



**City of Newton, Massachusetts**  
**Community Preservation Committee**



**DOCKET  
 ITEM NO.**  
  
**#132-09**

David B. Cohen  
 Mayor

**FUNDING RECOMMENDATION**

*DATE:* 28 April 2009  
*TO:* The Honorable Board of Aldermen  
*FROM:* Community Preservation Committee  
*RE:* **recommended Community Preservation funding for  
 WARREN HOUSE Historic Preservation & Rehabilitation**

**1. PROJECT GOALS & ELIGIBILITY**

This project is eligible for CP funds as historic preservation and rehabilitation. It will fund extraordinary repairs to roofs and above-roofline features, using historically appropriate materials (a slate roof, cast stone caps and ornaments, copper flashing, etc.), at this former Newton public junior high school, which was constructed in 1926 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This work is immediately critical to preserve the integrity of the building envelope, and will provide time to raise funds from non-CP sources for other, less urgent but also necessary preservation work on the building.

Following its closure as a school, this building stood unused for several years. In 1992 it was converted for adaptive reuse as housing and a daycare center. Of the building's current 59 apartments, 21 are affordable to households earning no more than 50 percent of the area-wide median income. The 65-year ground lease and special permit from the City of Newton require the building's owner/operator, Newton Community Development Foundation (NCDF) to rent space for a daycare center serving 25 children at \$1 a year; plow and maintain 82 parking spaces costs for the City of Newton recreation fields and tennis courts that surround the building, and pay water costs for the bubbler that serve those facilities.

In return for the recommended investment of CP funds, the City of Newton will acquire a historic preservation restriction on the entire exterior of the building for the term of, and renewable with, the lease. NCDF will also use its best efforts to extend any and all expiring affordability restrictions to the full term of the lease.  
*(For further discussion, see appendix.)*

**2. FUNDING RECOMMENDATION**

On 18 March 2009 the Community Preservation Committee voted to recommend funding this project in full as described in the attached proposal, by **8 in favor, 0 opposed**. The Committee recommends that \$1,082,500 be appropriated for this project from the Community Preservation Fund's historic resources and general reserves, and attributed 100% to historic resources, as follows:

<b>Warren House Historic Preservation &amp; Rehabilitation BUDGET</b>	
<b>USES</b>	
Hard costs (roof replacement and above roofline renovations at the East and West Balconies of the South Wing; South Wing main roof; North Wing main roof)	\$1,113,321
Soft costs (architectural and engineering; clerk of the works; project sponsor's legal costs; soft cost contingency)	\$134,102
City of Newton legal costs	\$2,500
<b>TOTAL USES</b>	<b>\$1,249,923</b>
<b>SOURCES</b>	
<b>Community preservation funds</b>	<b>\$1,082,500</b>
Inclusionary zoning funds	\$67,423
Warren House reserves	\$100,000
<b>TOTAL SOURCES</b>	<b>\$1,249,923</b>

## **ADDITIONAL SOURCES & USES OF FUNDS**

To date, NCDF has spent a total of \$66,000 of its own funds to assess the building's condition, propose and estimate costs for historically appropriate repairs, and commission the 20-year capital and replacement reserves plan that serves as the basis for the current funding request.

Attachments to this recommendation provide additional detail on the sources and uses of funding for two phases of preservation work at Warren House: urgent work (phase 1), for which CP funds are critical; and less urgent but still needed work (phase 2), which will not draw on CP funds. Although NCDF envisions phasing this work over time, the requested CP funds would be needed even if other funds were already in hand for phase 2.

## **3. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Community Preservation Committee further recommends that:

1. recommended CP funds be appropriated to the spending authority and control of the Director of Planning and Development
2. project site work begin within 12 months after the funds become legally available to NCDF
3. before site work begins, NCDF convey to the Newton Historical Commission a historic preservation restriction on the building's exterior that runs for the full term of, and is renewable with, the ground lease, by following any and all legal processes required by City ordinances, etc.
4. the Newton Historical Commission be required to convert and hold the restriction above as perpetual, if the ground lease is not renewed and the building is sold out of public ownership
5. NCDF be required to use its best efforts to extend the term of affordability to the end of the lease (2056) for the 6 currently affordable units with deed restrictions that expire in 2023
6. recognizing the current proposal as phase 1 of a larger program of needed capital investment for this building, NCDF agrees not to request Newton CP funding for subsequent phases of this same capital investment program; however, this should not preclude CP fund requests for other NCDF properties or projects
7. after receipt of CP funding, 50 percent of any unanticipated new funds (such as energy rebates) found for phase 1 of this program be returned to the CP Fund, if the terms of such new funding allow this
8. 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 clerk of the Committee on Community Preservation)

- A.** Proposal summary/cover letter (2 pp.)
- B.** Scope of Work & Budget (phase 1, recommended for CP funding; 2 pp.)
- C.** Project Phasing: Site Plan, Sources & Uses of Funds (all phases and funders; 5 p.)
- D.** Newsletter article: Museum/community celebration of Warren House history (2 p.)
- E.** Affordable Housing at Warren House (1 p.)
- F.** Letters of support (4 pp.)
- G.** December 2008 original proposal to the CPC (approx. 100 pp.)

***Appendix:***

**DETAILED FINDINGS on FUNDING ELIGIBILITY & PRIORITIES**

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

A case might be made that physically preserving this historic building will also preserve the affordable housing it contains. Preservation of affordable housing is an allowable use of CP funds, even if the housing was not originally acquired or created with CP funds. However, as advised by the Newton Law Dept., the CPC has chosen to recommend all funding for this project under “historic resources.”

**Newton Plans & Priorities**

***Community Preservation Plan***

The Warren House proposal meets the following goals in this *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.
2. Serve more than one CPA category ...
4. Leverage other public and/or private funds.
5. Preserve a resource or opportunity that would otherwise be lost.
7. Demonstrate strong community support.

*Historic Resources Goals*

1. Support the preservation and/or restoration of municipally owned resources that are on the National or State Historic Registers. ...
3. Encourage protection of resources that retain their historic integrity, in terms of location, context, design, style, workmanship, and materials.
4. Enable access to the resource by the public, including access by disabled residents.

*Community Housing Goals*

1. Help Newton make 10% of its housing stock affordable to those at or below 80% of median income.
2. Create community housing that is well designed, of decent quality and based on sound planning principles ...
4. Keep new units affordable for the long term and in perpetuity where possible.
5. Demonstrate that the amount of requested CPA funding as well as the total public subsidy requested is reasonable ... For example, it may be reasonable to support a higher public subsidy to enable the creation of housing serving lower income groups.
6. Show that the proposal ... could not otherwise be economically feasible without CPA funds.
7. Avoid displacement of current residents.
9. Reuse previously developed sites for community housing ...

***Comprehensive Plan***

Warren House is an excellent example of the “adaptive reuse” of the city’s historic resources, which is strongly supported by the Newton’s current *Comprehensive Plan*: “The ways in which Newton uses its historic resources [should] match the depth and breadth of the resources themselves. ... **Historic buildings** and landscapes are already used throughout the City for **affordable housing**, economic development, and recreation. Ironically, many of these uses are not recognized as historic preservation or adaptive reuse, perhaps because these projects depend less on preservation regulations and review than on proactive planning.”

**DISCUSSION**

*Community character:* Warren House represents a period in Newton’s development, after 1920, when automobiles began to encourage residential development, and major new public buildings – such as schools and the new City Hall – were sited mostly outside traditional village centers, wherever

developable sites were available. Placement on its site, size, architectural details – including the cupola, and its original use as a junior high school – when that was still an experimental idea, all make Warren House a visible symbol of Newton’s historic commitment to innovative public education. In addition, Warren House’s current use represents the diversity that is so strongly valued by many Newton residents, but which is very much threatened by market forces.

*Leverage:* CP funding is critical to this project, but the bulk of the funding for preservation and rehabilitation work at Warren House is anticipated to come from other sources. Many avenues of additional funding remain open, but for several reasons these funds are on a slower timeline and cannot be used to meet the building’s immediate and increasingly urgent needs.

*Urgency:* Warren House now urgently requires work that has long been deferred for financial reasons – both when it served as a public school, and during its early 1990s conversion for housing. Since NCDF first requested CP funds for Warren House in 2006, several deteriorated pieces of cast stone have detached from the roofline and fallen onto the sidewalks below (fortunately, no one has been injured). Decorative concrete (cast stone) was still experimental when Warren House was built; preservation architects often find it necessary to use newer mixes or techniques when replacing this material.

*Cost/efficiency:* The expected useful lifetime of many materials called for in this project is 50-75 years (the copper sheathing should last 50 years, the slate roof at least 75). Most materials that cost less to begin with are not only historically inappropriate, but are likely to prove more expensive in the long run because they require replacement in 20 years or less.

*Accessibility:* As the February 2006 community history celebration showed, Warren House is now fully accessible. That event brought together former teachers and students with current residents, in a warm and inviting atmosphere. NCDF has offered to host similar community open house events in the future, so the general public can appreciate at close hand how both the original conversion project and NCDF’s ongoing stewardship have preserved this former school’s historically significant interior features, as well as the exterior features addressed by the current proposal.

*Housing goals:* Although the CPC is not recommending this project for housing funds, Warren House provides 21 units affordable to households with at most 50% of the area’s median income. Such units are difficult to produce and even more difficult to replace if they are lost. NCDF expects to extend affordability on all these units to the full term of its ground lease with the City of Newton. Finally, the proposed project will not only avoid displacing current residents, but will reward their impressive loyalty to Warren House, which has been tested by having to move out of their units during past, temporary repairs (for some residents, more than once).