



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
NEWTON HISTORY MUSEUM ARCHIVES Preservation & Enhanced Access**

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. This project will rehabilitate and expand the research library/archives at the Museum to preserve existing collections, provide space for future additions to the collections, and enhance public access, including access for users with limited mobility.

The archives of the Newton History Museum, operated as a public-private partnership between the City of Newton and the Newton Historical Society, are critical for evaluating and managing all of Newton's historic resources. Funding for this project is therefore an investment in the success of many other, future preservation projects, and more broadly in "doing more with history" to plan for Newton's future, as recommended in the city's recently adopted *Comprehensive Plan*.

Current storage conditions at the Museum pose significant risks to the archives themselves, and make the archives increasingly difficult for the public to access. In addition, the collections cataloguing included as an in-kind donation for this project will allow for efficient future use of these archives, as staff members with long community memories and deep personal knowledge of the collections move on, either to other organizations or into retirement. *(For details of proposed work, see the Museum's original proposal. For further discussion of funding eligibility & priorities, see appendix to this recommendation.)*

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 **\$359,400** be appropriated from the fiscal 2008 general reserve of the Community Preservation Fund as follows:

\$357,400 Archives Preservation & Rehabilitation (Community Preservation Fund)

\$2,000 Law Dept. costs (Community Preservation Fund)

\$359,400 TOTAL community preservation funding

\$24,000 Archives Preservation & Rehabilitation (funds already committed by private donor)

\$13,164 Collections cataloguing (in-kind donation)

\$396,564 TOTAL Project Cost

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

historic resources 100%

ADDITIONAL SOURCES & USES OF FUNDS As noted above, community preservation funding for this project will leverage an additional \$37,164 in funds already committed by a private donor (for rehabilitation and expansion of the physical archives), and in donated time (for collections cataloguing).

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 Cindy Stone, Director of the Newton History Museum as a City of Newton department.
2. The project begin no later than 31 December 2008, and be completed no later than 31 December 2010, or any later deadlines approved in writing by the Director of Planning and Development.
3. As for all community preservation projects, the Museum provide regular written and/or oral reports on the project's progress as requested by community preservation program staff, especially when design specifications have been completed and are ready for bidding, and a final report of all project costs and work completed.
4. The Newton History Museum make every effort to avoid using the entire 20 percent project contingency; if and when half of this amount has been spent, the Museum be required to submit a detailed accounting to the CPC and the Board of Aldermen of costs incurred to date, and of any further costs it expects to incur, under that heading.

The Committee recognizes that this contingency is high, but considers it acceptable because it is difficult to predict in advance all conditions or materials that may require repair or replacement in a historic building, especially one as old as the late 17th-century wing of the Jackson Homestead, which houses the Museum archives. Detailed design specifications may allow the Museum to reduce this contingency, but in response to preferences expressed by the Board of Aldermen, the Committee is no longer recommending separate funding for site-specific design studies in advance of full project proposals.

5. The Newton History Museum meet the requirements of the Community Preservation Act by working closely with the City of Newton's preservation planning staff to ensure that the project follows the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties* (online at www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab_index.htm)
6. The Newton History Museum meet the requirements of Newton ordinance 22-76 on the "preservation of city-owned properties subject to funding under the Community Preservation Act" by working closely with the City of Newton's Public Buildings, Inspectional Services, and Purchasing departments to obtain approval from the Newton Historical Commission of all plans for the rehabilitation of the Jackson Homestead, the Museum's city-owned building as early as possible, before bidding or beginning project work.
7. 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*
- ◆ *Provided by Newton History Museum*: Proposal & letters of support from: Newton Historical Commission, Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities, Ellen Fitzpatrick (Director of Graduate Studies, History Dept., University of New Hampshire; Chair, Newtonville Local Historic District Commission), Peter Kastner (Community Heritage Maps), Claudia Sauerma Wu, John Stewart
- ◆ Supportive comments from the League of Women Voters
- ◆ Summaries of *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties* and Newton ordinance 22-76, on the preservation of city-owned properties subject to funding under the Community Preservation Act

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 Newton History Museum archives contain tens of thousands of documents, maps, photographs, and slides. 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 the Museum, 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 18th, 19th, or early 20th 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.

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