach to the City's archives. First, the 2011 *Survey* concluded that some records held by separate City departments were at risk of loss, due to minimal climate control or fire suppression in their current, scattered locations. Second, as of winter 2015, planning has begun for new projects that may reconfigure or reduce some space currently used for archives at City Hall, as well as the space specifically designed for archives on the first floor of the Newton Free Library.

The CPA eligibility of Newton's archives was established for multiple previous projects, listed under [City Archives](#) from the [Proposals & Projects](#) page of the program website, [www.newtonma.gov/cpa](http://www.newtonma.gov/cpa).

### RECOMMENDED FUNDING

On 12 February 2015 by a vote of 7-0 (member Don Fishman absent, no current Planning & Development Board appointee) the Community Preservation Committee recommended appropriating \$20,000 for this project from the Community Preservation Fund's historic resources fund balance and reserves, and if needed from its general fund balance, to the control of the City Clerk, for the purposes summarized in this budget:

<b>City Archives Strategic Plan - Project Budget</b>			
<b>Uses</b>		<b>Sources</b>	
Consultant	\$20,000	Community Preservation Act funds	\$20,000
Archivist @ 20 hours	\$700	City FY15 Operating Budget (for City staff time)	\$3,780
5 Member Planning Team @ 8 hours each	\$2,360		
9 Staff responsible for departmental archives @ 2 hours each	\$720		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$23,780</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$23,780</b>

website [www.newtonma.gov/cpa](http://www.newtonma.gov/cpa)

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## **SPECIAL ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE CPC**

**Interdepartmental collaboration & support:** This project is spearheaded by City Clerk David Olson and part-time City Archivist Nancy Kougeas (hired partly in response to the 2011 *Survey and Inventory*). However, its success depends critically on the collaboration of all City departments. Based on the relatively few letters of interdepartmental support that accompanied the proposal when it was first submitted in 2013-14, the CPC was initially concerned that eliciting this collaboration might be a challenge. Since then, however, Kougeas's work has drawn the attention of many City departments both to the value of their historical records and to practical options for managing those records, by using scarce City space more efficiently than in the past. The planned new projects for City Hall and the Newton Free Library have reinforced this new attention to archives.

**Digital & physical preservation:** Digitization cannot eliminate the need for archival storage facilities with adequate climate control and fire suppression. However, as David Olson noted to the CPC and as demonstrated by Newton's past CPA-funded archival projects, digitization can help to preserve original records by reducing the need to handle the originals physically. The CPC therefore hopes the *City Archives Strategic Plan* will evaluate options that combine digitization with physical preservation and facilities improvements.

**Facilities:** David Olson and Nancy Kougeas have explained that Newton needed special state authorization to move some of its historical records to the purpose-built vault and compact shelving in the new main library, when that building was constructed across the street from City Hall; and that the state is unlikely to authorize housing any of Newton's physical archives at a location other than either City Hall or the library. However, the CPC hopes the *Strategic Plan* will explore whether, if Newton made digital versions of some records widely accessible, the state might allow the originals to be stored in less central locations, as well as the option of converting for archives storage any surplus or underused City buildings not located on Homer Street.

## **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS** (*funding conditions*)

1. The *City Archives Strategic Plan* should be completed within 1 year of the date when CPA funds are appropriated by the Board of Aldermen, or by any extension of that deadline granted in writing by the CPC or its designee.
2. The City Clerk and City Archivist should provide to the CPC and Board of Aldermen project updates upon request; present and summarize the completed *Strategic Plan* at a public meeting of the CPC, along with a brief written comparison between the project's actual and budgeted expenditures.
3. Any CPA funds appropriated but not used for the purposes stated herein will be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.

## **KEY OUTCOMES**

The Community Preservation Committee will evaluate this project based on these key outcomes:

- Completion of the *City Archives Strategic Plan* within the original proposal budget and by the original deadlines above.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

(delivered to the clerks of the Programs & Services Committee and Finance Committee)

- Copy of CPC "City Archives" project webpage, with links to additional information:  
[www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/cpa/projects/cityarchives.asp#Strategic](http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/cpa/projects/cityarchives.asp#Strategic)
- February 2015 slide presentation to the CPC (February 2014 slide presentation for CPC public hearing is available on project webpage above)
- Original 2013 proposal and supporting attachments, including letters of support