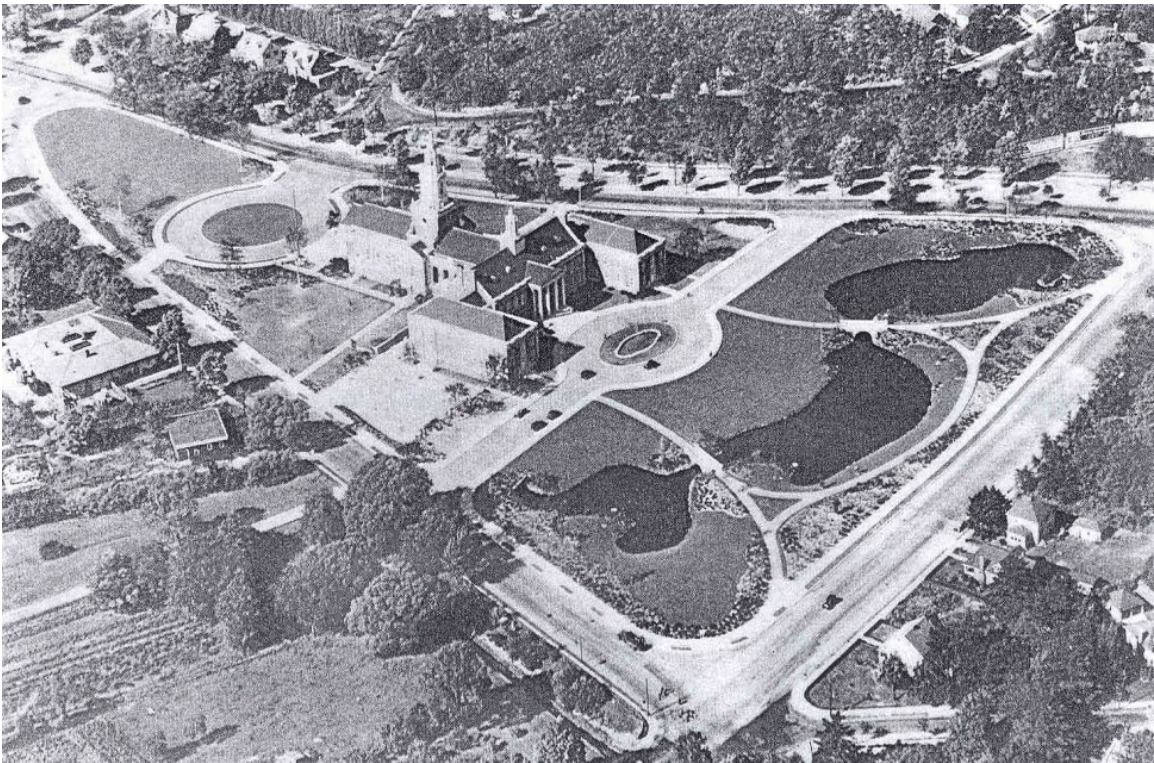


CPA Application for

City Hall and War Memorial Grounds Historic Landscape Preservation Master Plan

Phase One: Ponds and Parkland



Newton City Hall and War Memorial Aerial View 1932

Courtesy of Newton History Museum

to
the Community Preservation Committee
by
the City of Newton Parks and Recreation Department

October 2, 2006

Introduction

Using 2005 Community Preservation Act funds the Department of Parks and Recreation took the first and crucial step toward preserving Newton's Olmsted-designed City Hall and War Memorial grounds. The Department enlisted the services of Pressley Associates, Inc., landscape architects with historic preservation expertise, to develop the preservation master plan. The final report, both in written and graphic form, is now complete and ready to use as a guide in a prioritized and phased approach toward making improvements. The first phase, which is the focus of this application, is referred to as the "Ponds and Parkland" phase. The scope of this work encompasses the ponds, their edges, and the immediate landscaped area out front bounded by Walnut Street on the east, Commonwealth Avenue on the north, Homer Street on the south and City Hall's access drive on the west. The intent of this phase is to improve the storm water management capabilities of the ponds and to rehabilitate the surrounding park area in keeping with the historic plan.

Historic Background

This historically significant landscape was designed and installed in 1931/32 by the Olmsted Brothers firm and, along with the Georgian-style building by architects Allen and Collens, is listed on the National Historic Register. During schematic design, landscape treatment alternatives were thoroughly evaluated for the site. Due to the site changes made to date "rehabilitation" is the recommended landscape treatment and considered the best fit for this property. This approach as defined by the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and the *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* is specifically intended to preserve character and retain historic features while allowing for contemporary use.

Schematic Design

Using existing survey information, numerous historic plans, sections and photographs available from the archives of both Newton's Historic Commission and the Olmsted Historic Site in Brookline, Pressley Associates thoroughly and systematically researched and documented the landscape's history. In general their recommendations were to: retain the historic character around the three ponds and lawns to the north and west of the building, while retaining contemporary additions such as Millennium Park and allowing for monitored public events; selected non-historic trees and shrubs should be removed to allow for lost views and vistas and missing historic trees and some shrub borders replaced; the original character of the vegetation around the ponds should be re-established to allow for reflections of the building in the water and the north pond re-configured to re-establish its original size and shape. The full report will be available at the Parks and Recreation Department office, the Newton History Museum and online at the Department's website.

The master plan suggests doing work in three distinct phases: (1) Ponds and Parkland; (2) City Hall and Memorial Drives and City Sidewalks; and (3) City Hall Grounds and West Memorial Lawn.

1. Goals

The goals of the first phase of the preservation master plan are

- to improve the storm water holding capacity of the three ponds, and then
- to re-establish the historic character of the ponds and their surrounding landscape.

A. Pond Silt Removal – City of Newton Work

The three ponds that are fed by Hammond Brook and that eventually drain into the Charles River play a critical role in the City's overall drainage scheme. The surrounding streets, parking lots and downstream areas that flood in the heaviest of rains are evidence of the need to maintain the efficiency of the ponds' storm water holding capacity at all times. The long overdue and critical removal and disposal of the silt built up in the ponds is to be performed in-house by the City's Public Works Department. This work is planned for the winter, because when the ground is frozen the site is least impacted by the trucks used to perform the operation.

B. Ponds and Parkland – Fall 2006 CPA Funding Request

Any CPA funds allocated for this project are to be for work that is to follow the City's pond silt removal work. This application is a request for funds to outsource the design development/construction document phase for the restoration and stabilization of the pond edges and the re-establishment of the historic character of the ponds and their surrounding landscape. The proposed work entails removing inappropriate shrubs from the pond edges, providing for stabilized pond edges and maintenance access routes to ease future silt removal work, restoring the stone dust pathways making them accessible, removing non-historic trees and shrubs to restore views in and out of the site, and finally, planting some missing historic trees and shrubs in keeping with the Olmsted plan.

2. Community Need

City Hall and War Memorial Grounds is Newton's most intact historic public landscape. In order for it to be a successful historic public landscape the City needs to adopt a philosophy that acknowledges its importance. This first phase of the preservation project will foster a greater appreciation and public awareness of the site and educate the public as to its significance. The value and environmental role of this 10-acre open space including its ponds cannot be overstated and needs to be respected. And while this site is here to serve present and future users, to remain the special place that it is, the task of protecting its integrity needs to be understood and undertaken.

3. Community Support

Unlike a City park or neighborhood park, Newton's civic center exists to serve the entire constituency. Letters of support for this project were provided during the initial schematic design phase and these groups, the Public Buildings Task Force, the Historic Commission and Newton's Historical Society continue their support.

4. Timeline

Once funding is made available in the spring of 2007 a detailed topographic survey of the front area will need to be performed and put into electronic format. While the City's existing survey information was used for master planning purposes, much greater detail is required to produce documents for public construction. This detailed survey of the front landscaped area is to take roughly one month and cannot effectively be done in the winter months. A concurrent five-month design development/construction document phase is anticipated. The project could then be put out to bid in the winter of 2008, with construction beginning in the spring of 2008 and completed by the fall of 2008, six months later. The timeline for the construction phase of this project is completely dependent on the pond silt removal work to be performed by the Public Works Department. It is assumed for the purposes of this application that this work will be completed by then.

Phase	Time/Duration
Project Start:	Spring 2007
Topographic Survey:	Spring/Summer 2007 (1 month)
Design Development/Construction Documents:	Summer 2007-Fall 2007 (5 months)
Bid and Contract Award:	Winter 2008 (3 months)
Construction:	Spring 2008-Fall 2008 (6 months)
Project Completion:	Fall 2008

5. Credentials

The Parks and Recreation Department is quite familiar with the City Hall and War Memorial Grounds. They are responsible for its ongoing maintenance and event-specific maintenance. Carol Schein, the City's Open Space Coordinator, will continue as project manager and provide the necessary coordination.

6. Success Factors

Success will be measured by the site's reinforced integrity and renewed beauty. Views in and out of the ponds' park area will be restored as will the historic-intended reflection of the building's façade in the water. Residents and visitors of all ages will be able to move safely and visibly through this renewed passive park to enjoy the natural setting and wildlife.

7. Budget

The budget for this project is \$1,153,748. Refer to the cost estimate included with this application for specific details pertaining to the Ponds and Parkland phase and the phases to follow. For this first phase, Ponds and Parkland, the hard and soft costs break down as follows:

Hard Costs:

Construction:	\$829,636
Contingency (25%)	208,408
Topographic Survey	12,000

Soft Costs:

Designer Fee (10%)	\$103,704
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Total Project Cost: \$1,153,748

8. Other Funding

Other funding towards this project will come from the City of Newton’s Public Work Department and will be used to perform the pond silt removal and disposal operation.

9. Maintenance

Ongoing maintenance will be required for this site as it always has been and always will be. The most notable area where maintenance needs will be eased is around the ponds, with the removal of large and inappropriate shrub masses and invasive species that have taken hold there. The perimeter of the ponds is to be designed in accordance with the historic Olmsted plan, which will return the ponds edges to lawn only. The master preservation plan report includes an extensive maintenance plan for the site and as well it provides a site-specific event policy that limits what can and cannot go on at the site. This new policy is intended to assist with maintenance as well. It ensures that when damages are incurred, as they often are, the repair costs are covered by the event sponsor. The usual volunteer groups, Newton Serves, Newton Pride, and the community service group supervised weekly by a Department member will continue as always to work on the site at different times throughout the year.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

10. The City of Newton Parks and Recreation has jurisdiction over the City Hall and War Memorial Grounds. The Department of Public Works has jurisdiction over the ponds, access drives and related sidewalks.

11. The existing and proposed site plans are included with this application. All other relevant descriptions are in the final preservation master plan report.

12. The work to date and all future work will be in compliance with all zoning ordinances, Architectural Access Board Regulations, ADA, and any and all other relevant laws and regulations.
13. On September 18, 2006 the Parks and Recreation Commission approved the first phase of this project unanimously 6-0.
14. No hazardous materials are known to be on this site and none are anticipated to be uncovered here.
15. All appropriate professional standards and strict guidelines will be followed in the rehabilitation of this historic resource.
16. This project is a wonderful and fitting example of the value and intent of the Community Preservation Act. The finished project will foster much community pride.

City of Newton



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

1000 Commonwealth Avenue

Newton Centre, MA 02459-1449

David B. Cohen
Mayor

December 15, 2006

To: Community Preservation Committee
City of Newton

Subject: Letter of Support for City Hall Historic Landscape Preservation Project; Phase I: Ponds and Parklands

The proposal from the Parks and Recreation Department to implement an extensive landscaping project around the City Hall ponds, is timely based on maintenance work scheduled by the Public Works Department. In the fall or winter of 2007, it is anticipated that Public Works will begin a full depth clean-out of the three detention ponds in front of City Hall estimated to take approximately six weeks to complete.

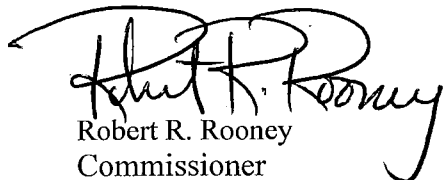
The process of removing an estimated 1200 cubic yards of sediment by the processes known to be generally available and affordable, will require the extensive use of heavy equipment (dozers, loaders, dump trucks, etc) and a fairly significant restoration effort. Plantings at the water's edge and at equipment access points are expected to require full rehabilitation. A plan to replant the grounds with species-specific plantings can be accommodated immediately after the sediment removal takes place anticipated to be early spring, 2008.

The purpose of the detention ponds, while scenic in normal use, are to provide a more efficient means by which sediment can be removed from Laundry Brook. As such, it is expected that siltation occurs at a rate which would require removal every ten years or so. Currently the ponds are over-full, and must be cleaned to ensure adequate drainage of the culverts and reduce eutrophication of the receiving water, Bullough's Pond. Funding in recent years has precluded the timely removal of such sediments. With the creation of a Stormwater Utility account in FY06, funding is now possible for projects such as this.

As part of the project, permanent access points will be identified in coordination with the Parks and Recreation Department and the Conservation Commission. These points will ensure that perennial plantings will not occur at these locations and preclude damage in future years when sediment removal is again required. I have reviewed the plans for the CPA project as developed by Pressley Associates, Inc. and feel that the sediment removal and the landscaping projects are totally compatible. The sediment removal can be programmed to minimize the exposure of disturbed embankments based on the timing of the follow-on landscaping project.

Should there be any questions regarding this project, the Department point of contact is the City Engineer, Lou Taverna, who can be reached at 796-1020.

Sincerely,



Robert R. Rooney
Commissioner