



Finance Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Monday, January 11, 2021

Present: Councilors Grossman (Chair), Malakie, Humphrey, Kalis, Norton and Noel; 1 vacancy

Also Present: Councilors Crossley, Leary, Laredo, Wright, Ryan, Albright, Krintzman, Danberg and Baker

Absent: Councilor Gentile

City staff present: Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux, Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo, Comptroller Sue Dzikowski, CPA Program Manager Lara Kritzer, Director of Planning and Development Barney Heath, Chief Information Officer Joe Mulvey, Fire Chief Gino Lucchetti, and Commissioner of Inspectional Services John Lojek

Chair's Note: *The Committee met jointly with Zoning & Planning to discuss the following 2 items.*

#25-21 **Appropriate \$1,137,285 from Free Cash for Permitting Management System**
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the sum of one million one hundred thirty-seven thousand two hundred and eighty-five dollars from June 30, 2020 Certified Free Cash to fund the implementation of the City's municipal information and permitting management system.

Action: **Finance Approved 6-0**

Note: The Chair of the Finance Committee introduced Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo to make a presentation about the permitting management system (presentation attached). Mr. Yeo introduced the request and noted that the system will support the permitting and licensing processes for the City of Newton and provide comprehensive municipal information management for building projects and land use. A team of City employees has been working over the last 1.5 years on this project. The team was led by John Lojek of ISD and includes Jonathan Yeo, Joe Mulvey from IT, Neil Cronin from Planning, Kristin Patton from ISD, Sherry Logee from HHS, and Councilor Chris Markiewicz. Dottie Keene from Dottie Keene Associates was hired to assist the team with the evaluation of our systems. Over the last six months, the team has been reviewing the RFPs and interviewing bidders and is now ready to hire the firm OpenGov to implement a system for the City of Newton. Dottie Keene worked to analyze the business practices of the City and document the requirements necessary to write an effective RFP. She then helped to facilitate the evaluation and selection of a winning vendor. She will continue to work with the city to assist in OpenGov's implementation, working with all departments to configure our business work flows into this new system. The new system will be a major step forward, as Newton does not currently have a coordinated permitting and licensing system.

OpenGov is used by thousands of entities across the country, as well as 83 municipalities in Massachusetts. The cost for the software and implementation is \$1.1 million for the first three years. The price includes purchasing the software, the annual vendor costs, new hardware, and our consultant. This new system will include all of our permits and licenses, as well as property information in one comprehensive database. It will configure workflows to keep our departments moving ahead on projects, and provide a significant improvement for contractors and residents. Users will be able to see more information on line with greater self service, as well as allow contractors to apply and pay online for various inspections and permits.

Mr. Yeo introduced ISD Commissioner John Lojek, who thanked the Mayor for her leadership and for allowing the project to move forward. Mr. Lojek has been wanting this project for 16 years. The team worked hard and put in time outside their normal working hours to put this project together. Because of all the work that went into the RFP, Mr. Lojek believes the City is getting very good value for its money.

The system design goes beyond just permitting and licensing. It will provide a variety of property information and allow us to track almost everything that's done on a property from brand new building permits to dog licensing - all online. Not only Inspectional Services, but also departments like Engineering and DPW which are involved with the issuance of building permits will be able to track where everything is. It will be enormously helpful to the Planning Department and the City Council as it works on Special Permits as it will put all the information about a property, which is currently scattered across the City, in one place.

The Chair of the Finance Committee thanked Mr. Yeo and the members of the project team, and noted that it's exciting to get to this point. She called on Councilor Markiewicz for his thoughts as a member of the team.

Councilor Markiewicz stated that he believes this is the most important application for the City of Newton. It has the potential to be transformative, and will create a database of everything related to permits including the recording of conditions in special permits. He was impressed by this firm and the breadth of what they offered. The fact that they serve over 80 communities in Massachusetts is notable and indicates a software vendor who will invest in their software over time.

Through this software, the City will be able to implement kiosks in City Hall for permits and promote self service. The City's inspectors in the field will have real time access to property records, diagrams, information, etc. which will enable them to do a very complete inspection. Councilor Markiewicz believes that the proposed appropriation will be money extremely well spent. The staff time savings that the City can realize will be tremendous. The return on investment for this system will be real in a very short period of time.

The Chair of the Finance Committee asked for questions from the Councilors.

It was asked if one of the benefits of this system would be the ability to follow up on conditions or requirements of special permits? Mr. Yeo responded that there is a reminder system built into the program that includes tickler files to remind departments of steps that are outstanding. ISD can also

set up future inspections, and permit requirements, through the calendar feature. Planning could set up reviews of special permit conditions to remind them to review them within a certain time frame.

It was asked if the system would provide reminders to employees through e-mail? Mr. Lojek responded that reminders will be right in each employee's workflow and work schedule for the day. It was noted by a Councilor that they were thrilled to have this tickler component as part of the software because in the past they had to go around to departments to remind them that they needed to take care of yearly requirements.

Director of IT Joe Mulvey was asked about the security and the potential for a breach of this system. Mr. Mulvey responded that this solution is cloud based and does not tie directly into our internal systems. The IT department did discuss security with the company and because this is cloud based system that doesn't work with an active directory it's pretty secure and doesn't raise any red flags.

The committee questioned how the constituent experience will be different with this product? Mr. Lojek responded that the idea behind the new system is that everybody can see exactly where a project is in the process at any given moment. The system is all about routing the work. The process may start in ISD, but at the appropriate time, the Planning Department will immediately be able to look at it, then Engineering will be able to look at it. No more pieces of paper being passed around. All plans will be accepted electronically and all approvals will be part of the electronic work flow. The system will make each department more accountable as everyone will know how long something has been sitting in a particular department.

It was asked what new hardware is needed for this project? Mr. Yeo responded that new tablets would be needed for the inspectors to take with them out in the field. When they are on the site inspecting a building they will be able to look at the plans and be able to see in real time exactly what they're supposed to be reviewing. The department does have some tablets now, but they are at the end of their useful life. Tablets usually only last about three years because of wear and tear.

Councilors asked about the rollout of the system because there are concerns about bumps in the road and how they will be minimized. Will there be a testing period and what kind of testing? Mr. Mulvey noted that they are breaking the migration up into three phases. The biggest phase will be moving the current Community Plus data into OpenGov. There will be several iterations of the import to ensure that everything comes over smoothly. While the data is being imported, ISD and Planning will be working specifically on workflow including the steps required. As far as the testing goes the first round will be making sure that the staff is happy and satisfied with what we expect the platform to do. Unlike the website transition, we don't have an existing system, so we will be creating a new system and then implementing a go live time at some point so it's a very different project than transitioning a website. Mr. Lojek responded that his staff will be starting with a specific permit type like electrical and mechanical permits and will then move on to building permits and adding the Planning Department and the Health Department, and so on

It was asked if there would be a period of time once this site went live when a builder, an architect or constituent could still come in and have personal contact with members of ISD as not everyone is going to be comfortable or understand how to use the data in the system. Additionally, will there be a staff person dedicated to assisting people with how to use the system? Mr. Lojek responded that he ISD counter is going to stay open. There is always going to be a need for the counter to provide personal service and information to citizens about particular issues. We don't expect to lose personal contact with people at all.

The Councilors asked about older records and the legacy component because there are documents that are part of the history of a property that are not scanned in at this point in time. Mr. Lojek responded that all the information from 2005 forward, and all of the plans from 2015 forward are electronic, so all that material will be uploaded as part of the data conversion. There's a lot more work to do with the older data. It was noted that sometimes it's important to know what happened further back in history to resolve a current-day issue.

With all the data and the process being electronic, it was asked if the software could segregate what is needed by the departments and inspectors for enforcement and what is available to the public? Mr. Lojek responded that the system could do that.

It was asked if residents would be able to see if something that has been flagged for the future will be coming up and how that flagged item was responded to. Mr. Lojek responded that he expected that would be the case. Items to be addressed in the future can be added into the system with as much of this online as possible.

It was asked if everything that's online now will be uploaded to into the new system and be available when the system goes live. It was noted that there needs to be integration between the City Council web pages and the city web pages. Mr. Yeo responded that when a new City Clerk is hired, we will need to figure that out.

It was asked if information like demolition permits, tree permits, historical commission hearings, etc. would show up for a property through this system. Right now it is hard to find all of this information for a property through the website as it is in multiple places. Mr. Lojek responded that all of these items would be incorporated into the workflow. It will require the cooperation of many different departments.

As this item had only been referred to Finance, a motion was made by Councilor Kalis to approve which received 6 votes in favor with none opposed.

Referred to Zoning & Planning and Finance Committees

#458-20

CPC Recommendation to appropriate \$1,433,000 in CPA funding for Grace Church

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending the appropriation of one million four hundred and thirty-three thousand dollars (\$1,433,000) in Community Preservation Act historic resource funding to the Grace Episcopal Church Tower Restoration project for the stabilization and preservation of the historically significant ca. 1872 conical stone spire, tower and belfry.

**Actions: Zoning & Planning Held 6-0 (Councilors Baker and Danberg not voting)
Finance Held 6-0**

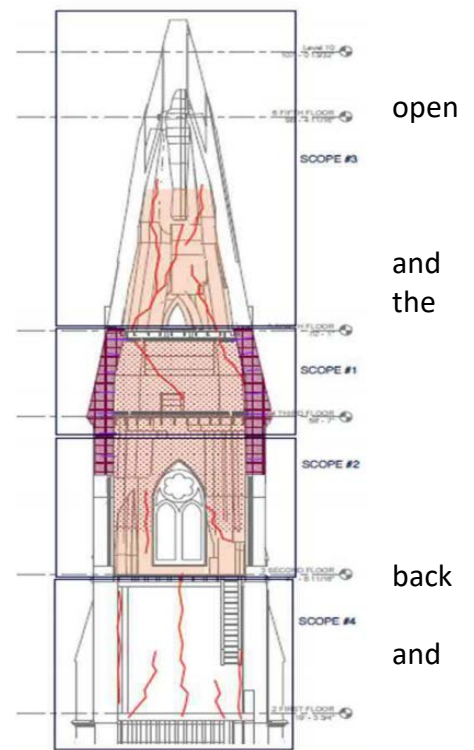
The Chair of the Finance Committee introduced the item and noted that there were a number of people who were instrumental in helping to get to this meeting organized including President Albright, Councilor Crossley, CPA Program Manager Lara Kritzer, Assistant City Solicitor Andrew Lee, and Mr. Olson and Ms. Flynn from the Clerk's Office. She noted that she met with President Albright and Councilor Crossley to put together the materials that the Committees received in advance of this meeting and hopes that committee members found them helpful. She then introduced CPA Program Manager Lara Kritzer to make a presentation on behalf of the Community Preservation Committee.

Ms. Kritzer introduced the Chair of the Community Preservation Committee Mark Armstrong and Vice Chair Dan Brody. She also noted that they were joined by several representatives from the Grace Episcopal Church including architect Scott Aquilina. She then shared her presentation (attached).

The Grace Episcopal Church building has been considered to be an architecturally and historically significant structure for as long as the City has been tracking its historic resources. It was designed by noted architect Alexander Esty in 1872 and is thought by many to be one of his major works. The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Farlow and Kendrick Parks Historic Districts and had a preservation restriction placed on it in 1999.

Many city documents have noted the need to protect and preserve Newton's churches, not only for their architectural and historical contributions to the area, but also for the social services, community gathering places such as polling centers, and multi-use space facilities which many of them provide. Grace Episcopal Church and its tower have been community landmarks. The most notable element of the structure is the gothic revival stone tower which is offset from the main building and houses an open belfry and an architecturally unusual stone spire. The exterior condition of stonework is regularly inspected and repaired as needed. During a recent review of the bell tower last year, engineers from Structures North Consulting discovered cracks in the stonework which seriously threatens the integrity of the structure.

At this point the tower is in danger of collapse. The applicant proposes to stabilize the structure by securing the exterior stone to the core structure. The system would use an integral spring loaded steel reinforcement system to resolve the structural flaw is expected to permanently correct the issue. Once the structure is stabilized, restoration work would be completed to repair the existing cracks and damaged stone, and to re-point the mortar throughout the structure. The proposed budget divides the work



into two phases over two years.

Phase One will complete the stabilization of the structure in 2021 and Phase Two will complete the restoration of the stonework in 2022.

The applicants are requesting 50% of the project cost from the CPA, and propose to match these funds with a mix of other grants and donated funds.

Proposed Project Budget - Sources	
Requested CPA Funding	\$1,433,000
Massachusetts Historical Commission Preservation Projects Fund (Received)	\$50,000
Massachusetts Historical Commission Emergency and Preservation Projects Fund	\$100,000
National Fund for Sacred Places	\$250,000
Grace Episcopal Church Member Contributions and Endowment	\$875,000
Private Foundation Support	\$158,000
PROJECT TOTAL	\$2,866,000

The CPC's recommendation proposes that funds set aside in the historic resource reserves be used for this project. The reserve fund represents the 10% of annual CPA funds which are set aside each year for historic preservation, which is one of the CPAs three stated purposes. The historic reserve fund has a total of \$1,037,119 in unused historic resource funds through FY21. The balance of the funds requested would come from reserve funds in FY22. A chart was provided as part of the presentation on how Newton's CPA funds have been used to date.

Current CPA Fund Balances

Account Types	Current Fund Balance
Community Housing Reserve Fund	\$911,042
Historic Resource Reserve Fund	\$1,037,119
Open Space Reserve Fund	\$409,689
FY21 Budget Reserve	\$1,306,399
General CPA Fund Balance	\$9,865,878
Total Funds Available	\$13,530,127

Mr. Armstrong, Chair of the Community Preservation Committee, stated that there were a couple of votes that were not in favor of this project for different reasons, but that it received a favorable recommendation from the Committee. As required by the CPC, the request was for 50% or less of the total amount of the project. The CPA funds are expected to be used to leverage other sources of

funding for this project. The Committee recognized the urban design and architectural value of the tower, and its place in the City, when they made their decision.

The Chair of the Finance Committee laid out her plans for tackling the discussion of this project. She proposed breaking the discussion up into four components:

The first component will be a discussion of the merits of this project. Is this a historical resource that we want to preserve?

The second category of discussion will be around the fact that this is a privately owned historic resource. What other projects have been funded that fall into this category?

The third category of discussion will be around the amount of money that is being requested. It is a significant amount of money. What are the other historic resource projects that are in need of funding?

And finally the legal component of this particular project. There are some different legal aspects of this project to consider.

The Chair of Finance opened the floor for discussion.

The Merits of this Project.

Councilors provided the following comments and concerns:

Councilors in general felt that the project was both historically and architecturally a gem for the Community. It is an outstanding resource which is worth preserving, and meets many of the community preservation plan goals. It contributes to the preservation of Newton's unique character and enhances the quality of life in Newton Corner.

There is broad based community support. Councilors heard from a wide variety of people, not just members of the church. To many, this is an icon that you encounter as you drive, walk or bike along Church Street. It stands out as part of the landscape of Farlow Park.

It is an important landmark for Ward One. There is very strong support for this funding from the Hunnewell Hill Neighborhood Group, the Newton Corner Neighborhood Group, and from many members of the neighborhood. It was noted that the Council has received many, many emails hoping to get this funding for the tower. Grace Church is a private religious organization, but also regularly leases space for important community and social service resources for the community. The church has entered into partnership with Independent Living providing independent living for cognitively challenged adults and has rented out its rectory for outpatient services to Riverside Community Care which serves thousands of individuals, and works closely with the schools and the health department. It also provides space at below-market rates for many community organizations and the church hosts

entertainment programs, as well as serving as a polling location for Ward One residents. The church is not just a religious space, it is also used for the public good.

Without the funds from the CPA the bell tower is at risk to be taken down.

A Privately Owned Historic Resource

Councilors provided the following comments and concerns:

Concern was raised about public money going to a private organization. I further back in history to resolve a current-day issue was noted that the City has done this before with excellent outcomes. In Newton Corner the West Suburban YMCA building received funds for window preservation and funds have been given for affordable housing projects with great success. The West Suburban YMCA provides public benefit including camp programs and housing for homeless men. The key concept to understand is that public funds are not just being used for private purposes, but to advance a public purpose.

The City has funded other private organizations with a large amount of money like the Durant-Kenrick and Allen house projects. Some Councilors felt that what separates those two projects from this one is that those two projects have a very public purpose, as opposed to this particular project which does not have the same level of public access. The Community Preservation Committee should develop a policy around funding for private organizations. Criteria needs to be developed to decide whether or not it is appropriate to give private organizations Community Preservation funds.

Some Councilors felt it was important that we not conflate the purposes of the CPA. There's a different set of metrics for the Grace Church project than the YMCA building, because the church is historically significant in different ways. The Council should be careful about the conditions that are put upon it.

The Amount of Money Requested

Councilors provided the following comments and concerns:

Many other communities have funded similar projects. However, the amount of money that is being asked for from the CPC for this project pales in comparison to the amounts funded by other communities. The largest ones were funded in Boston which gave three churches funds for similar projects. The largest amount of money given in Boston was \$450,000 and that was to the First Baptist Church. In that case the money was approximately a third of the project. This \$1.4 million is the largest amount of money for any of these projects. And while it's a worthy project, is this the right amount of money, or could we challenge the community to raise other funds, as other churches have done, to fund a more significant part of the project?

It was noted that 10% of the CPA funds need to be spent on historic resources and we have a little over one million in the account with \$400,000 coming in each year.

One Councilor noted that if these funds are approved, the property should be landmarked. The church itself said in their letter to the Council that that's one of the things that they want to follow through with.

A Councilor asked whether a condition could be added that if the church sells the property at some point down the road, that the CPA money will be returned?

Solicitor Lee stated that the Law department is looking into landmarking and is taking that under advisement. With regards to the condition of having the money returned if the property transfers ownership, it doesn't conform to the reasoning of the granting of CPA funds. Usually when CPA funds are spent, the property is protected through some sort of a restriction like a Historic Preservation Restriction that runs with the land regardless of who owns it. Solicitor Lee's understanding is that the only time that funds are actually repaid to the city is if the structure was destroyed by some calamity and there were insurance proceeds. Then the funds would be paid back to the city. He didn't believe that a condition to require that the funds must be repaid if the ownership changes is something that's ever been done before.

Ms. Kritzer noted that any CPA funding for historical resources requires a preservation restriction. In this case the property already has a preservation restriction which requires that if they make any changes to the historic structure, they must first get approval from the Massachusetts Historical Commission for those changes. When landmarking was originated it was to protect buildings, such as this one, from changes that were inappropriate. Local landmarking puts protections on the property that are reviewed by the Newton Historical Commission. A preservation restriction goes to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, which often involves the Newton Historical Commission as well, for approval. We already have the restrictions and the protections in place on this property, whether or not we choose to fund the project.

It was asked if when the reserves available for this project were calculated was the 10% required allocation or the 20% CPC determined ideal amount used? Ms. Kritzer responded that when the Comptroller sets up the accounts each year they put 10% of the annual funds into the budget reserve. However, since the CPA has not had many historic resource projects in the last few years, there's a greater amount of money in that fund right now.

Ms. Kritzer was asked how this expenditure squares with the lengthy chart of other items that are in the historic resource categories for the future? She responded that it is hard to predict because it's hard to tell when a project will come before the CPC with a proposal. Our list of potential City projects includes the score from the CIP so that we know how important it is, or how likely it is to come up, but the CPC can only act on proposals brought before it. Until the City is ready to move forward with a project, we don't necessarily know when the funds will be needed. Recent historic projects have been very small like the one from Historic Newton for fence and gutter repairs. The CPA hasn't had a large-scale project recently. The most recent large-scale project request was for the War Memorial steps and that was placed on hold because of the costs.

Some Councilors commented that the Council has heard that if Grace Church doesn't get the full amount, then this project will not happen. But that's not the right way to look at this request. The Committee should recommend to the full Council the allocation that it feels is appropriate, if any.

It was asked if the larger Episcopal Church in the United States or the region provided assistance toward this project? Members of Grace Church responded that Grace Church is an integral member of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. The Diocese of Massachusetts has over 90 parishes in communities that are not as affluent as Newton. Those churches are struggling financially, and the Diocese is working very hard to support those churches, including programming on racial justice, hunger relief, and other social equity programs. The money comes from the parishes themselves to fund the Diocese. The Diocese is not in a position to help in significant ways financially

A Councilor is interested in finding out from Grace Church what would happen if a lesser amount was appropriated. What if the City provided funds in the range of \$400,000 to \$800,000 dollars? It was noted that the community fundraising portion of this project may not have begun yet, so this may be another opportunity to raise more funds

A member of the church council stated that they can't raise money until they know what the project will entail. The church has done a very extensive feasibility study with several consultants that they have hired to find out what funding is available through other grant money, and what exactly could be raised as a congregation and a community. By far, Community Preservation funds are the biggest possible grant that they could get. Without that, they won't be able to raise enough money to fix this problem. A member of the church council stated they have followed all the criteria of the CPC. One of the criteria is to not apply for more than 50% of the project and the request is only for 50% of the project. It was noted that the church would have liked to apply for more funds but know this is not an option. They have a very good handle on what they think they can raise and believe it's going to be a stretch for them to raise this money, but are committed to raising the match.

It was asked if there is any dollar amount less than what has been requested that could be accepted and still be able to complete the project? The members of the congregation responded that they examined how much they will be able to raise and how much the CPA would be able to fund. The church needs this \$1.43 million to make this project happen. It was noted that it would be cheaper to take the tower down. The tower does not affect the mission of the church. The church will function with or without a tower. A member of the church noted that if they do achieve a higher level of fundraising than they predicted, they would be happy to share that savings with the City and adjust the amount of money accepted from the CPC.

The Chair of the Finance Committee noted that she added this to the list of questions for the Law Department. If Grace Church raises more money than projected, would the CPC be able to accept money back?

Legal component of this particular project

Councilors provided the following comments and concerns:

It was noted that this is the first time Newton has considered a CPA project for a religious institution, but that 91 municipalities in Massachusetts have already committed CPA funds to help preserve historic houses of worship. Newton has yet to do so and it was asked if this was by happenstance or does Newton need to pass a policy to allow that? Ms. Kritzer responded there's no set policy amongst the committee. The proposals that have been funded are a function of who has applied in the past for CPA funds. All Community Preservation Committees are limited by what projects are proposed to them. For whatever reason, Newton has had virtually no religious institutions apply for funding in the last 20 years. She felt that was just coincidence.

A Councilor remembered that Grace Church applied for funds in the first year that the City had the CPC. Ms. Kritzer responded that they applied in the first year or two of the program to restore the clerestory windows in the church. They ended up, however, getting funding from the Mass Historical Commission and funding from an insurance issue. They ended up receiving more funding than they needed so they withdrew their CPA application and went no further with it.

One Councilor stated that here in New England we have so much history tied up in our churches; for example, no one would argue if public funds were dedicated to historic preservation of Boston's Old North Church. It is important that the Council evaluate each project on its own merits, and on an individual basis. A Councilor stated that the Council should not rule out funding to private organizations just because they are houses of worship. And in fact, the Supreme Court said as much in their Trinity Lutheran case.

A Councilor stated that they were very comfortable that we are on sound legal ground and felt that this is actually a very important thing for the City to be doing. They were quite comfortable that scrutiny has been applied by the Community Preservation Committee and that they did an appropriate job.

Ms. Kritzer was asked how many other churches are in Newton that are on the Historic Register and she responded that there are 25. Some Councilors foresaw the City possibly entering a whole new area of possible funding requests, and felt it important for the Community Preservation Committee to think about what the criteria are that a religious organization must meet to be worthy of receiving Community Preservation Funds.

Some Councilors felt that a steeple is religious in form and function unlike a church playground, or the secular community functions that have been described. This request is not for acquiring the church building for public use and preservation, which would be a different question. A number of Councilors noted that churches are a big part of our historic landscape in Newton. But if that's true, then the Council might need to think long term about what the answer is not just for this specific project but for preservation of church buildings in general. A Councilor noted that the government should not be in the business of picking and choosing the active and ongoing religious sects to support or not support.

One Councilor noted that students of architecture and religion understand that a church building is heavy with symbolism.

Some Councilors felt that public funds should not be used for the purpose of supporting any religious denomination. One Councilor stated that religious organizations should not be receiving public funds because money that is given to faith-based churches can have restrictions on it, therefore presenting the possibility that certain individuals could be excluded from enjoying the benefits of the public funds.

Some Councilor felt that if the City is truly committed to supporting our historic buildings, then there needs to be a discussion on how the City deals with historic religious buildings.

The Chairs of both Finance and Zoning & Planning entertained motions to hold this item in their respective Committees, which were approved in each committee. The Chair of Finance noted that she has kept a list of questions, and the biggest sticking points, that have come up during the conversation. She asked that if Councilors have additional questions or concerns over the coming days, that they contact her or Chair Crossley. She would like to make sure that the Committees are staying on top of this and getting any information that is needed. She and Chair Crossley will work together to find another night to continue this discussion. She thanked all of the members of the public, the administration, and the Grace Church community for participating and for their patience tonight.

#23-21 Accept \$25,600 in grant funds from Mass Emergency Management Agency
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend a grant from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) in the amount of twenty-five thousand, six hundred dollars (\$25,600) to purchase equipment for the City's emergency operations management function.

Action: Finance Approved 4-0 (Councilors Norton and Noel not voting)

Note: Fire Chief Gino Lucchetti presented the request to accept and expend a \$25,600 grant from MEMA to purchase equipment for the City's emergency operations management function. Chief Lucchetti explained that currently the back-up dispatch at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is connected to the City's server and when the City's internet goes down so does the internet at the EOC. This equipment will ensure that the EOC will remain up and running.

Councilor Kalis motioned to approve which passed 4-0 with Councilors Norton and Noel not voting.

#24-21 Authorization to expend a Mass Dept of Public Health grant
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend a grant in the amount of forty-nine thousand four hundred and fifty-seven dollars (\$49,457) from the Mass Dept of Public Health to supplement staffing support in the City's Department of Health and Human Services.

Action: Finance Approved 4-0 (Councilors Norton and Noel not voting)

Note: Chief Financial Officer, Maureen Lemieux explained that this is an additional grant that the City received from the Mass Department of Health. Ms. Lemieux explained that this brings the total of what the Mass Department of Health has awarded to the City to just under \$300,000. These funds

go to overtime for existing staff. Ms. Lemieux noted that these funds may also be used when it is time to further distribute vaccinations. The first responders are beginning to receive their vaccinations this week and the schedule for the rest of the vaccinations will be announced at a later time.

Councilor Kalis motioned to approve which passed 4-0 with Councilors Norton and Noel not voting.

Chair's Note: *The following two items were discussed together.*

#395-20 **Request for updates on budget and possible reimbursements at Newton Public Schools**
The President of the Council, on behalf of the City Council, requesting updates to the Finance Committee from the Chief Financial Officer regarding budget expenditures and possible reimbursements related to school reopening at each meeting this fall.

Action: **Finance Held 4-0 (Councilors Norton and Noel not voting)**

Chair's Note: *Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux provided an update on the expenditure of funds for COVID-19 as related to item #239-20.*

Note: Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux explained the City has received and deposited approximately \$3 million in reimbursements from the CARES Act. Newton has now received \$3,250,000 of the \$7.8 million that was allocated to the City. Ms. Lemieux explained that we have applied for approximately \$1 million from FEMA, which the City has not received yet. If there are items that FEMA will not cover, then those items will be moved to the CARES application. Ms. Lemieux noted that reimbursement for eligible spending under the CARES Act has been extended to expenditures through December 31, 2021.

The School Department should be receiving approximately \$2.5 million. Currently, the School Department has received \$745,000 from ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund); a portion of those funds were shared with the private schools in Newton. The public schools received approximately \$683,000, and that number will be multiplied to equal about \$2.5 million. Ms. Lemieux noted that the School Department will have until September 2023 to spend those funds. The cost of testing staff members for the Newton Public Schools under the program the schools are currently running is approximately \$24,000 a week for the 1100 staff members that have signed-up to participate. The cost does not include the PPE required to be able to follow testing protocols, which brings the cost to \$25,000-\$30,000 a week. Ms. Lemieux noted that she was unaware whether labs had the capacity to allow the City to do more testing than that but explained that what the City is really paying for is spots at the labs.

FEMA has announced that the City is still able to apply for overtime costs incurred for first responders. Ms. Lemieux explained that the City will continue the Grab & Go program for food insecurity which costs about \$45,000-\$50,000 a month. There may also be more ventilation work done at the schools. Currently, the City has spent \$2.3 million in areas that are being utilized this year, but once all the kids are back in the buildings there are other spaces that will need to be utilized that have not be addressed yet. Ms. Lemieux noted that money is not the impediment when it comes to bringing students back

into the schools. Additionally, she noted that social distancing, transportation, and other issues can be some of the barriers to getting kids back to the school in person.

Councilors asked the following questions:

Q: What was in the City's CARES application that was not funded?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that everything in the City's CARES application was funded but noted that this does not mean in the end that everything will be covered. For the CARES Act, the federal government has allowed the City to estimate what they will spend on different items. Once all the invoices are submitted, the City will have to go through a reconciliation process. If there is anything that the federal government deems to be ineligible in the end, the City will have to give that money back. Ms. Lemieux noted that they have been careful on what the City has asked to be reimbursed.

Q: What expenditures made by the School Department will be covered in the CARES Act?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that the ventilation project, testing and most of the PPE should be covered by the CARES Act. The School has charged most of their costs for technology to separate grants.

Q: What is the future of testing in the City?

A: Ms. Lemieux noted that the administration and the Health Department believes in testing. The technology for testing keeps on changing. The Governor's recently-announced testing program entails 6 weeks' worth of free testing; after that the City would need to pay for it. Ms. Lemieux noted that the City does have the funds to pay for this testing. The City is also looking towards getting the vaccination out to others after we are finished with the first responders.

Q: Once there has been a full accounting of remaining possible CARES Act funding for Newton, what are the administration's next highest priorities?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that further ventilation work, continuing the Grab & Go program, testing, and trying to get the vaccine out to as many people in Newton as possible are the priorities.

Q: If the CARES act does not cover certain items, can the City apply for FEMA funding?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that the CARES Act is the more lenient fund so they would not be able to add those expenses to the FEMA application. If FEMA denies any part of the City's application, then the City can add that to the CARES Act application. Ms. Lemieux noted that if there is any money left over for CARES funding the City would look to use those funds, if covered under CARES, for lost revenue or insurance claims that deal with COVID-19.

Q: Why wouldn't the School Department use the funds they received from ESSER to be able to get students back in the classroom by September of 2021?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that they may use those funds for that purpose, but this grant money was just announced a few days ago so plans may not be made yet for the funding.

Q: Why is the testing only happening twice per month?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that she is unable to answer this question because it does not deal with finances. She noted that the issue may deal with lab capacity. Additionally, she noted that only approximately 54% of the in-person School Department staff has signed up for testing.

Q: Has the way reimbursements are coming in change the way the City is spending?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that spending has not changed much, because with respect to anything the City is being reimbursed for, the expenditures were not budgeted as of March 2020. Previously, the City had to show that any projects that were eligible for CARES funding were operational by December 30, 2020, but that is no longer a concern since CARES funding deadline has been extended.

Q: How many individuals is the City servicing per month through the Grab & Go Program?

A: Ms. Lemieux noted that she did know the exact number but could come back to the Committee with this answer.

Q: Regarding testing, has the administration told the Health Department not to worry about money and do whatever is necessary to provide as much testing as possible?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that the administration has conveyed this information to the Health Department, and questions about testing should be directed to the School Department. The administration has told the School Department that they would pay for testing regardless of whether CARES Act funding was extended.

Q: What financial conversations has the administration had with the Health and Human Services Department and School Department regarding what they will need to reopen the schools fully next year? Additionally, is there a commitment to provide them with the funds to be able to do that?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that she has not been part of the conversations about what the cost would be to fully reopen in September. She noted that she is unsure if health-wise the schools could fully reopen in September. If social distancing is still happening and herd immunity has not happened in September 2021 this may be difficult.

Q: Who is deciding when the students will be back to in-person learning and what are the barriers to making this happen?

A: Ms. Lemieux noted that right now, the barriers are not finances.

Councilors made the following comments:

Before the next Finance meeting, the CFO should update the sources and uses chart that was provided in the Financial Forecast.

Ms. Lemieux noted that she will be able to update that chart. The new Munis system was implemented on 01/11/21 and the City was able to process the weekly payroll for the City this past Monday. Ms. Lemieux explained that today was the first day they were able to process the payroll for the School Department through Munis.

The administration should provide the Council with an accounting of what funds were brought in against the \$9 million that the City cut from the budget.

The administration should talk to the Health and Human Services Department and the School Department about being able to test more frequently than twice a month. If money is not an issue than the City should investigate opening more testing sites.

The City should know how many people are dealing with food insecurities within Newton to be able to plan for even when the pandemic is over.

The City should be doing weekly testing within the School Department. The problem can't be lab capacity because other communities are able to test every week and the Governor has stated that communities can do weekly testing.

The administration should put in writing to the School Committee and the Commissioner of Health & Human Services that if they want to do weekly testing the administration will pay for that in full.

Ms. Lemieux noted that the administration has told them that the City will pay for testing.

There should be a firm commitment from the administration that they will provide whatever funds are necessary to open for full in-person learning if from a health perspective that is deemed advisable.

Mrs. Lemieux noted that she will discuss this with the Mayor.

The Council continues to ask the question what the barriers are to getting students back to in-person learning and continues to hear that there would be no financial or health reason that the students can't be back in school. Councilors continue to struggle to understand who and what is driving the decisions behind lack of in-person learning. For example, the Health Department seems to be making the decisions on social distancing protocols, where the testing facilities will be, and how frequently testing is necessary. The School Committee seems to be making the decision on when the students will be in the classroom, or whether there will be hybrid or remote learning.

Ms. Lemieux noted that she does not believe that the Health Department made the decision to test every other week. She also did not believe it was the Health Department's decision that there would be only one site for testing.

It was noted that the City has not established a scientific advisory group to inform decisions with respect to COVID-19 and the schools reopening. The School Committee has made it clear that they are relying on the Health Department for advice regarding protocols for testing and how often testing should be done.

There should be a meeting between the City Council and the School Committee.

Councilors thanked Ms. Lemieux, Ms. Dzikowski and their teams for the work they have done during this time.

Councilor Kalis motioned to hold item 395-20 which passed 4-0 with Councilors Norton and Noel not voting.

The Committee adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Walker Grossman, Chair



Newton Information Management System

Software & Implementation Services

City Council Finance & ZAP Committees, January 11, 2021

Newton Information Management System

What

- A system to support the City's permitting processes, licensing and municipal information management for building projects and land use.

Who

- John Lojek, ISD
- Joseph Mulvey, IT
- Jonathan Yeo, COO
- Neil Cronin, Planning
- Kristen Patten, ISD
- Sherri Lougee, HHS
- Chris Markiewicz
- Dottie Keene (consultant from D.H. Keene Associates)

When

- Project started in 2019, consultant hired
- Implementation services and software contract bid in June 2020
- Bid review, interviews and contract discussions – July to Dec 2020
- First phase of implementation (building permits) – 2021 to 2022
- Additional phases of implementation – 2021 to 2023

Newton Information Management System

Consultant

- Dottie Keene of D.H. Keene Associates
- ★ • Has been working with City team since 2019 to analyze business practices, document requirements into an RFP and facilitate the evaluation and selection of a winning vendor
- She will now assist the City with OpenGov's implementation by working with multiple departments to precisely describe and configure the business workflows in the new system
- She will test and approve data conversions and ensure that interfaces and integration with city systems are complete and correct
- She will assist with training of departmental users and ensure a smooth rollout of an updated public website for permits and licenses and property information lookups

Newton Information Management System

Background

- Newton does not have a coordinated permitting and licensing system
- Many communities have implemented efficient on-line systems from a number of major vendors over past decade
- ISD's internal system, Community Plus, is no longer supported and is not a comprehensive, modern system
- **2019 Analysis Found:**
 - Incomplete Building Project Ideas or Plans
 - Lengthy permitting process
 - Difficulty in tracking time deadlines and conditions to be met
 - Disjointed communication of permitting status
 - Inability to see updated building project plans across departments
 - Lack of constituent ease of use
 - Difficulty in seeing an overall view of the history of a property

Newton Information Management System

Requirements for New System

- **Central access and storage** of building plans and updates to them, and version control
- **Permitting steps tied together into one view of all applications for a specific building project** on a property
- **Easy and speedy ways** to enter a building project, track permit applications, denote status changes and issue signoffs on work performed
- **Ability to enter inspection results remotely** using mobile devices
- **Ability to capture permit or licensing revenue from all departments** or to be able to note that a fee was paid. This includes interoperability with credit card solutions
- **Pre-determined (yet adjustable) workflow steps to guide applicants** through the permitting process for a building project
- **Status lists and notification method** of projects and where each is in the various permitting processes
- **Tickler files to remind departments** of steps that are outstanding and need to be addressed
- **Ability to designate conditions and follow on steps** to be performed and tracked after a building project has been completed (but not closed out)
- **Ability to analyze projects and create reports**

Newton Information Management System

OpenGov

- A California-based company with an office in Boston
- OpenGov purchased very popular ViewPoint Cloud system and team in 2019
- Used by over 1,000 municipalities in the country for on-line permitting and other systems
- Used by 83 municipalities in Massachusetts for information and permitting systems
- Examples include:
 - Wellesley
 - Franklin
 - Shrewsbury
 - Westwood
 - North Andover
 - Williamstown
 - Dartmouth
 - Sudbury
 - Fitchburg
 - Wayland
 - Worcester
 - Barnstable

City of Newton Project Implementation Costs for OpenGov

	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year 5		EXPENSES
	Jan-Jun FY2021	Jul-Dec FY2022	Jan-Jun FY2022	Jul-Dec FY2023	Jan-Jun FY2023	Jul-Dec FY2024	Jan-Jun FY2024	Jul-Dec FY2025	Jan-Jun FY2025	Jul-Dec FY2026	
City Resources											
City Executives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$0
City Executive Project Sponsor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$0
City Project Manager	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$40,000	\$35,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$175,000
IT Interface integration leads - vendor liaison + doc mgmt impl, website updates	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$0
IT Data conversion and cleanup contractor	\$35,000	\$40,000	\$35,000	\$40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$150,000
GIS coordinator for interface with OpenGov PLC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$0
MUNIS contractor to import PLC financial transactions	0	\$37,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$37,500
Business leads for workflow/rules configuration, user admin, reporting, testing, training assistance	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$45,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$180,000
Department testers/superuser SMEs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$0
Purchases											
Additional hardware: monitors, mobile inspection devices...	0	\$30,000	\$15,000	0	0	0	\$30,000	0	0	0	\$75,000
One-time vendor implementation team setup	\$66,785	\$40,000	\$38,000	\$0	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$144,785
Annual vendor hosting of PLC applications, document images and interfaces "in the cloud"	\$135,000	0	\$135,000	0	\$135,000	0	\$135,000	0	\$135,000	0	\$675,000
	\$331,785	\$242,500	\$308,000	\$120,000	\$135,000	\$-	\$165,000	\$-	\$135,000	\$-	\$1,437,285
FY Totals	\$331,785		\$550,500		\$255,000		\$165,000		\$135,000		
	FY2021		FY2022		FY2023		FY2024		FY2025	FY2026	

FY21-23 TOTAL =

\$1,137,285

Newton Information Management System

New System will:

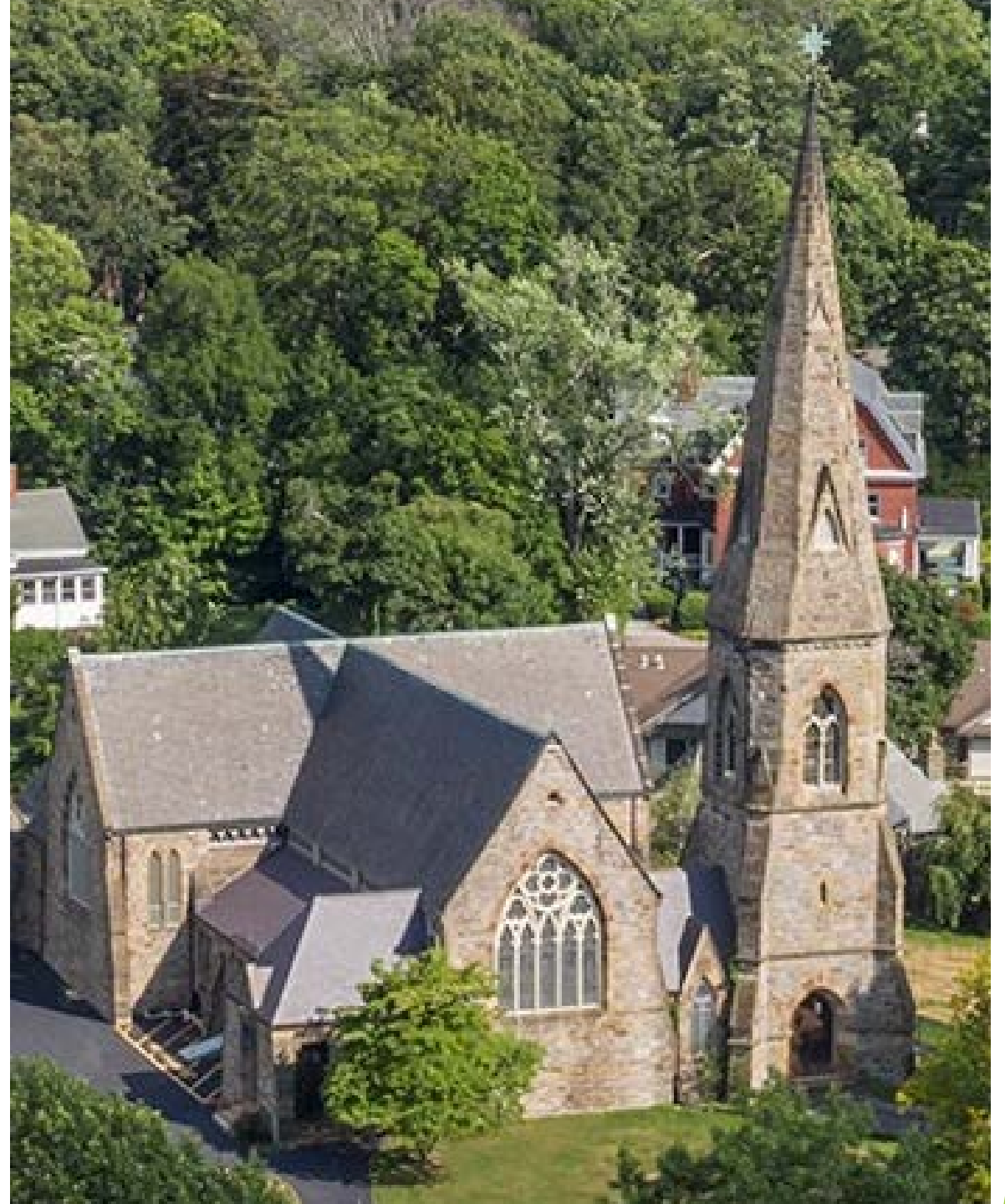
- Include all permits, licenses and information about a property into one comprehensive database
- Configure workflows to prompt departments on next steps on reviews and approvals
- Provide significant improvements for contractors and residents alike by allowing them to see more information online with greater “self service” and having contractors apply online for various requests for inspections and permits

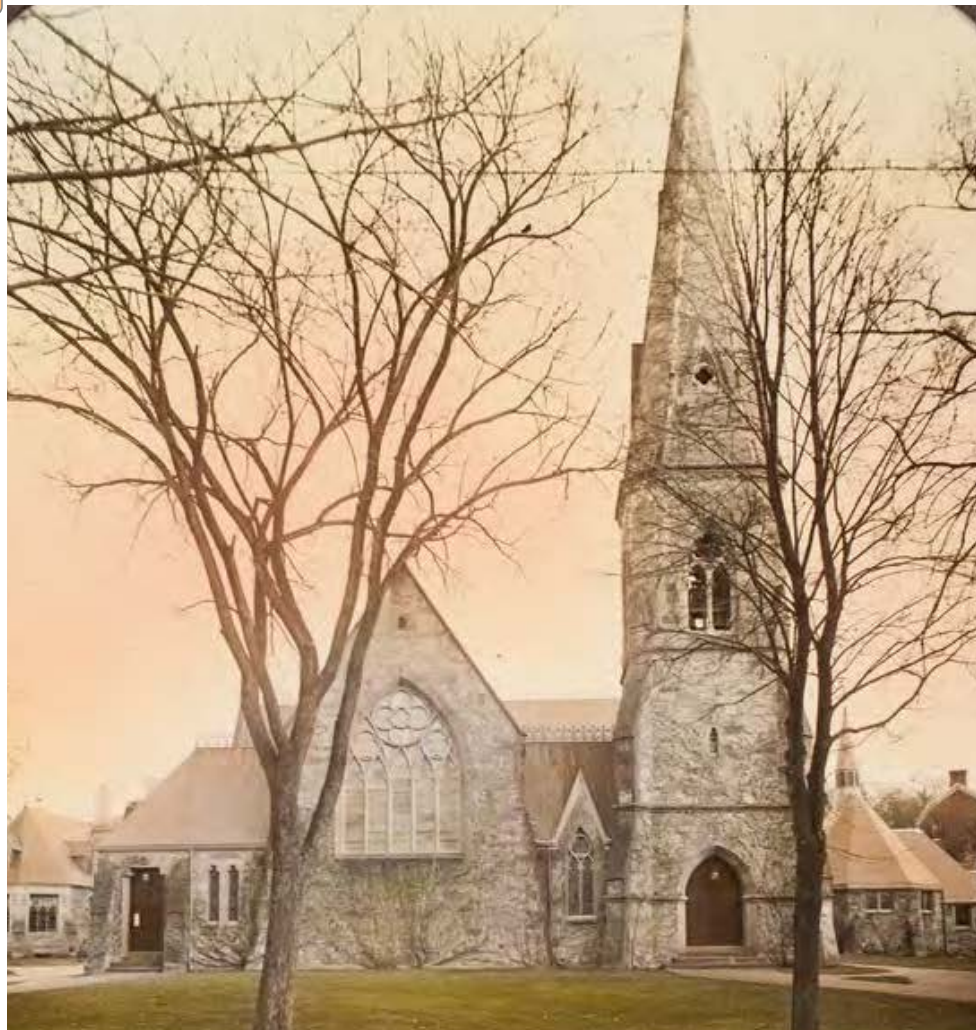
Grace Episcopal Church Tower Restoration Project Recommendation

Community Preservation Committee
Presentation to Finance and
Zoning and Planning Committees
January 11, 2021

Project Overview

- ▶ The ca. 1872 Gothic Revival style building is highly significant both historically and architecturally
- ▶ Listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Farlow and Kenrick Parks Historic District in 1999
- ▶ Preservation Restriction in place since 1999





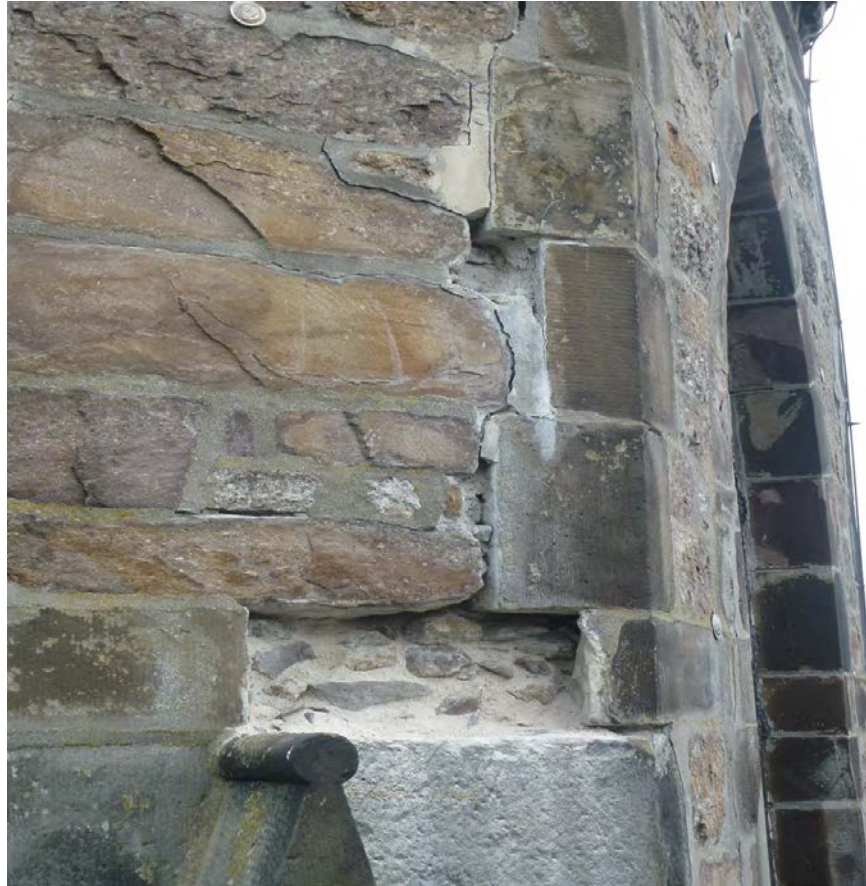
Above: Grace Episcopal, ca. 1873

Right: Church as shown on 1878 bird's eye view Map of Newton Corner



Current Funding Request

- ▶ Grace Episcopal regularly inspects stone buildings and tower, completing repairs in 1985 and 1999
- ▶ In 2019, Structures North engineers discovered serious structural problems threatening the integrity of the structure.



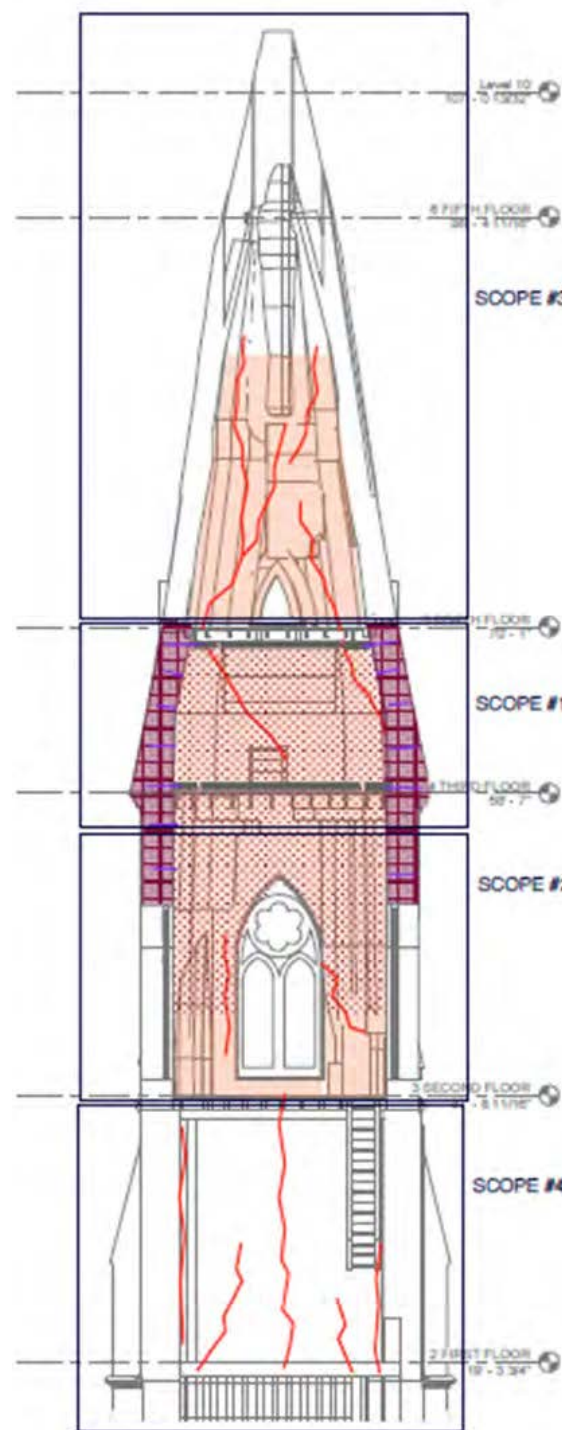


Current Conditions



Current Funding Request

- ▶ The tower is now considered to be structurally unsafe and access is currently prohibited.
- ▶ The Applicant has worked with Structures North to develop a detailed set of plans to first stabilize the structure using a patented engineering system and then to restore the stonework to prevent further damage



Proposed Project Budget - Uses

Phase I (2021)		
	Stabilization	\$822,317
	Contingency	\$146,683
	Soft Costs	\$145,500
	Phase I Total	\$1,114,500
Phase 2 (2022)		
	Restoration	\$1,380,672
	Contingency	\$142,828
	Soft Costs	\$228,000
	Phase II Total	\$1,751,500
	PROJECT TOTAL	\$2,866,000

Proposed Project Budget - Sources

Requested CPA Funding	\$1,433,000
Massachusetts Historical Commission Preservation Projects Fund (Received)	\$50,000
Massachusetts Historical Commission Emergency and Preservation Projects Fund	\$100,000
National Fund for Sacred Places	\$250,000
Grace Episcopal Church Member Contributions and Endowment	\$875,000
Private Foundation Support	\$158,000
PROJECT TOTAL	\$2,866,000

CPA Funding Recommendation

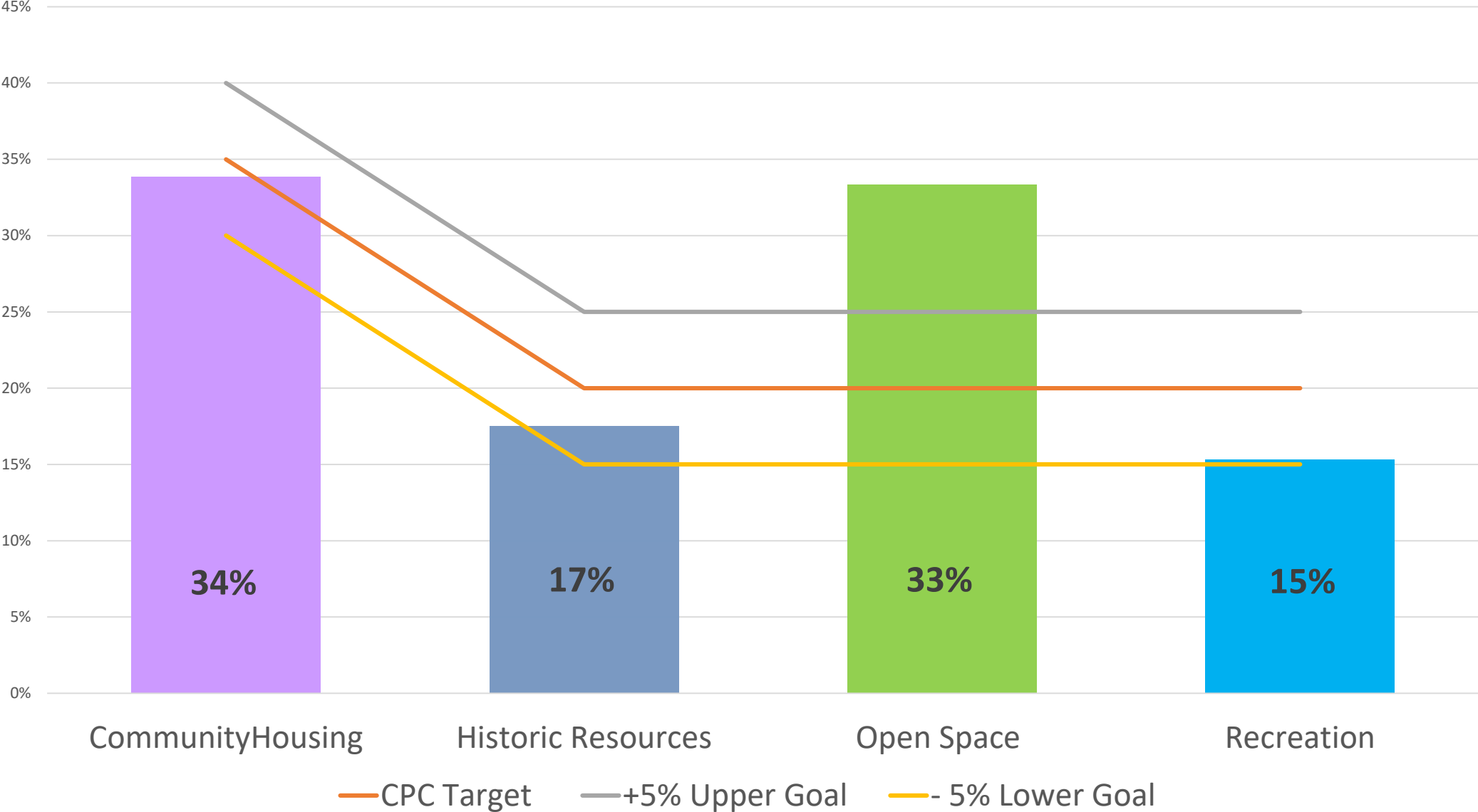
Recommended Sources of CPA Funding

FY21 Historic Resource Reserve Funds	\$479,737
Prior Fund Balance - Historic Resource Reserve Fund	\$557,382
FY22 Historic Resource Reserve Funds	\$395,881
Total CPA Recommended Funding	\$1,433,000

Current CPA Fund Balances

Account Types	Current Fund Balance
Community Housing Reserve Fund	\$911,042
Historic Resource Reserve Fund	\$1,037,119
Open Space Reserve Fund	\$409,689
FY21 Budget Reserve	\$1,306,399
General CPA Fund Balance	\$9,865,878
Total Funds Available	\$13,530,127

CPA Funding by Category (2002-2020)



Questions & Discussion

▶ Thank you!



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To: Councilor Rebecca Walker Grossman, Chair Finance Committee

Cc: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller
Jonathan Yeo, C.O.O.
All City Council Members
David Olson, Clerk of the Council
Susan Djikowski, Comptroller

From: Maureen Lemieux, C.F.O.

Date: January 15, 2021

Subject: Grab & Go Program

As promised, I am providing the following information regarding the City's Adult Food Insecurity Program.

Three-day bags are provided to program users. Each day has one breakfast and one lunch, so there are 6 meals per bag. Effective January 4, the program is running Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10-12 at Newton North and Newton South.

The program has seen an average of 425 cars per week between August 24 (when car data started being collected) and January 8. There is a significant elderly population using the program. There are also a noticeable number of families.

Although we would like to be able to track and report more specific information, we are very mindful of maintaining the privacy and respect of the individuals participating in this program. We have made the decision to focus on assisting anyone who is lining up for and asking for our food, rather than collecting data from them.

Data on the program is as follows:

- Total meals served from April 30-January 8 to Adults 186,634
- Cumulative total cost for adult meals from April 30-January 8 \$372,550.50