



City of Newton, Massachusetts Community Preservation Committee



MEMORANDUM

David B. Cohen
Mayor

REVISED 10/27/04

TO: Honorable Board of Aldermen
FROM: Community Preservation Committee
DATE: 21 September 2004, REVISED 27 October 2004
RE: **CPC Recommendation for CPA Funding**

PROJECT TITLE: ANGINO FARM
CPA PROJECT ID: CPA-FY05-01
CPA CATEGORY: Open Space

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant, Newton Conservators, requests a total of \$2,560,000 to fund the acquisition of the entire Angino Farm property for use as a community farm. The property includes a farmhouse and a large wood barn that sit aside a large open field. There are also some smaller outbuildings at the rear edge of the land. Angino Farm is the last remaining farm in Newton. The applicants propose to create a farm under the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, where individuals/families would purchase annual “shares” for approximately \$500 and receive in-season produce throughout the growing season. This type of farm is already established in Weston, Natick, Waltham, Framingham and Lincoln.

The historic farmhouse and barn would be utilized in a manner supporting operations on the farm, with the potential of providing one unit of housing reserved for the farm manager. The Newton Historical Commission has determined the Angino Farm to be a locally significant historic resource, and is considering designating the property as a City Landmark. Landmark designation would provide an extra layer of protection, requiring design review by the Historical Commission for construction of any outbuildings or structures needed to support the farming operations.

The requested CPA funds would primarily be used to purchase the land, with the intent of establishing a community farm on the premises. The request for \$60,000 over the \$2.5M purchase price covers soft costs (appraisal, capital needs assessment, soil assessment, etc.) and \$40,000 of initial capital improvements to the farmhouse and barn, as estimated by Donald Lang, an architect who is also a Newton Historical Commission member. These initial improvements are proposed as phase I stabilization of the buildings within a multi-phase renovation plan, a budget for which is included in the proposal.

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FINDINGS

Community Preservation Act (MGL c.44B)

1. MGL c.44B defines open space as including but not limited to “land to protect...agricultural land...lands to protect scenic vistas...” This project, which would enable farming activities to occur on existing agricultural land and protect the scenic vista along Winchester and Nahanton streets provided by an intact farmscape, complies with this definition of open space. Nahanton Street has for a number of years been designated a Scenic Highway under the state’s scenic highway statute.
2. The project complies with §5(b)(2), which allows the CPA to fund the acquisition, creation and preservation of open space, including passive recreation opportunities as a result of the acquisition of the last farm in Newton.

3. MGL c.44B defines historic resources as “a building, structure...or real property that...has been determined by the local historic preservation commission to be significant in the history...architecture or culture of a city or town.” The Newton Historical Commission, by a 6-0 vote, determined Angino Farm to be a locally significant historic resource, thus complying with the definition as stated in the statute.
4. The project also complies with §5(b)(2) allowing the CPA to fund the acquisition, preservation and restoration of historic resources. Angino Farm represents the last remaining intact farmscape in Newton. As such, not only are the buildings historically significant, but the entire parcel is a historic resource. Through preservation restrictions and the potential landmark designation, Angino Farm would be preserved in its entirety.

Newton Community Preservation Plan (“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.	Yes, See below
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.	See below
6. Create incentives for other private projects to occur.	Yes
7. Show that a project is the most reasonable available option to achieve the objective.	Yes
8. Demonstrate strong community support.	Yes
9. Serve to equitably distribute CPA funds throughout the City.	See below

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal #1: In addition to the meeting the open space and historic preservation goals, this project would have the potential to create numerous educational and volunteer programs for Newton residents of all ages.

Goal #2: As previously noted, this project serves multiple CPA purposes.

Goal #3: Projects funded during FY04 included a high CPA cost of \$500,000 and a low CPA cost of \$2,000. This is the first project considered in FY05, and it comes prior to the annual Fall funding round. Therefore, there is no basis for comparison with other projects in this fiscal year. However, as this project relates to others already approved under the Act, the acquisition of this parcel of land is significant because it is noted as a priority in Newton’s Recreation and Open Space Plan, it preserves the last intact farmscape in the City, and it preserves two historic structures.

Goal #4: As described in the application, the project has leveraged approximately \$40,000 in outside funds, contingent upon CPA funding, to aid with start-up costs. Additionally, preliminary commitments have been received from over 40 individuals for the purchase of farming shares per the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm model proposed for Angino Farm. Other funding from private sources is anticipated once the farm is operational.

Goal #5: Angino Farm is for sale on the open market. Although the Newton Conservators have a purchase and sale agreement, that agreement expires on December 1, 2004. The land is zoned as SR1 under the Newton Zoning Ordinance, allowing for single-family homes. Given the amount of land (approximately 100,000 sf) along with other zoning considerations, the parcel could support three lots containing single-family homes. If purchased on the open market, the land is at risk of private development that could consume the open space and potentially subject the historic structures to demolition.

Goal #8: Community support for this project is documented through letters included in the original application. These and subsequent submissions are from individual citizens along with Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly, the Newton Historical Commission, the Parks and Recreation Department, the School Department and the Mayor. Additionally, committees pertaining to the farming and historic preservation components of the project are being formed, and private funds, in the form of advanced farm shares, have been committed as testimony to the sustainability of a community farm.

Goal #9: The FY04 applications include funding requests for projects in Nonantum, Newton Corner, West Newton, Newtonville, Newton Upper Falls, Newton Center, Chestnut Hill, and Newton Highlands; this project is located in Oak Hill.

Open Space Goals

1. Provide protection for land listed in the <i>Recreation & Open Space Plan</i> .	Yes
2. Expand existing open space.	No
3. Enhance biodiversity or wildlife habitat and reclaim natural resources.	Yes, See below
4. Protect wetlands, mitigate flooding and improve groundwater recharge.	No
5. Create small pocket parks.	See below
6. Enable the development of passive recreation opportunities.	Yes
7. Serve as suitable sites for nature-related education, scientific study, or observation and enjoyment of nature.	Yes, See below
8. Protect a natural feature of special interest.	Yes
9. Enhance public access (where access does not seriously threaten habitat).	Yes, See below
10. Provide linkages and wildlife corridors between open spaces.	Yes, See Below

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal #3: By reintroducing farming to the landscape, the biodiversity the site will be necessarily enhanced. Considering agricultural lands as part of Newton’s natural resources, this proposal will constitute not only a reclamation of that resource, but the employment of it as a community good.

Goal #5 & 6: Although not a park in the traditional sense, the farm component would allow for community involvement on a volunteer level, and be open to people wishing to visit the premises and perhaps participate in farming activities.

Goal #7: Operation of a farm on the premises will provide the opportunity for educational programming targeted to local schools, groups interested in farming and the general public. Volunteer opportunities will allow individuals to gain hands-on experience with farming techniques and methods.

Goal #9: A community farm on the site will encourage active participation by local residents and groups interested in increasing their knowledge of farming. Engaged parties can visit the farm, and have the opportunity to become involved in the process.

Goal #10 This site is adjacent to land along Nahanton Street protected by conservation restriction, and only a short distance from Nahanton Park, city-owned conservation land along the Charles River at Wells Avenue, DCR property along the opposite bank of the Charles River and the Charles River Country Club, which contains significant wildlife resources. This parcel is part of an open space corridor along the Charles River, Winchester Street and Nahanton Street (the latter protected under state law as a Scenic Highway), which together provides important habitat for migrating birds and other small animals.

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.	See below
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.	See below
3. Encourage protection of resources that retain their historic integrity, in terms of location, context, design, style, workmanship, and materials.	Yes, See below
4. Enable access to the resource by the public.	Yes, See below
5. Support the objectives and priorities of local historic preservation organizations, such as the	Yes

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goals #1 and #2: This project will preserve the last remaining farm in Newton, which is currently held under private ownership. While Angino Farm is not presently on any Historic Register, has not been landmarked by the City, or found to be “preferably preserved” specifically, the Newton Historical Commission has determined Angino Farm to be historically significant at the local level, and is considering designating the property as a City Landmark.

Goal #3: The proposal calls for initial capital improvements to be made to the historic farmhouse and barn. In addition, the applicants propose to a Historic Preservation subcommittee charged with developing a long-term comprehensive preservation plan for the two existing structures on site.

Goal #4: Both the farmhouse and the barn will be utilized in a manner supporting farm operations. All participants engaged in farming activities will have access to the historic structures, as they will constitute components of the working farm. The buildings are also proposed for use in educational and other programming, which would make them accessible to students and other members of the public to which the programming is directed.

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 project to create a community farm. Specifically, the CPC voted to recommend bonding \$1,500,000 to be repaid over a term of five years and appropriating the remaining \$1,060,000 from current CPA funds to be expended under the direction and control of the Director of Planning and Development for the purchase and acquisition of that parcel of land known as Angino Farm at 303 Nahanton Street. The CPC vote allows the Board of Aldermen to consider a second option, at its discretion, to appropriate the total requested \$2,560,000 from current CPA funds. This flexibility is intended to enable the Board to make this decision in the broad context of the City’s usual practices with regard to bonding, the circumstances of the financial markets, and other factors. In either case, the funding would be subject to the following conditions:

1. The parcel of land known as Angino Farm, 303 Nahanton Street, shall be owned by the City of Newton with the intent of establishing a community farm. Operations of the farm may be contracted to a private entity.
2. Restrictions shall run with the land and buildings in perpetuity. The terms of these restrictions shall be determined by the Director of Planning and Development in consultation with the CPC Chair, or his designee. They shall be guided by the following goals:
 - 2.1. The restrictions shall allow for the operation of a community farm by a non-profit organization.
 - 2.2. While the property is being used primarily for farming use, the demolition or construction of any structures shall be subject to design review and approval by the Newton Historical Commission, as well as any exterior alterations to the existing farmhouse and barn.
 - 2.3. If the City determines that the farm use no longer be practicable, the land and buildings should be used for other purposes consistent with community preservation goals as defined by MGL c.44B.
 - 2.4. If the land, in whole or in part, is sold, all proceeds from the sale of the land shall be returned to the CPA fund in accordance with MGL c.44B.
3. Prior to the release of funds, the soil on the site shall be tested by an appropriately certified environmental specialist to evaluate the site’s appropriateness for use as a farm to grow edible crops. The resulting report shall be reviewed and approved by the Director of Planning and Development, in consultation with the

4. The purchase of this land by the City of Newton shall occur no later than 31 December 2005 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 completion date 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. Any portion of the grant not used for the purposes stated herein shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.