



**City of Newton, Massachusetts  
Community Preservation Committee**



David B. Cohen  
Mayor

**MEMORANDUM**

*DATE:* 14 April 2008

*TO:* The Honorable Board of Aldermen

*FROM:* Community Preservation Committee

*RE:* **recommended Community Preservation funding for  
CITY ARCHIVES Preservation & Rehabilitation, Phase 2**

**1. PROJECT GOALS & ELIGIBILITY**

The Community Preservation Act explicitly includes documents in defining the preservation of historic resources as an allowable use of CP funds. Phase 2 of this project will complete the preservation of archival material held in the vaults of the City Clerk and City Engineer. The City Archives hold documents dating back to 1679 and contain a wealth of historical information about Newton and its people. By law, this information must be accessible to City employees, Newton residents, and the public interested in genealogy or history. For years, these archives have been at risk due to overuse and poor climate, moisture, and fire controls; and have been largely inaccessible to the public. This project corrects these conditions through improved:

- ◆ Storage facilities for vital records- births, deaths, and marriages and records relating to City government functions including oaths of office, ordinances, depositions, and Aldermanic committee agendas and reports
- ◆ Fireproof housing and additional shelving for materials in active use by the Board of Aldermen
- ◆ Preservation of records that are in danger of being lost due to overuse or neglect
- ◆ A digital repository for improved access to the City's historical records
- ◆ Compliance with MGL c.66 § 9 requiring communities to properly bound their public record books

The City Clerk/Clerk of the Board of Aldermen cares for and maintains these archival collections

**2. FUNDING RECOMMENDATION**

On 27 March 2008 the Community Preservation Committee recommended funding this proposal by a vote of 8 in favor, 0 opposed.

The Committee recommends that the sum of **\$77,076** be appropriated from the fiscal 2008 general reserve of the Community Preservation Fund as follows:

<i>Phase 1, funded in FY07</i>		<b>Phase 2, requested &amp; recommended in FY08</b>	
Document conservation/preservation	\$35,200	Document conservation/preservation	\$44,800
Compact/mobile shelving	\$32,000	Fireproof cabinets	\$14,360
		Document Scanning	\$10,000
10% contingency	\$6,720	10% contingency	\$6,916
Legal costs	\$850	Legal costs	\$1,000
<b>Total FY07</b>	<b>\$74,770</b>	<b>Total FY08</b>	<b>\$77,076</b>

This appropriation should be allocated as follows among the allowable uses of community preservation funds:

historic resources      100%

*UNSPENT FUNDS:* Phase 1 was completed on time and under budget. The City Clerk anticipates returning over \$12,000 of unspent Phase 1 funds to the Community Preservation Fund by 1 May 2008.

### 3. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Community Preservation Committee further recommends that:

1. Funds for this project be appropriated for spending under the direction and control of David Olson, City Clerk, as head of a City of Newton department.
2. The project begin no later than 1 October 2008, and be completed no later than 1 July 2009, or any later deadlines approved in writing by the Director of Planning and Development.
3. As for all community preservation projects, the City Clerk provide regular written and/or oral reports on the project's progress as requested by community preservation program staff, and a final report of of all project costs and work completed.
4. Any portion of the Community Preservation Fund grant not used for the purposes stated herein shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.

### 4. ATTACHMENTS

(delivered to the clerks of the Committee on Community Preservation and Finance Committee)

- ◆ Appendix: *DETAILED FINDINGS on FUNDING ELIGIBILITY & PRIORITIES*
- ◆ Proposal (*new fy08 cover page for phase 2 plus first 8 pp. of original fy07 proposal for phases 1-2*)
- ◆ Letters of support from: Newton Historical Commission, Veterans Office of the City of Newton, Newton Free Library, Priscilla Leith (*rec'd fall 2006 for both phases of the project*)
- ◆ Supportive comments from the League of Women Voters (*recd January 2008 for phase 2 of the project*)

***Appendix:***

**DETAILED FINDINGS on FUNDING ELIGIBILITY & PRIORITIES**

**Community Preservation Act** (MGL c.44B)

Historic resources are one of the three reserved purposes for community preservation funding. The Community Preservation Act's definition of historic resources explicitly includes any "document or artifact that has been determined to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture or culture of a city or town."

The CPA also allows for funding the "rehabilitation" of historic resources, as well as all other CP-eligible resources under certain conditions. However, the Act also requires that such work "comply with .. the *United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*," which define "rehabilitation" as making "possible an efficient contemporary use ... while preserving those portions and features of [a] property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values." The *Standards* identify the first two steps in rehabilitating a historic resource as:

1. historical research, inventory and documentation
2. analysis and evaluation of historic integrity and significance

This research, analysis, and evaluation all rely heavily on the preservation of archival records.

**Newton Plans & Priorities**

This project addresses the following goals previously identified in Newton's citywide plans:

***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.
3. Demonstrate the highest cost/benefit value relative to other proposals.
5. Preserve a resource or opportunity that would otherwise be lost.
7. Demonstrate strong community support.
8. Equitably distribute CPA funds throughout the City.

**Historic Resources Goals**

1. Support the preservation and/or restoration of municipally owned resources that are found to be historically significant by the Newton Historical Commission.
4. Enable access to the resource by the public, including access by disabled residents.
5. Support the objectives and priorities of local historic preservation organizations, such as the Newton Historical Society [and] the Newton History Museum ...

***COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: PLANNING FOR & WITH HISTORY***

***Vision***

- ◆ The City uses historical images and examples in presentations and meetings about all planning and development issues ...
- ◆ Planners, architects, contractors, and property owners use [historic] documents, maps, and photographs [to] inform their conversations with neighbors about new projects. ...
- ◆ Educators teaching in the Newton Public Schools, community service learning, afterschool programs, and summer camps use local historical resources and sites ...

***Strategies***

- ◆ Put community education first, instead of last. ...

***Actions***

- ◆ Initiate neighborhood-level implementation of this *Comprehensive Plan* through history presentations/discussions that cover all the issues and goals covered in the *Plan* ...
- ◆ ... invest more resources in education and incentives that can make regulatory decisions more predictable or transparent, and less controversial.

- ◆ Develop new tools and training to encourage the broader use of historical information by all City staff, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations involved in planning and development.
- ◆ Support more systematic use of local historic sites and resources in Newton Public Schools.

**DISCUSSION**

The City Archives contain tens of thousands of documents and maps. Many of these materials are themselves significant in the “history, archeology, architecture or culture” of Newton. All of these materials document the individuals, organizations, buildings, and landscapes that have shaped Newton’s history and defined its character as a community. Preserving the archives held at City Hall, and making those archives more accessible for research, will therefore provide critical support for all future CP proposals for historic resources.

“Historic resources” is a broad category in Newton, partly because Newton’s Community Preservation Committee has explicitly encouraged projects that combine two or more of the resources fundable under the Community Preservation Act (see table below). Newton’s CPC has recommended, and its Board of Aldermen has funded, historic resources funding for many projects that have also provided community benefits as housing, open space, or recreation land.

In addition, many of Newton’s housing, open space, and recreation resources may and probably should be treated as historic resources. Newton’s basic community character, development patterns, and distribution of resources were all strongly shaped by its history long before the passage of the Community Preservation Act in 2000, or its local adoption by the voters of Newton in 2002. As a result, Newton does not have large areas of previously undeveloped land that can be acquired and set aside to protect wildlife habitats or watersheds, or developed for the first time to create new community housing or recreation facilities. More often, preserving Newton’s community character and its diversity of housing, open space, or recreational opportunities requires rehabilitating sites with a long history of previous use and development. For example, many of Newton’s conservation areas, parks and playgrounds occupy wetlands that were partially filled, or center on streams that were heavily re-engineered or re-routed, in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, or early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Archival records are critical for either preserving or rehabilitating these simultaneously “natural” and “historic” resources.

Finally, beyond the issue of community preservation funding eligibility, Newton’s recently adopted *Comprehensive Plan* makes a strong case for “doing more with history,” by using historical information for purposes well beyond historic preservation and historic resource management per se. Rather than segregate “historic” resources from all other resources, the *Comprehensive Plan* argues that archives and historical analysis can help Newton to make more sustainable, long-term decisions about the full range of issues covered by the *Plan*, including economic development, housing, transportation, recreation and open space, and public facilities. Archives are critical for making and evaluating community decisions with impacts that outlast the decisionmakers themselves.

<b>COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT Allowable Uses of Funds</b>				
	<b>COMMUNITY HOUSING</b>	<b>HISTORIC RESOURCES</b>	<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	<b>RECREATION</b>
<b>acquire</b>	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>create</b>	YES	<b>NO</b>	YES	YES
<b>preserve</b>	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>support</b>	YES	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>rehabilitate/restore</b>	<b>YES, IF</b> created or acquired with CP funds	YES	<b>YES, IF</b> created or acquired with CP funds	<b>YES, IF</b> created or acquired with CP funds