

**To:** Newton City Councilors  
**From:** Grace Church Tower Committee  
**Date:** February 1, 2021  
**Subject:** CPA Application for Funding to Restore Historic Tower in Newton Corner

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide additional background information about topics that were raised by Councilors in the joint Zoning and Planning and Finance Committee meeting on January 11, 2021. The memorandum is organized as follows:

- Community Benefit of Historic Preservation
- The Amount of Grace’s Funding Request
- Contact Information
- Appendix: Summary of Recent Planning Activities

We appreciate your time and the careful consideration that you have and will give to this matter. If there is any way in which we can assist you with your deliberations, we look forward to an opportunity to do so.

## Community Benefit of Historic Preservation

*As noted in City of Newton Planning Studies, by Historic Preservation leaders and in the community, the tower and the 8-bell Eldredge Chime and tolling bell represent an irreplaceable component of Farlow Park and the Newton Corner neighborhood.*



- Grace Church is requesting CPA funds that are ***restricted for historic preservation.***
- There is widespread agreement at the federal, state, and local levels that ***historic preservation in and of itself is a public good and benefits communities.***<sup>1,2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Economics and Historic Preservation: A Guide and Review of the Literature; The Metropolitan Policy Program; The Brookings Institution (September 2005)

<sup>2</sup> Lahr, M. and Listokin D.; Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Massachusetts; Massachusetts Historical Commission; Center for Urban Policy Research (May 2002)

- **Preservation of historic sites has direct economic and environmental impact** (through the act of preservation itself) and indirect economic and community impact as a result of **increased home values, faster appreciation, generally higher tax revenues in neighborhoods that are part of or proximate to historic features, greater sense of cohesion, identity and neighborhood pride**, and heritage tourism to name a few.
- The Massachusetts state historic preservation plan<sup>3</sup> outlines 15 major goals. Among these goals the **state stresses the importance of seeking recognition for sites of major historical significance**, which has been done in the case of Grace, **protecting historic resources through financial support** (Goal 5) **which encourages localities to adopt the CPA**, and **Protecting Historic Resources through Local Government Actions** (Goal 7) which include demolition delays, restrictions, zoning ordinances, **and use of CPA funding**.
- **There is also a cost of NOT investing in historic preservation**. Placing restrictions on properties and including them on historic registers **absent attendant financial support results in the permanent loss of historic structures and precludes future generations from the opportunity to appreciate** the workmanship, aesthetic, and history that these structures uniquely provide.
- While the ultimate benefit under consideration is whether or not to save an important 19th century architectural landmark, **Grace Church has maintained and opened its buildings for uses that benefit the wider community for over 150 years in addition to contributions through its programming**.

**Quotation from Councilor  
Greenberg's Comments on January  
11:**

*I want to reiterate what an important landmark this is for Ward 1. There is very strong support from the Hunnewell Hill and Newton Corner neighborhoods. All across the board, we have received many emails hoping to get this funding for the tower. I also want to point out that not only is Grace Church a private religious organization, but it offers an important community and social service resource for Newton and all for the public good. Some examples:*

*It [Grace] has entered into partnership with Toward Independent Living providing independent living for cognitively challenged adults. It has rented out its rectory for outpatient services with Riverside Community Care, helping 1000's of individuals and working closely with the school and health departments. It provides space for twelve-step and other social service and youth programs. It opens the sanctuary regularly for publicly accessible music programs. It also has provided, since 2016, a polling station for Ward 1 residents.*

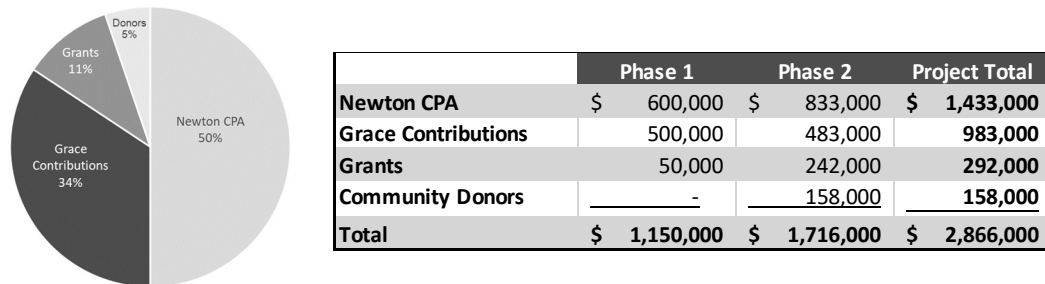
***I just want folks to remember that this is not just a religious space, but it is also used for the public good.***

<sup>3</sup> Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Plan 2018-2022.

## The Amount of Grace’s Funding Request

We have been up front about the urgency of our need and the reality, confirmed through extensive due diligence, of both the cost of the work required and our internal and external fundraising capabilities. Figure 1 provides a summary of proposed sources of funds and the requirement for funds by project phase, both of which reflect findings from the assessments that were completed.

**Figure 1 – Potential Sources of Funds by Project Phase**



- There is an extremely urgent need to stabilize the tower (beginning Spring 2021) due to the risk of a catastrophic structural failure.
- To date during the silent phase of our campaign, ***we have raised some \$500,000 from within our community***, enough to meet the anticipated match for Phase 1 - the structural stabilization of the tower.
- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts awarded Grace a \$50,000 grant **which is conditioned on receipt of CPA funds**; up to \$100,000 total from MHC is likely.
- A grant of \$250,000 is possible from a third-party foundation **if CPA funds are received**.
- Our statement is not a challenge, or a declaration made without the utmost sincerity: **without a commitment of \$1.43 from the Newton CPA, we do not have a viable path forward**.
- Shared learning from other local organizations—chiefly those whose mission is historic preservation—**suggests that community (external) fundraising of \$150,000 is achievable but ambitious**.
- As we have determined that ***partial removal is not more affordable than the full restoration*** we have proposed.

## We respectfully urge you to consider the following as you evaluate this CPA application:

- **Grace can be flexible with the timing of receipt of CPA funds over two or three funding cycles** to ensure that the grant is only appropriated from restricted Historic Resource funds and does not monopolize CPA Historic Resources in any single year.
  - The ***CPC will retain some \$180 K per year in remaining restricted funds for historic preservation*** (based on projections in the CPA FY2021-2022 Funding Forecast).

- In addition, the FY2021 ***\$9.83 M unrestricted fund will be available for affordable housing, open space and/or recreation projects during those years***, in addition to the funds that are restricted to each of those uses.
- If awarded this grant, we will work with the City of Newton to ***evaluate disbursements of CPA funds and adjust appropriately*** if any of the following circumstances come to pass: the ***cost is lower than anticipated*** following the competitive bidding process, or Grace realizes external ***fundraising success beyond our assessed capabilities***.

## Contact Information

Our governing council is a fiduciary body that is responsible for:

- Providing for ongoing maintenance of our entire historic campus and its use by the parish and wider community, which we have done faithfully for 150 years to the benefit of all Newton.
- Stewarding resources in a manner that ensures long term financial sustainability and Grace’s ability to advance its mission to companion the vulnerable, heal division, and confront and dismantle inequality.

With some 85 family units, raising our projected share of what’s needed, both internally and externally, will require a tremendous commitment of time and energy. We are prepared to make that commitment. Among our parishioners, we are fortunate to have volunteers who donate their expertise and time to advance our work, including engineers, architects, and professional fundraisers. A core group of five have contributed more than 1,500 working hours since January 2020.

Please feel free to reach out if we can answer any questions or provide additional information.

**Leah Gassett, 2021 Board Chair** at [leah.gassett@gmail.com](mailto:leah.gassett@gmail.com) or 617-821-7470

**Scott Aquilina, Project Manager** at [sbaquilina@gmail.com](mailto:sbaquilina@gmail.com) or 617-943-4079



*The 1873 Belltower this fall compared to a rendering of the view from Farlow Park with the tower removed.*

## APPENDIX

### Summary of Recent Planning Activities

- **2018** – Tower Study Committee formed and solicited guidance from outside experts on possible scenarios and techniques for preservation.
- **2019** – Tower Study Committee reported that the condition was worse than believed:
  - Structural failings inherent in the design had **accelerated the deterioration of the tower**.
  - Weakened masonry risks falling stones and **potential “catastrophic” collapse**.
  - The difference in the cost of partial restoration (truncated tower) versus full restoration were found to be immaterial.
- **2020** – Grace leadership convened two working groups:
  - Tower Committee was charged with refining estimates for two options: restoration and removal. **Restoration costs were estimated to be \$2.87M, and removal costs to be \$650,000.**
  - Capital Campaign Committee began planning with guidance from two external consultants and a nonsectarian, national organization involved in preserving sacred places.
  - **Recommendation:** Given the cost to restore and the capital campaign assessment, our advisers **recommended that Grace pursue removal of the tower.**
  - May/June: Grace’s governing board tabled this recommendation and decided to explore a potential partnership with the City to secure CPA historic preservation funds to save the historic tower.
  - July: The Newton CPC—experts appointed by the mayor with the approval of the city council, charged with studying the needs and resources of the city regarding community preservation, and making recommendations for funding—reviewed Grace’s pre-proposal. The **CPC encouraged a full application from Grace for a grant representing 50% of project cost.**
  - September/October: The Newton CPC carefully scrutinized Grace’s application during two public hearings and voted to recommend the project for CPA funding in the amount of \$1,433,000.
- **2021** –
  - The Newton City Council will vote on the CPC’s funding recommendation.
  - To date, more than 700 Newton residents have expressed support of the use of CPA funds toward this project.
  - Immediately following the vote by the Newton City Council, Grace is prepared to launch the public phase of our capital campaign.