

Lara Kritzer

From: Lucia Dolan <dolanlucia@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 16, 2020 2:52 PM
To: Lara Kritzer
Subject: Grace Episcopal Church Tower Proposal

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Dear Ms. Kritzer,

Please forward to the Community Preservation Committee.

Dear Chairman Armstrong and Members of the CPC Committee,

I am writing in regard to the Grace Episcopal Church Tower Repair Proposal. I was disappointed that you approved the pre-proposal. I think it sets a concerning precedent for private groups with old buildings in need of repair. My background, I am currently a member of an Episcopal Church in Newton and on its Building Committee and a decade ago was on the Vestry of another Episcopal Church in Newton, where I co-chaired a financial audit.

My concerns specific to the Grace Church proposal:

- Over half the funding for the project is to come from the CPC. Other funds have been requested, but not committed. The next largest source of funds is from the parishioners and endowment. The proposal does not specify how much from each. It has been my experience that many churches with small congregations lean heavily on their endowment to fund their annual budget. Taking money from the endowment will reduce the Church's ability to draw on the endowment in the future.
- Does the congregation have the ability to raise \$15,000 solely for tower maintenance every year? What is the state of repair - windows, roof, mechanicals - of the rest of the Church. Congregations are shrinking in Episcopalian Churches nationwide (down 16.5% between 2003-2013 in Massachusetts according to church documents). The largest of the 7 Episcopalian Churches in Newton has less than 300 parishioners.
- The Church's architect, Alexander Rice Esty, has 7 buildings listed in the National register of Historic Places, Grace Church is not one of them. We have many, many historic buildings in Newton, is this one a priority?
- Grace Church's public use is minimal, every Church I've belonged to hosts small non-profit meetings, like AA meetings. There are 3 other churches within two blocks of Grace that could perform this service. Plus the Y and the former Newton Corner Library. The other community services Grace provides, such as B-Safe, are not site specific.

I realize there are many requests for limited CPC funds. I believe they should be focused on publicly owned buildings and property that are non-religious and have greater public use.

Sincerely,

Lucia Dolan

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Lara Kritzer

From: John Lovett <johnjlovett3@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 16, 2020 3:16 PM
To: Lara Kritzer
Cc: Marcia Johnson; Judith Jaffe; Lucia Dolan
Subject: LWVN--Questions on Grace Church project proposal

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Dear Ms. Kritzer,

My name is Jack Lovett. I'm a Newton resident and a member of the LWVN's CPC review committee. After Tuesday's CPC meeting, the LWVN had a couple questions regarding the Grace Episcopal Church project proposal.

First, during the meeting, it was argued that the Grace Episcopal Church is located in an historic district. Has that been confirmed? We were unable to find evidence that the neighborhood is located in a National Historic District.

Second, would the CPC consider requesting a legal opinion from the City Solicitor regarding whether the project qualifies for CPC funding? Given past litigation in Acton, MA regarding the use of CPC funding on private property and religious institutions, we thought a legal opinion is warranted for this proposal.

Thank you,
Jack Lovett

--

John "Jack" Lovett
Northeastern University
Master of Public Administration
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and History

From: [Aquilina, Scott](#)
To: dolanlucia@gmail.com
Cc: [Lara Kritzer](#); mark@oma-architect.com
Subject: Dolan Letter to the Newton CPC
Date: Monday, October 5, 2020 10:17:13 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
Importance: High

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Ms. Dolan,

I was personally offended by your letter to the Newton CPC - offended as a citizen of Newton, a professional in Historic Preservation, and as fellow Episcopalian.

You have no right to make assumptions about the health or financial wellbeing of Grace Church or cast aspersions on our motives, especially as you have never spoken to us or carefully read our application to the CPC. In response to your hurtful and inappropriate comments, I offer this rebuttal.

- Our proposal does indeed specify how we plan to fund the portion of the project cost not covered by the CPC grant.
- We do not plan to make an inappropriate draw on our endowment and indeed our commitment to manage that resource responsibly is why we are working so hard to encourage the Newton CPC to partner with us. We respect the Massachusetts Attorney General's directive that non-profit organizations maintain endowed funds to preserve their long-term health in service to the public. Toward that goal, the Attorney General also encourages non-profit organizations to seek outside funding where appropriate for major projects.
- We are a committed and growing congregation and we are good stewards of the property that we make available for community use. We will stand by our pledge to create a \$15,000 annual reserve for the future maintenance of a restored tower as part of our commitment to the city to make good on its investment.
- The state of our buildings, including stained-glass windows and slate roofs, are good and we recently replaced our mechanical systems. As our latest report to the CPC makes clear, we have averaged just under \$100,000 in annual expenditures for property maintenance and upkeep since 2006.
- Grace Church's public use is not minimal but real and impactful, and while there are 3 other churches within two blocks of Grace that could perform similar service, they don't. We offer our space to social service and mental healthcare groups that have been denied access to other locations. As a point of correction, we host an annual event for the children and teens of the B-SAFE Summer Youth Program that includes a full day of programming both inside and outside of our buildings. Indeed, Grace Church has been a leader in social outreach for 147

years and we will continue that commitment because it represents who we are as Christians.

- Grace Church has been listed in the Farlow and Kenrick Parks National Historic District since 1982. Buildings which are included in a National Historic District are not individually listed. Indeed our place on the National Register of Historic Places is the basis of our Preservation Restriction with the Massachusetts Historic Commission, a group that supports our application to the Newton CPC and that will be providing us funding for the project.
- Grace Church is one of several, not dozens, of churches in Newton with Historic Register status. These designations were all sponsored by the city and approved by the National Park Service which administers the program. These structures are all worthy of preservation. As of tonight, we have 597 signatures of support for our application to the Newton CPC. At least half of these are from neighbors in the Newton Corner district for which Grace Church and the Tower serve as a central landmark.
- As an Historic Preservation professional, and as a commissioner on the Newton Upper Falls Historic District Commission, I categorically disagree that there are not adequate funds in the Newton Community Preservation Program to properly support the preservation of both city-owned and worthy privately owned buildings. We are inviting the Newton CPC to partner with us to provide authentic support for an architectural heritage that includes a rich portfolio of 19th Century buildings. Community Preservation Act funds have been granted by ninety-one municipalities across the Commonwealth, including Cambridge and Boston, to support historic preservation projects associated with churches. Indeed, Esty's Church of the Covenant received Boston CPA funds last year.

I am not the only one who has taken great offence to your ungenerous and uninformed assertions. As you have represented yourself as an experienced church leader, we feel compelled to take further action. You should know that representatives of Grace Church will be in touch with the rector of your church to make known the negative impact your remarks have made to our organization.

Most sincerely,



Scott Aquilina, AIA | Jacobs | Project Director | People & Places Solutions |
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Scott B. Aquilina, AIA
1253 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA

Ms. Lucia Dolan
20 Devon Road
Newton Centre, MA

January 18, 2021

Dear Lucia,

You may recall that we have met on several occasions as your church hosts the annual B-SAFE Partners' meeting and you have always been there supporting this important justice project. I am writing a personal apology to you regarding my October 5th response to your letter to the CPC in July. As these letters were public from the beginning, my apology to you is therefore also a public one.

First of all, I was speaking for myself and not for the Grace Church committee. It's true I was alarmed to see your statements regarding the status of our parish and our intent in pursuing this grant. While I disagree with your characterization of Grace Church, I want you to know that I did not reach out to anyone at your church and our committee would never condone such an action. That was a statement made in the heat of the moment and I do regret any anxiety my statement may have caused.

I have learned a lot in this my first effort in community organization. Preserving this significant architectural feature of Newton Corner is of the utmost urgency to me and to many others. We've come to more fully appreciate that, while there is strong support for CPA funding for our project, there are important questions to consider and to discuss. My passion for saving this landmark and for envisioning a broader and more effective support of historic preservation in Newton got the best of me in regard to your comments. I do hope you will accept my sincere apologies for the tone of my response to you and that we can come together on the many values that I am confident we share in common for Newton and our broader community.

My best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Scott Aquilina', with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

Scott Aquilina