



## City of Newton, Massachusetts Community Preservation Committee

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Board of Aldermen  
FROM: Community Preservation Committee  
DATE: 25 February 2004  
RE: **CPC Recommendation for CPA Funding**

**PROJECT TITLE:** STEARNS/PELLEGRINI LONG-RANGE PARK PLAN (formerly known as Stearns Park Master Plan)

**CPA PROJECT ID:** CPA-FY04- 7

**CPA CATEGORY:** Recreation

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicants, the Parks & Recreation Department, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Nonantum Advisory Committee, and Planning & Dev. Department, originally requested \$51,000 to be used for the creation of a active & passive recreation needs plan for Stearns Park that may be implemented over a period of five years. However, at the request of the CPC, a revised proposal was submitted that includes a reduced scope of work for outside consultants (with an increase of work to be done in-house) and combines the Stearns Park plan with a similar plan for Pellegrini Park in Nonantum in order to better evaluate neighborhood needs on a coordinated basis. Both of these changes resulted in a reduced funding request of \$30,000. The estimated budget for the combined plan is about \$60,000 and CDBG funds will be used to fund the remaining \$30,000 of the project.

The proposal identifies various reasons that this plan is needed, including: the history of piecemeal, uncoordinated improvements to the parks; a likely increase of elderly park users due to the new elderly housing development (Nonantum Village Place) that is under construction adjacent to Stearns Park; and to identify desired uses for the vacant parcel on Watertown Street (adjacent to Stearns Park) that is under negotiation for potential City acquisition. The plan would be generated through a structured community process to identify specific community needs and a community vision for the park.

#### FINDINGS

##### Community Preservation Act

1. The project complies with §5(b)(2) that allows the CPA to fund the creation and preservation of land for recreational use, which the CPC has a precedent of applying to recreation facilities as well as to land. Both the Department of Revenue guidelines (IGR No. 00-209) and the Community Preservation Coalition's report titled "Potential Uses of CPA Funds", list incidental project costs as allowable expenditures. Specifically, the Coalition states that "CPA funds may be used for site surveys, environmental assessments, historic or housing consultants, architectural and engineering fees, permit processing fees, construction consultants . . . and similar costs associated with and incidental to the development of a CPA project." This proposal for a plan will identify specific construction projects that will either create new recreation facilities at this park or preserve existing facilities. The plan would also serve as a preliminary study to determine whether or not the acquisition of the vacant parcel is warranted and what it would best be used for (in some ways similar to the land planning studies that were conducted for Kessler Woods using CPA funds).

**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
2. Serve more than one CPA category.	No
3. Demonstrate the highest cost/benefit value relative to other proposals.	See below
4. Leverage other public and/or private funds.	Yes
5. Preserve a resource or opportunity that would otherwise be lost.	Yes
6. Create incentives for other private projects to occur.	Yes, see below
7. Show that a project is the most reasonable available option to achieve the objective.	Yes
8. Demonstrate strong community support.	Yes, see below
9. Serve to equitably distribute CPA funds throughout the City.	See below

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal #3: Projects received during the November funding round included a high CPA cost of \$375,000 and a low CPA cost of \$2,000. The CPA cost for this project is \$30,000. The relative benefit for this project is to create a plan that will identify significant, quality improvements that factor in existing conditions, community need, and maintenance capacity. The plan will result in a "laundry list" of prioritized improvement projects.

Goal #6: Generating this plan may create incentives for privately-funded improvement initiatives by creating a "laundry list" and prioritization of desired improvement projects.

Goal #8: As documented in the application, this project has received community support from city officials and residents. A letter, dated 1/28/04, was submitted to the Committee from the League of Women Voters in opposition to the funding request.

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

**Recreation Goals**

1. Address the needs targeted in the <i>Recreation and Open Space Plan</i> and take advantage of other opportunities to meet the recreation needs of the residents of the City.	Yes, see below
2. Meet the recreation needs of the greatest number of residents possible.	No
3. Meet the greatest variety of recreation needs possible.	Yes, see below
4. Serve passive as well as active uses. Finding ways to balance the range of recreational opportunities and serve the diverse recreation needs of the community is a priority of the CPC.	Yes, see below
5. Preserve sight lines consistent with open space. . . . Decisions about scale and placement should be made with the objective of enhancing or enabling open views.	Yes
6. Access for disabled residents should be included in plans wherever possible.	Yes

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal #1: The City's *Recreation and Open Space Plan* lists the need to improve facilities at both Stearns and Pellegrini parks in the Recreation Action Program (p. 99).

Goal #3 & 4: Stearns and Pellegrini parks serve the community as both active and passive recreation areas since the parks provide facilities for a variety of activities including tennis courts, basketball courts, a baseball fields, swings, game tables, and benches.

**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 6-0, with one abstention, to recommend funding this application to create the Stearns/Pellegrini Long-range Park Plan by appropriating and transferring the requested \$30,000 to be expended under the direction and control of the Director of Planning and Development for purposes of funding a grant for \$30,000 as detailed in the application (submitted 1 November 2003, revised through a letter dated 23 January 2004 from Amy Yuhasz), subject to the following conditions:

1. Work shall commence no later than 31 December 2004 and shall be completed 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 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.
2. Any portion of the grant not used for the purposes stated herein shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.