



City of Newton, Massachusetts  
Community Preservation Committee



David B. Cohen  
Mayor

TO: Honorable Board of Aldermen  
FROM: Community Preservation Committee  
DATE: February 6, 2006  
RE: **CPC Recommendation for Funding**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park- Phase 1A Improvements  
**CPA PROJECT ID:** CPA-FY06-10  
**CPA CATEGORY:** Recreation  
**RECOMMENDED CPA FUNDING:** \$753,700

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

The applicants, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Development and Nonantum Advisory Committee, request CPA funds to undertake substantial improvements to both Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park as Phase 1 of a two phase, four-year project. The scope of work was developed through an extensive planning and design initiative that was partially funded through CPA funds in FY04 (matched by CDBG funds). In Phase 1A, the applicants request \$753,700 to begin work. \$750,000 will go to creating detailed construction documents and the first stage of parks improvements. The Law Department's expenses come to \$3,700. The applicants initially requested \$1,490,000 for the entire Phase 1 part of the project. After consultation with the CPC and revising a few elements of their proposal, including removing a mural restoration and reducing the contingency from 15% down to 10%, Phase 1 was spread over two years, with the understanding the applicants will request \$752,500 in FY07. The CPC simultaneously recommended spending \$752,500 for Phase 1B, but will not docket it with the Board of Aldermen until the next fiscal year. Phase 2 of the Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park Project is estimated to cost \$1,200,000. Funding for that phase will likely be requested in the FY08-FY09 timeframe.

The parks are located just over a half-mile from one another in the Nonantum neighborhood. Although the improvements are not identical for both parks, generally the first phase will improve the parks' overall appearance by reorganizing existing park facilities, grouping the playground structures together, building a new tennis court (for Stearns Park) and reconfiguring and relocating the basketball courts. Also, curb appeal will be improved through landscaping and the addition of new fencing. The creation of new paths and installation of water fountains will increase accessibility for disabled citizens. Phase 2 of the project includes additional improvements such as the construction of bleachers, installation of additional lighting, preservation of the ballfields, interpretive signage and picnic tables.

**FINDINGS**

**Community Preservation Act (MGL c.44B)**

Recreation

Under MGL c.44B§2, recreational use is defined as "active or passive recreational use, including but not limited to the use of land for community gardens, trails and noncommercial youth and adult sports, and the use of land as a park, playground or athletic field." This project complies with the definition of recreational use based on both Stearns and Pellegrini Parks established use as public parks.

In addition, the project's scope of work is in compliance with §5 (b)(2) which enables the "creation and preservation of land for recreational use". The proposed scope of work for both parks would virtually *create* two new parks due to the substantial nature of the changes in total, which include: major reorganization of park elements; installation of new facilities with significantly upgraded materials and designs to meet current safety and performance requirements; and the creation of new facilities to replace facilities that are completely non-functioning due to the severity of damage and deterioration. The degree of work proposed through this project goes beyond "rehabilitation" as defined in §2 as "the remodeling, reconstruction and making of extraordinary repairs", which, under §5 (b)(2), is a prohibited use of CPA funds for facilities that were not initially acquired with 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, see below |
| 5. Preserve a resource or opportunity that would otherwise be lost.                                                                                    | Yes, see below |
| 6. Show that a project is the most reasonable available option to achieve the objective.                                                               | See below      |
| 7. Demonstrate strong community support.                                                                                                               | Yes, see below |
| 8. Serve to equitably distribute CPA funds throughout the City.                                                                                        | See below      |

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal 3: Compared to other recreation projects, the Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park- Phase I Improvements is the most expensive. However, the project is the result of a carefully crafted, community driven process where the current conditions of each park and the recreation needs of the neighborhood were assessed. Both Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park have been high on the Parks and Recreation Department's priorities list for years and significant improvements are necessary.

| <i>Project Name</i>                                    | <i>Fiscal Year</i> | <i>Total CPA Funds</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Stearns/Pellegrini Park Improvements – Phase 1A</b> | <b>06</b>          | <b>\$753,700</b>       |
| Senior Center Park                                     | 05                 | \$271,210              |
| Forte Park*                                            | 03                 | \$250,000              |
| Bowen Park Initiative                                  | 06                 | \$205,000              |
| Albemarle Community Classroom                          | 03                 | \$99,931               |
| Cabot Outdoor Classroom                                | 04                 | \$68,270               |
| Wellington Park Improvements                           | 05                 | \$64,000               |
| Bowen Ballfield                                        | 03                 | \$56,805               |
| Houghton Garden                                        | 04                 | \$50,000               |
| Kayla's Garden                                         | 03                 | \$23,718               |

\* The Forte Park project was awarded a total of \$500K under the condition that \$250K be returned to the CP Fund after reimbursement through a state/federal grant. Therefore, this table represents that \$250K of CP funds was awarded to this project.

Goal 4: The table below shows the ratio of CPA funds requested to other funds available for project use. \$140,000 of CDBG funds is available for the first year of the Phase 1 project. The applicants pledge to raise additional funds from the community to contribute to the second phase of the project.

| <i>Total project cost</i> | <i>CPA funds requested</i> | <i>Leveraging (CPA as % of total project cost)</i> |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| \$890,00                  | \$753,700                  | 84.7%                                              |

Goal 5: Both Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park require long over due updates and improvements. The tennis courts are currently cracked and underutilized. The playground equipment is outdated and the existing pathways are not clear. The improvements outlined in the CPA proposal will ensure that the parks are a valued part of the community for a long time to come.

Goal 6: Extensive study was undertaken to inventory the parks conditions and meetings were held with local residents over their priorities for the park. The current proposal is the result of a thorough community process where residents' needs and concerns were identified and plans were developed to meet them.

Goal 7: The Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park improvements were generated through broad neighborhood participation in meetings and a survey questionnaire. The Mayor, local Aldermen, the Nonantum Advisory Committee and the League of Women Voters support the proposal.

Goal 8: The FY06 applications include funding requests for projects in Nonantum, West Newton, Newtonville, Oak Hill, Newton Centre, Chestnut Hill, Newton Highlands, Auburndale, Newton Upper Falls as well as citywide projects. Both Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park are located in Nonantum.

#### Recreation Goals

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Address the needs targeted in the <i>Recreation and Open Space Plan 2003-2007</i> and priorities as identified by the Parks and Recreation Department and Commission and take advantage of other opportunities to meet the recreation needs of the residents of the City. | Yes, see below |
| 2. Demonstrate that the proposal is planned with consideration for the current and future needs and vision of the park/recreation facility.                                                                                                                                  | Yes, see below |
| 3. Meet the recreation needs of the greatest number of residents possible. This means that when faced with a decision between two or more projects, all other factors being equal, the one that serves the largest number of residents will be selected for consideration.   | Yes, see below |
| 4. Meet the greatest variety of recreation needs possible. The committee will favor projects that provide multiple recreation opportunities in a given location.                                                                                                             | Yes, see below |
| 5. 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 |
| 6. Preserve sight lines consistent with open space... decisions about scale and placement should be made with the objective of enhancing or enabling open views.                                                                                                             | N/A            |
| 7. Access for disabled residents should be included in plans wherever possible.                                                                                                                                                                                              | Yes            |

#### Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal 1: The Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park proposal meets some of the goals and policies for active use recreation outlined in the *Recreation and Open Space Plan 2003-2007*. The Plan cites the need for maximizing the use of existing facilities, which this proposal does, and to focus on recreation needs in underserved areas of the City. The Nonantum area has less than 10 acres of recreation space available per 1000 residents, which is the lowest compared to other sections of Newton.

Goal 2: In FY04, the applicants approached the CPC about park renovations at both Stearns and Pellegrini. The CPC advised them to work on both parks concurrently. In the study phase, a better assessment of community vision would arise and in the construction phase, economies of scale would emerge, reducing some costs.

This proposal contains recreation elements to meet the needs of children and adults for both passive and active uses. For children, play areas will be reconstructed with modern equipment and low-maintenance rubberized surfaces that reduce injuries from falls. Older children and adults will benefit from resurfaced basketball and tennis courts and improved soccer and softball fields. Passive recreation needs will be satisfied by realigned and resurfaced pathways and linkages to the street and nearby elderly housing. Accessibility is increased for the handicapped as well, both in terms of access to the park and ease of getting around.

Goal 3: Nonantum is a dense section of Newton, with many potential park users in the area. The Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park improvements will benefit more City residents than any other parks project submitted for CPA funds.

Goal 4: See response to Goal 2 above.

Goal 5: See response to Goal 2 above.

### **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 7-0, with one abstention, to recommend funding this application to improve the condition of the recreation facilities and aesthetics at Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park by appropriating and transferring the requested \$753,700 for the first year of Phase 1A project costs to be expended under the direction and control of the Parks and Recreation Department for purposes of this project as detailed in the application dated October 3, 2005, subject to the following conditions:

1. The Parks and Recreation Department or designee shall submit to the CPC an initial project timeline and a status report on a quarterly basis that describes work that is complete, work remaining, expenditures and target completion date.
2. The Community Development Division of the Planning and Development Department shall be responsible to coordinate with the co-applicant, Nonantum Advisory Committee, to ensure its continued involvement as a stakeholder in the project.
3. Work shall commence no later than December 31, 2006 and shall be completed no later than December 31, 2007 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.
4. Consideration of CPA funds for the Stearns Park and Pellegrini Park- Phase 2 improvements, anticipated in FY08-FY09 will require the demonstration of a good-faith effort on the part of the applicant to substantially leverage other funding sources.
5. Promptly after substantial completion of the design work, the applicant shall submit to the Community Preservation Committee a final project development cost statement. Any portion of the grant not used for the purposes stated herein shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.