



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

**City of Newton, Massachusetts**  
**Office of the Mayor**

Telephone  
(617) 552-7100

Telefax  
(617) 965-6885

E-mail  
swarren@newtonma.gov

March 25, 2011

Community Preservation Committee  
City of Newton  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

SUBJECT: Request for funds for update of Recreation and Open Space Plan

Dear Community Preservation Committee,

I respectfully request that the Committee consider a request for administrative funds of \$4,000 for the purpose of hiring additional assistance for update of the *2003-2007 Recreation and Open Space Plan* to be considered out of cycle, with a public hearing and working session at a single meeting, if possible.

City Planning staff has been preparing for an update of this *Plan* by completing State-mandated accessibility analyses and revising the database upon which this plan is based. By May 2011 they will assemble a group to begin a community review process that will continue into the fall. Additional administrative assistance will ensure that the rewrite of this important document proceeds in a timely way and will also enable us to be eligible for certain grant funds. The process is expected to conclude by summer 2012.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Setti D. Warren,  
Mayor

1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

[www.ci.newton.ma.us](http://www.ci.newton.ma.us)



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

**City of Newton, Massachusetts**  
Department of Planning and Development  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone  
(617) 796-1120  
Telefax  
(617) 796-1142  
TDD/TTY  
(617) 796-1089  
www.newtonma.gov


Candace Havens  
Director

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 25, 2011

TO: Community Preservation Committee c/o Alice Ingerson, CPA Manager

FROM: Candace Havens, Director of Planning and Development  
Jennifer Molinsky, Chief Planner for Long-Range Planning 

SUBJECT: Pre-Proposal Project Summary: Update of Newton's *Recreation and Open Space Plan*

Cc: Bob Rooney, Chief Operating Officer; Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer

**Description of project:** The Department of Planning and Development is requesting \$4,000 to support the completion of the update of the City's *Recreation and Open Space Plan*. The *Plan* is used extensively to guide City decisions regarding open space and is a useful public reference. In addition, the *Plan* must be regularly updated per requirements of the Commonwealth's Office of Energy and Environment in order for the City to be eligible to apply for certain grants. The current plan is out-of-date, covering the period ending in 2007. In the past two years, much progress has been made toward an update of the *Plan* (please see the attachment for a description of the steps in the process and indication of those steps already completed). The next steps involve engaging those who have an interest or expertise in the subjects covered in the document in order to set goals for the next five years. This process is labor intensive, requiring numerous community meetings, deliberation over the establishment of priorities for the years ahead, and rewriting of sections of the document to reflect the consensus. After that, there are numerous reviews required by law, including by the City's Planning and Development Board, Parks and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, and Board of Aldermen, as well as the State Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The requested funds would be used to hire a consultant to complete the required data collection, arrange and participate in numerous required public meetings, draft updates to various sections of the *Plan* depending on the outcome of those meetings, and respond to the required reviews of the *Plan*.

**Timeframe:** The process will take approximately 14 months, beginning in April 2011 and concluding in the June 2012.

**Budget:** The estimated cost of a consultant to work with City staff to revise the Recreation and Open Space Plan is \$4,000. The entire budget for completing the update to the Plan is roughly \$18,000, of which roughly half has been spent:

**Estimated budget:**

Data collection; update of the Open Space database; redlining of existing document	<b>\$9,200 (completed)</b>
Public meetings, redrafting of Plan, and required reviews	<b>\$9,000</b> total \$4,000 Intern \$5,000 City staff
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$18,200</b>

**Management and staffing:** The project of completing the update of the plan will be managed by Jennifer Molinsky, Chief Planner for Long-Range Planning, reporting to Candace Havens, Director of the Planning and Development Department. The intended consultant, Jitka Hiscox, is well-poised to assist with the completion of the *Plan*, having worked for the Department of Planning and Development in 2009 to assess whether previous goals have been met and to collect data on new conditions in the City.

**Consistency with Community Preservation Committee Goals:** An updated *Recreation and Open Space Plan* would support the CPC's goals for open space and land for recreational use by guiding decisions involving open space acquisition, creation and preservation of linear open space and paths, and creation and preservation of parks in areas of the City where these are currently scarce.

## TENTATIVE OPEN SPACE PLAN UPDATE SCHEDULE

**START DATE:** April 2011

**END DATE:** June 2012

### **Already done (2009-2011):**

- Read Open Space Plan and compare to current Comprehensive Plan for conformance
- Update database (mostly done)
- Look at parcel-specific documents
- Note changes that have occurred (e.g. purchases of Angino Farm, etc.)
- Flag areas that may require additional input, including population characteristics, description of process, growth and development patterns, regional context, changes of landscape, water resources, vegetation, fisheries/wildlife, scenic resources, unique environment, environmental challenges, private parcels, public nonprofit parcels.
- Redline existing *Plan* with proposed changes

### **April 2011**

- Contact groups and ask to name a participant member of review group

### **May 2011**

- Select members and write letter about kick off meeting in June

### **June 2011: 1<sup>st</sup> public meeting**

*Assemble members appointed by the mayor representing the following:*

- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Planning and Development Board
- Landscape Advisory Council
- Conservation Commission
- Dog Parks
- Skateboarders
- Bicyclists
- CPA/Historical Commission
- Newton Conservators
- Charles River Country Club
- Braeburn
- DCR
- Friends of Nahanton Park
- Urban Tree Commission
- Green Decade Coalition
- Board of Aldermen
- Newton Neighborhood Network
- MWRA
- Newton Cemetery
- Woodland Country Club
- Charles River Watershed Assn.
- Newton Historical Commission

- Newton Schools
- Friends of Cabot Woods
- Friends of Hemlock Gorge
- Friends of Houghton Gardens
- Friends of Nahanton Park

Agenda for first meeting:

- Welcome/orientation
- Identify purpose of group/goals
- Outline timeline anticipated schedule
- Discuss format
- Distribute old open space plan with redlined changes to database and text
- Ask group to prepare comments on areas of interest/expertise as they come up
- Q&A
- Pass out meeting schedule for summer and beyond/doodle calendar to follow

**Summer 2011: 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting**

- Summarize/review purpose of group/goals/process in more detail
- Begin review of first section of document

**Early fall 2011: 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting**

- Review sections of document
- Summarize goals and objectives
- Develop 5-year action plan

**Fall – Spring 2012:**

- ***Hear public comments***
- ***Update Draft in Final Form***
- ***Present to other required reviewers***
  - Planning and Development Board
  - Parks and Rec Commission
  - Conservation Commission
  - Board of Aldermen
  - State