

City of Newton



City of Newton, Massachusetts
Community Preservation Committee

David B. Cohen
Mayor

11 February 2003

Honorable Board of Aldermen
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Ladies and Gentlemen:

At the Community Preservation Committee's last meeting on February 5th, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend CPA funding in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 for planning studies and appraisal services for the property known as Kessler Woods in order to assist the City in the preparation of a formal bid for the purchase of this land.

Kessler Woods, which comprises over 42 acres of open space in the southeast corner of the City, is a conservation priority identified in the City's *Recreation and Open Space Plan* due to its environmentally sensitive features which include: a substantial amount of wetland; Saw Mill Brook with Riverfront Area designation; a locally-rare vegetative community; and a significant amount of diverse wildlife habitat. In addition, these parcels are located adjacent to two existing Conservation Areas owned by the Newton Conservation Commission. Acquisition of Kessler Woods would substantially further the objectives of the Community Preservation Act.

The owner of this land, NStar, originally issued a request for bids for these parcels with a submission deadline of February 21. Last week, at the City's request, the Attorney General's office extended that deadline by four months (into June). The Mayor will be in touch with NStar to determine the exact parameters of this extension.

Meanwhile, the City must move forward with an analysis of the property in preparation for submitting a bid package in June. Appraisal and land planning services will be critical to guide the City in seeking private partners in this effort, which, in light of the likely value of the property, will be necessary in preparing a serious bid for this property. Even if the City cannot end up owning the entire parcel, good planning and a sound development scheme can lead to the City getting all or most of the benefits which it may seek from this property. With an appraisal and conceptual plans in hand, the City could issue a Request for Proposals from potential private partners.

Please find enclosed a draft Board Order that David Wilkinson, Comptroller, has created for the Board's consideration. The Community Preservation Committee strongly recommends funding for the appraisal and land planning services in preparation for assembling a bid package to submit in June and urges the Board to approve the appropriation of the requested funds for these services.

Very truly yours,

Jeffrey Sacks
Chair



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COMPTROLLER
DAVID C. WILKINSON

February 21, 2003

TO: Board of Aldermen

FROM: Jennifer Goldson, Community Preservation Planner
David Wilkinson, Comptroller

SUBJECT: Docket Item #95-03 – Kessler Woods Land Acquisition

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The Community Preservation Committee has recommended a \$50,000 appropriation from the Community Preservation Fund Open Space Reserve for purposes of funding planning studies and an appraisal of the Kessler Woods property. These services are necessary in order for the City to prepare a formal bid for the purchase of the property.

Since the recommended financing source for this appropriation is the Open Space Reserve the appropriation will be classified as an open space project. Should the City purchase of the property, the planning and appraisal costs will be capitalized along with all other costs incurred by the City in connection with the purchase, for financial reporting purposes. If the City does not acquire the property, the costs will be expensed in the current year.

Pending action on this appropriation request, the Community Preservation Committee has authorized the use of up to \$3,300 in existing administrative funds for preliminary planning purposes. The use of funds in excess of this sum will require an appropriation transfer by the Board of Aldermen from the salary/benefit appropriation to the expense appropriation. No contract has been executed for either planning or appraisal services as of this date. Any preliminary planning that are temporarily charged to the administrative budget, will be reclassified to the Kessler Woods Land Acquisition project budget if the Board of Aldermen approves docket item #95-03.

Should you have any further questions about this project, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Cc: Community Preservation Committee