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**Community Preservation Committee
Funding Recommendation for
NEWTON HIGHLANDS PLAYGROUND REHABILITATION (CONSTRUCTION)**

date: 8 June 2016

from: Community Preservation Committee

to: The Honorable City Council

PROJECT GOALS & ELIGIBILITY

This project will implement the CPA-funded design for the rehabilitation of Newton Highlands/Joseph Lee Playground off Upland Road, near the corner of Winchester and Dedham Streets. The project will create a new drainage and stormwater management system; a new Little League field and a new natural turf multi-purpose field for soccer, football and lacrosse; lights for night play on the fields; a new tot lot; new basketball and tennis courts; and a new support building with restrooms, changing rooms and storage. Accessible pathways will cross and surround the site. Paths on the wooded hillside will be improved but will not be expanded.

The project's CPA eligibility, as the rehabilitation of recreation land, was established for its design phase.

RECOMMENDED FUNDING

On December 10 by a vote of 7-1 (Beryl Gilfix opposed, Laura Fitzmaurice absent) the Community Preservation Committee recommended appropriating \$2,500,000 for this project from the Community Preservation Fund's open space/recreation reserve and unrestricted fund balance and reserve to the control of the Parks & Recreation Department for any purpose included implicitly in the following summary budget:

Newton Highlands Playground Rehabilitation - Construction Budget

Uses of Funds			
Site preparation, demolition, earthwork & drainage, general site improvements	\$1,350,000	Electrical work (including overhead lights)	\$360,000
		Mobilization, Overhead and Profit (15%)	\$386,894
Plantings	\$270,000	Contingency (10%)	\$257,556
Playing fields & courts	\$283,000	Construction Admin. - Weston & Sampson	\$110,550
Park support building	\$312,000	Project Mgmt. - Parks & Recreation Dept.	\$12,500
Subtotal	\$2,215,000	Total Uses	\$3,342,500
Sources of Funds			
CPA			\$2,500,000
Parks & Recreation Dept. Operating Budget			\$12,500
Community Fundraising (\$44,000 in addition to \$10,000 listed in proposal)			\$54,000
Other sources, including CDBG (CDBG amount to be determined)			\$776,000
Total Sources			\$3,342,500

website www.newtonma.gov/cpa

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SPECIAL ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE CPC

Project Need: Newton Highlands Playground has long been the Parks & Recreation Dept.'s top capital spending priority. Because the Dept. has been unable to maintain the site adequately for many years, the fields are now barely usable or safe. Once it is fully rehabilitated, however, this site will significantly narrow – though it cannot completely fill – the gap between Newton's rapidly growing demand for organized outdoor recreation and the City's finite supply of public outdoor recreation facilities.

Project Budget: In response to CPC questions, the project team acknowledged that it might be possible to complete the project for less than the total CPA funding originally requested. As one example, CPC vice chair Jane Sender suggested that younger trees could probably be planted and maintained not only at a lower cost but more successfully in the long term than the mature trees included in the current planting budget.

Reliance on CPA Funds: Even after finding additional private donations at the CPC's urging, the Parks & Recreation Dept. requested CPA funding for over 99% of this project's costs. The CPC's recommendation for 75% CPA funding is intended, not as a criticism of this project, but to preserve funds for Newton's other CPA-eligible needs. Member Beryl Gilfix voted against the recommendation because she would have preferred to see the project use an even lower proportion of CPA funding.

Based on current funding forecasts, the *Community Preservation Plan* targets approximately \$5 million for the rehabilitation of Parks & Recreation facilities over the next 5 years. The current 5-year *Capital Improvement Plan*, as corrected by Commissioner DeRubeis, lists about \$14 million of potential CPA funding requests for this purpose over the next 5-6 years, including historic buildings that serve Parks & Recreation. The *Community Preservation Plan's* targets also differ significantly from the total potential CPA requests in the *CIP* for the Public Buildings Dept. (see attached excerpt from the *Community Preservation Plan*). To guide the submission of future City proposals, the CPC hopes that both the total of potential CPA requests and funding expectations for particular resources in the *CIP* can be revised to align more closely with the funding forecasts and allocation targets in the *Community Preservation Plan*.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS (*funding conditions*)

1. The CPC assumes all recommended funds will be appropriated within 6 months, and the project will be completed within 18 months, after the date of this recommendation. If either of these deadlines cannot be met, Parks & Recreation should submit a written request to the CPC to extend that deadline.
2. Immediately after completing the project, the Parks & Recreation Dept. should present an in-person and written final report of project results to the CPC, including a comparison of budgeted to actual expenditures and any updates to the department's list of potential future CPA requests in the *Capital Improvement Plan*.
3. Any CPA funds appropriated but not used for the purposes stated herein should be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.

KEY OUTCOMES

The Community Preservation Committee will evaluate this project based on how well it meets goals 1 and 2 above.

ATTACHMENTS

(delivered to the clerks of the Programs & Services, Public Facilities and Finance Committees)

- Five-year potential proposals and target allocations from *Community Preservation Plan*
- Copy of the CPC's project webpage for Newton Highlands Playground, with links to additional information: www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/cpa/projects/upperfalls.asp#Highlands-construction
- Slide presentation to CPC public hearing on 10 December 2015
- Proposal and supporting materials submitted to the CPC

All **public comments** received were supportive, other than those of the League of Women Voters, which supported the project while questioning its heavy reliance on CPA funds. All comments received in writing are on the webpage above, though they have not been included in the Council's packet.