



Finance Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Monday, January 25, 2021

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

Absent: Councilor Gentile

City staff present: Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux, Comptroller Sue Dzikowski, CPA Program Manager Lara Kritzer, Director of Planning and Development Barney Heath, Fire Chief Gino Lucchetti, Commissioner of Public Works Jim McGonagle, Committee Clerk Cassidy Flynn and Chief of Staff for Public Works Shawna Sullivan

#37-21 **Authorization to expend a Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth Grant**
CITY CLERK requesting authorization to accept and expend a thirteen thousand seven hundred-seventy-eight dollar and twenty-five cent (\$13,778.25) grant from the Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth for 2020 mailed ballot expenses.

Action: **Finance Approved 6-0**

Note: Cassidy Flynn, Committee Clerk presented the request to accept and expend a \$13,778.25 grant from the Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth for 2020 mailed ballot expenses. Ms. Flynn explained that the State received funds from HAVA Cares and had leftover funds at the end of the year that needed to be spent. These funds were dispersed to municipalities based on the number of ballots that were mailed out in the November election. Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer noted that the Finance Committee had previously approved an approximately \$37,000 grant to help with election costs. This brings the total to approximately \$50,000 in election grants and Ms. Lemieux noted that the City spent almost \$100,000 on the elections in 2020. The first grant had come from a nonprofit organization that is connected to the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Councilor Kalis motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees

#39-21 **Appropriate \$256,000 from the Washington Place Special Permit Mitigation Fund**
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the sum of two hundred and fifty-six thousand dollars (\$256,000) from the Washington Place Special Permit Mitigation Fund for the purpose of pedestrian enhancement design on a portion of Washington Street including design and bid preparation for fence replacements, fence artwork, landscaping and sidewalk installation on the south side of the street from Lowell Avenue to Walnut Street.

Public Facilities Approved 8-0 on 01/20/21

Action: **Finance Approved 6-0**

Note: Jim McGonagle, Commissioner of Public Works and Lou Taverna, City Engineer presented the request for \$256,000 from the Washington Place Special Permit Mitigation Fund to fund the replacement of the sidewalk from Lowell Ave to Walnut Street on the south side of Washington Street. These funds will also be used for the design, the bid document preparation and the replacement of the fence along that area of Washington Street.

Mr. Taverna explained that the sidewalk will be replaced with a cement concrete sidewalk. While replacing the existing sidewalk, they may need to remove and reset the concrete curb. The fence in this area is owned by MassDOT/MBTA and it needs to be removed and replaced with a new fence. There will also need to be landscaping/streetscaping design around the fence.

Committee members asked the following questions:

Q: What has been spent out of the Washington Place Special Permit Mitigation Funds to date?

A: It was noted that this is the first of the mitigation funds that will be spent.

Q: How much will be spent on landscaping?

A: Mr. Taverna explained that they are still investigating the design of the landscape.

Q: How is the spending of mitigation funds decided?

A: There is usually a liaison committee that is made up off a variety people that live close to the area.

Q: Was it considered to not replace the sidewalk and only focus on the landscaping and the fence?

A: Commissioner McGonagle explained that the sidewalk is in disrepair. The sidewalk plow also has to go through that area which can disturb the landscape next to the sidewalk but it is repaired in the spring. Commissioner McGonagle explained that the department tries to replace any asphalt with cement concrete sidewalk.

Committee members made the following comment:

There is support from the neighborhood group for beautification of the fence and there should be a sound barrier.

Councilor Norton motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

#38-21 **CPC Recommendation to appropriate \$28,900 in CPA funding**
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending appropriation of twenty-eight thousand nine hundred and ninety dollars (\$28,990) in Community Preservation Act

Historic Resource funding for the replacement of the wood picket fence along the Jackson Road/ west property line at the Jackson Homestead.

Action: Finance Approved 6-0

Note: Lara Kritzer, CPA Program Manager presented the request to appropriate \$28,900 in CPA Historic Resource funding for the replacement of the wood picket fence along the Jackson Road/ west property line at the Jackson Homestead. She was joined by the Chair of the Community Preservation Committee, Mark Armstrong, and a representative from Historic Newton, Lisa Dady.

Ms. Kritzer shared the attached presentation with the committee.

Ms. Dady noted that they will be replacing the existing fence with a fence that closely resembles what was there in the 1940s.

Committee members asked the following question:

Q: What other maintenance projects need to be done at the Jackson Homestead?

A: Ms. Dady explained that they still need to continue to replace the gutters on the rest of the building, work on storm window restoration and the weatherization of doors and windows. Some of these items are on the CIP and the plan is to work on updating the cost estimates for these projects. One project that is not on the CIP is the basement, which is not suitable for storing collections.

Councilor Norton motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

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 6-0 on 01/25/21

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: Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer explained that they have heard that FEMA who typically reimburses 75% of eligible costs may now cover 100% of all eligible costs. Ms. Lemieux noted that what counts as eligible costs has not been defined yet. But this news has affected how the City will look at CARES funding. The FEMA money will be retroactive and will last until September 30, 2021. FEMA also does not have a ceiling like the CARES Act application does. The City has applied for approximately \$1 million in FEMA reimbursements. At that time FEMA had stated that they would not cover any overtime costs for even first responders but this has also changed due to the Executive Order the President has issued. Ms. Lemieux explained that they did apply for FEMA reimbursements in October 2020 and were expecting to receive it by the end of the calendar year but this has not

occurred yet. Ms. Lemieux explained that the City Council did approve a \$1,000,000 COVID-19 non-lapsing account which is where she has been charging items until the City receives the reimbursements from the CARES Act and FEMA.

Committee members asked the following questions:

Q: How do the new regulations for FEMA reimbursements change how the administration thinks about testing or other priorities to help support the community?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that the State is putting together another testing program which the City needs to sign up for. This may be pool testing. Currently, the City has the school's testing program, the insurance testing program that is run through Fallon and then Newton has the opportunity to join the State's testing program. In the meantime, the City has vaccinated a large portion of their first responders. The FEMA reimbursement does not change the City's testing programs. The schools will also receive another approximately \$2 million and those funds can be spent until September 2023. The administration continues to maximize every dollar they are reimbursed for. The City may also continue to test throughout the school year next year.

Q: How does the Comptroller's office keep tabs on the money that is coming in and out of the City related to COVID spending and reimbursement, given the many moving parts?

A: Sue Dzikowski, Comptroller explained that they are relying on Ms. Lemieux's data on what funds should go into what account. Ms. Lemieux works with Steve Curley, Deputy Comptroller on a weekly basis on this data. Ms. Lemieux noted that there is still no consideration for lost revenue and all of the money that the City is receiving in grants or applying to be reimbursed for needs to be funds that were not budgeted for as of March 2020. The Comptroller's Office also needs to review every invoice. Ms. Lemieux noted that the administration has followed the guidelines for the FEMA application closely.

Q: If the City were to again separate the firefighters' living quarters from the Fallon EMTs living quarters, could these costs be reimbursed?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that this would be a reimbursable cost.

Q: What is the schedule for the selling of bonds this year?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that they have decided not to go out and sell bonds this year. The City is not approving many capital projects and the only general fund project that has been approved but not bonded is the Oak Hill Middle School addition. The administration will also be asking the City Council to approve \$1 million for the HVAC system at the Police Headquarters. If the City were to sell bonds this year, then the administration would need to budget for a full year of interest plus the first principal payment. Instead, the City can issue bond anticipation notes and will sell those in May or June for a 6-8 month term. Then the City will only need to budget for 6 months of interest. Ms. Lemieux explained that they will be selling bonds next year.

Q: When will the City know what FEMA will be covering?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that they hope to know sometime next week. The City has also not been given a certain cap on FEMA reimbursements but they are more limited on what they cover.

Q: Will FEMA cover the HVAC work being done at the schools?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that FEMA will not cover those costs.

Q: Can the \$1.2 million that is being asked of from the CPA for emergency housing be covered by FEMA?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that these costs would not be FEMA reimbursable. There may also not be enough funds left to use any CARES funding. This item will be discussed at a future committee meeting. It was noted that CPA funds do replenish themselves every year and the housing crisis has grown throughout the pandemic.

Q: Are PPE and other Covid related supplies being ordered in a way that plans for the future?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that Commissioner Morse has been proactive in managing PPE orders and has made sure he is doing what he needs to do during this process.

Q: Will the City be doing any refinancing this year?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that the City is not be able to refinance.

Councilor Noel motioned to hold item #395-20 which passed unanimously.

The Committee adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Walker Grossman, Chair

Jackson Homestead Fence Replacement CPA Funding Recommendation

Community Preservation Committee
Presentation to Finance Committee
January 25, 2021

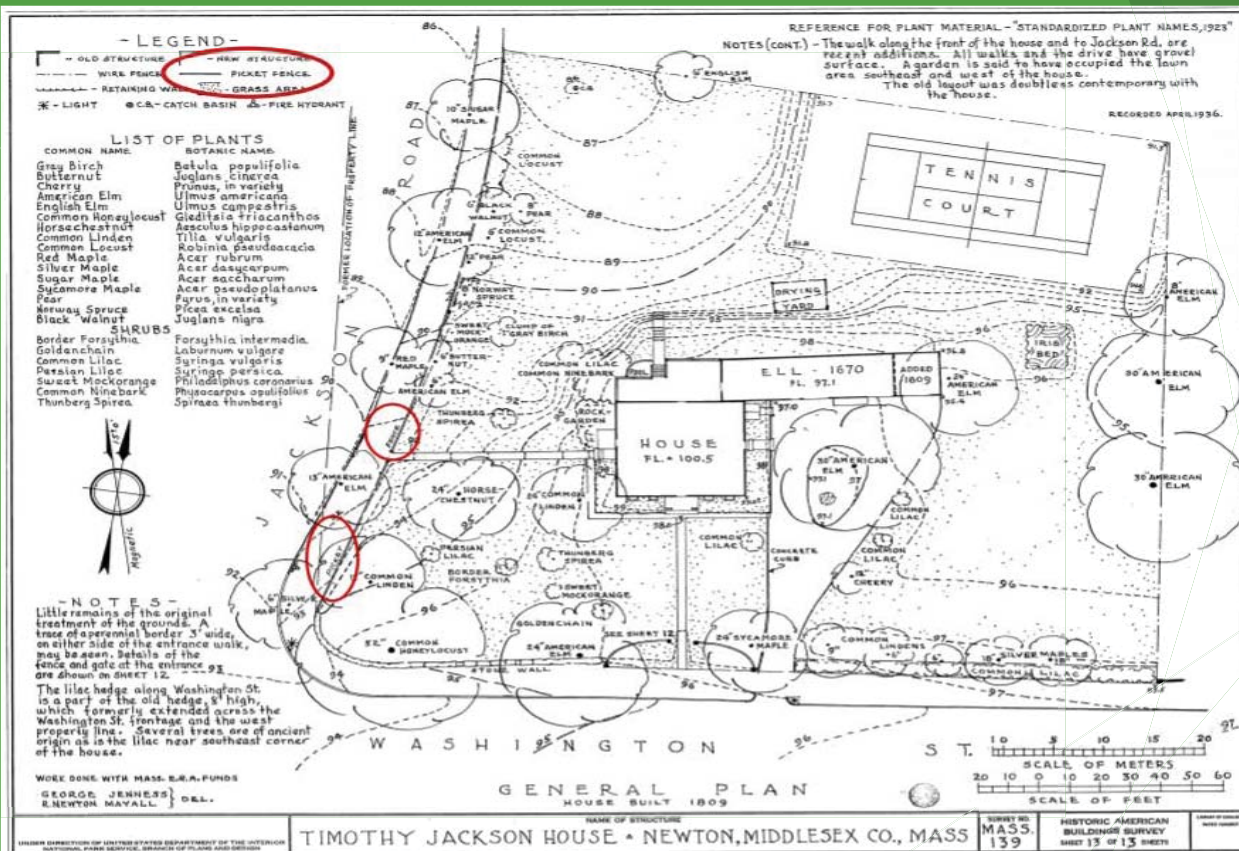
Project Overview

- ▶ Existing wood picket fence running along the west/Jackson Road boundary of the property is badly deteriorated and in danger of collapse
- ▶ Fence has been repaired and reinforced over the years - replacement now only option
- ▶ Historic documentation shows picket style fence in this location since at least 1930s.





Existing Conditions



HABS-HAER
Site Plan for Jackson Homestead, 1935.



Photo of Jackson Homestead, ca. 1940s

Funding Request

- ▶ Historic Newton is working with Steelco Fence to reconstruct the ca. 1940s wood picket fence using period appropriate details
- ▶ Proposal to install 210 feet of 4' high custom scallop-topped cedar picket fencing in the same location as the existing fence along the Jackson Road sidewalk with Post Saver sleeves on the end posts to protect them from deterioration
- ▶ The project has been reviewed and approved by the Newton Historical Commission

Proposed Budget

Funding Sources	Funding Amount
CPA Historic Resource Funding	\$28,990
Project Oversight by Lisa Dady and Derek Mannion	\$1,000
Total Project Costs	\$29,990

Questions & Discussion

► Thank you!