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Community Preservation Committee

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Board of Aldermen
FROM: Community Preservation Committee
DATE: March 24, 2006
RE: **CPC Recommendation for CPA Funding**

PROJECT TITLE: The Durant Kenrick Homestead Needs Assessment & Capital Improvement Plan
CPA PROJECT ID: CPA-FY04-11
CPA CATEGORY: Historic Preservation
RECOMMENDED CPA FUNDING: \$78,500

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The applicants, Newton Historical Society and Newton History Museum, request \$78,500 of CPA funds to undertake a needs assessment and development of a capital improvement plan for the Durant Kenrick Homestead at 286 Waverley Avenue in Newton Corner. The Homestead, which pre-dates the American Revolution, is one of the earliest intact historic homes extant in Newton and is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as a Local Landmark.

The Homestead was constructed in 1732 by the Durant Family as a gentleman's farmhouse and sat on approximately 91 acres of land. In 1790, the Durant Family sold the Homestead to the Kenrick Family who established a nursery on the property, which imported trees from Great Britain. The house is a two-story, wood frame, Georgian style building with a five-bay façade and a gambrel roof that extends to a long shed roof at the rear. The house not only boasts well-preserved historic features both exterior and interior, but a museum-quality collection of antique furniture, household articles and documents. A rear ell addition to the house serves as a caretaker's unit.

The Homestead currently sits on a 26,354 s.f.¹ lot that is owned by the Durant Homestead Foundation, which also owns the adjacent open lot of 24,639 s.f.² located on the corner of Waverley Avenue and Kenrick Street. A number of mature specimen trees are located on the open lot and are thought to have been planted by the Kenrick Family as part of their nursery operations.

Earlier in 2005, the Durant Homestead Foundation considered selling the corner open space lot due to a dwindling endowment, rising costs and limited capacity to open the property to the public. However, through active negotiations with the Newton Historical Society and Newton History Museum, the Foundation has offered to donate land with an endowment to the Historical Society. The Foundation has also agreed to postpone consideration of the sale of the corner lot while the Historical Society conducts a needs assessment, capital improvement plan and fundraising.

¹ Source: City of Newton Assessing Department Property Record Card Fiscal Year 2005, www.ci.newton.ma.us, 6/2005.

² Same as above.

The CPA funding request of \$77,500, plus \$1,000 for the Law Department, includes the following: assessment of existing conditions, including a real estate appraisal of the open lot and a potential conservation restriction; development of a capital improvements plan, including work on how to make the Homestead accessible to the larger public; and development of a strategy for acquisition and growth of an sufficient endowment.

FINDINGS

Community Preservation Act (MGL c.44B)

Historic Preservation

MGL c.44B §2 defines an historic resource as “a building...that is listed or eligible for listing on the state register of historic places . . .” The Durant Kenrick Homestead is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is, therefore, an historic resource as defined by the Act since any property listed on the National Register is also listed on the State Register. Furthermore, the Homestead was designated as one of the City’s first Local Landmarks in 1993.

The project clearly complies with MGL c.44B §5(b)(2), which allows CPA funds to be used for the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic resources. Both the Department of Revenue guidelines (IGR No. 00-209) and the Community Preservation Coalition’s report entitled *Potential Uses of CPA Funds*, list incidental project costs as allowable expenditures. Specifically, the Coalition states that “CPA funds may be used for . . . historic or housing consultants, architectural and engineering fees, . . . and similar costs associated with and incidental to the development of a CPA project.” The proposed Needs Assessment and Capital Improvement Plan is a critical step to prepare for potential acquisition of the property and comprehensive preservation of the building and grounds, and to ensure responsible future stewardship and operation as a publicly accessible historic house museum.

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, see below
2. Serve more than one CPA category.	See below
3. Demonstrate the highest cost/benefit value relative to other proposals.	See below
4. Leverage other public and/or private funds.	See below
5. Preserve a resource or opportunity that would otherwise be lost.	Yes, see below
6. Show that a project is the most reasonable available option to achieve the objective.	Yes
7. Demonstrate strong community support.	See below
8. Serve to equitably distribute CPA funds throughout the City.	Yes, see below

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal 1: This initial request for planning funds has great potential to lead to one of the “poster-child” projects the Newton CPA program will have the opportunity to fund – a project that will preserve one of Newton’s most unique historic resources, in terms of its age, historic integrity, setting and its planned highly public use.

Goal 2: The project could also lead to a mixed historic preservation and open space proposal by protecting the adjacent open space lot and its large specimen trees from development, thereby serving two CPA funding categories

Goal 3: The following table illustrates the comparative costs of historic preservation projects. While the cost of the Durant Kenrick Homestead Needs Assessment is greater compared to other study projects, the scope of the project is quite broad. The property needs to be surveyed and have multiple structural assessments undertaken if it is to be used by the public on a more frequent basis. Currently, the homestead is only open for public viewing a few times a year. If the property were transferred to the City, the public would be granted far greater access and with that comes the need for an accessible entrance and fire safety measures.

<i>Project Name</i>	<i>Fiscal</i>	<i>Total CPA Funds (for</i>
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	<i>Year</i>	<i>preservation portion only)</i>
Historic Burying Ground Restoration – Phase II	05	\$257,395
Newton Corner Library	03	\$236,129
Historic Burying Ground Restoration – Phase I	03	\$188,277
YMCA	05	\$160,273
City Hall – Balustrade	03	\$150,660
Washington Park Lighting	05	\$131,035
City Hall – Lighting	03	\$121,200
City Hall – Windows	03	\$119,400
Durant Kenrick Homestead Needs Assessment & Capital Improvement Plan*	06	\$78,500
248 Elliot Street	05	\$63,290
Farlow/Chaffin Park*	05	\$51,500
248 Elliot Street – Clapboard Restoration	06	\$43,600
Millhouse Commons	05	\$41,653
City Hall Historic Landscape*	05	\$40,000
Newton Health Department Building*	06	\$26,425
Brigham House*	03	\$20,000
Civil War Monument*	05	\$15,000
War Memorial Stairs*	05	\$15,000
Historic District Signs	04	\$2,000

*Denotes projects requesting CPA funds to conduct a design/study in preparation for a larger preservation project.

Goal 4: The Durant Kenrick Homestead Needs Assessment is the first step in the process of evaluating the property for its transfer to the City and greater public use. The applicants have received a modest donation in response to media coverage of their project. They pledge to leverage CPA funds and raise private money for the acquisition of the property. It should not be overlooked that the Durant Kenrick Foundation is prepared to donate land, buildings, furnishings and art collections valued at approximately \$3,000,000. Additionally, a few project services will be performed in-kind by local architects.

Goal 5: This initial planning project would be the first step in a much larger project to create a high quality historic house museum for public benefit and to comprehensively preserve this historic resource, which is not only unique for its significance to local history but to the history of the region. This project is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that is only possible at this time due to the generosity of the Durant Family Foundation and the capacity and willingness of the Newton Historical Society and Newton History Museum to lead this undertaking.

Goal 7: The application has included strong support letters from ward seven members of the Board of Aldermen, Farlow Hill Neighborhood Association, Newton Historical Commission, Newton School Committee, Newton Corner Neighborhood Association and Newton Conservators. The League of Women Voters also enthusiastically supports this CPA application.

Goal 8: The FY06 applications include funding requests for projects in Nonantum, West Newton, Newtonville, Oak Hill, Newton Centre, Chestnut Hill, Newton Highlands, Auburndale, Newton Corner, Newton Upper Falls as well as citywide projects. The Durant Kenrick Homestead is located in Newton Corner.

Historic Preservation Goals

1. Support the preservation and/or restoration of municipally owned resources that are on the National or State Historic Registers, or that have been landmarked, found to be “preferably preserved” or historically significant by the Newton Historical Commission.	N/A
2. Support the preservation and restoration of privately owned properties that are on the National or State Historic Registers, or that have been landmarked, found to be “preferably preserved” or historically significant by the Newton Historical Commission.	Yes, see below
3. Encourage protection of resources that retain their historical integrity, in terms of location, context, design, style, workmanship and materials.	Yes, see below
4. Enable access to the resource by the public, including access by disabled residents.	See below
5. Support the objectives and priorities of local historic preservation organizations, such as the Newton Historical Society, the Newton History Museum, local historic districts and other such organizations within the City of Newton.	Yes, see below
6. Where appropriate, address the issues and goals raised in the forthcoming Citywide Preservation Plan.	See below

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal 2: The Durant Kenrick Homestead Needs Assessment is the first step in supporting the preservation of a privately owned property on the National Register and a Local Landmark. The work outlined in this proposal will go towards making the Durant Kenrick a public resource.

Goal 3: This project would encourage the enhanced protection of both the Homestead and the adjacent open space parcel, both of which retain a great degree of historic integrity through the stewardship of the Durant Family and preceding owners. If successful, this project would ensure long-term stewardship of the properties and would enable a much greater degree of public access than has been possible to date.

Goal 4: Part of the building assessment will look at what will be necessary to make the Homestead accessible to disabled residents.

Goal 5: The project clearly supports the objectives and priorities of the primary local historic preservation organizations: Newton Historical Society, Newton History Museum, and the Newton Historical Commission.

Goal 6: The City’s Preservation Plan has not yet been finalized.

CPC RECOMMENDATION

The proposal is consistent with the CPA criteria and many of the Plan’s goals, as described above. Therefore, the Community Preservation Committee voted unanimously to recommend funding this application to undertake a needs assessment and capital improvement plan for the Durant Kenrick Homestead at 286 Waverly Avenue by appropriating and transferring the requested \$78,500 to be expended under the direction and control of the Director of the Newton History Museum for purposes of historic preservation, as detailed in the application dated February 15, 2006, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to appropriation of any CPA funds, the Newton History Museum shall identify a City project manager who will be responsible to facilitate the execution of a funding agreement between the City and the Newton Historical Society and will be responsible for general oversight of the project.
2. The City project manager or designee shall submit a status report to the CPC on a quarterly basis that describes work that is complete, work remaining, expenditures and target completion date.
3. Consideration of CPA funds for future phases will require the demonstration of a good-faith effort on the part of the applicant to substantially leverage other funding sources; provided, however, the applicant understands and agrees that CPC’s recommendation of funding for this design plan does not imply any CPC support for, or any applicant expectation of, a further CPC recommendation for the funding of future project

design or construction phases.

4. Work shall commence no later than December 31, 2006 and shall be completed no later than December 31, 2007 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.
5. Promptly after substantial completion of the planning and design work, the applicant shall submit to the Community Preservation Committee a final project development cost statement. Any portion of the grant not used for the purposes stated herein shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.