

Community Preservation Committee

2006 Town Meeting Report

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) was provisionally appointed in February, 2006 and confirmed in March, 2006. The members and their affiliations, as provided in the statute, are as follows:

Richard Wolk – Conservation Commission
Marilyn Fenollosa – Historical Commission
Leo McSweeney – Housing Authority
Betsey Weiss – Housing Partnership
Wendy Manz—Planning Board
Sandra Shaw – Recreation Committee
Joel Adler – at large, appointed by the Board of Selectmen
Norm Cohen – at large, appointed by the Board of Selectmen
Richard Pagett – at large, appointed by the Board of Selectmen

Betsey Weiss has been appointed as Chair of the CPC, and Marilyn Fenollosa as its Secretary.

Since the March 6th election, there have been two regular CPC meetings, held on March 13th and 23rd, and a public hearing held on March 30th. Because the CPC had a very limited amount of time to consider projects during the period between enactment and Town Meeting, there was not sufficient time to establish a formal application and review process for the spring 2006 Town meeting.

Therefore, the CPC was only able to vote on and recommend to Town Meeting three proposed Municipal Capital Projects already included in Article 28 of the 2006 Warrant which are eligible for CPA funding. These are the installation of environmental controls for the Cary Hall vault, police dispatch room renovations and fire station renovations.

The Cary Hall Vault Environmental Controls project is described in Warrant Article 28 item (i) (\$60,000). The vault, which is 800 square feet, is too hot and too dry, and not the proper environment to maintain town records. The vault contains police and fire logs (historical, for research purposes); old town reports; personal records (marriage and birth certificates); and other documents and information that are now in smaller vaults and in different departments and locations. These improvements will therefore centralize storage. Also, the Town has made a request to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a grant for shelving, which will give us 1-1/2 times more shelving space. A CPA grant would serve as matching funds. The Massachusetts Legislature recently added “documents” to the list of historic resources that may be preserved using CPA funds, making this project eligible.

The second CPC project being brought before Town Meeting is the Police Station Dispatch Room renovation for \$100,000, described in Warrant Article 28(g). The request

is for funding to upgrade the safety dispatch center. The project will entail interior renovations to accommodate the larger equipment that the police are required to have. Of the \$840,000 total cost, \$100,000 is for interior renovations (the rest is radio equipment). This project is part of a long range plan to renovate and upgrade the facilities. This upgrade will enable the police department to continue operations while the back half of building is being renovated. The police station is on State Register of Historic Places as part of the Town Hall complex, so it qualifies as an “historic resource” and the renovation is CPA eligible.

The third CPC project is the Fire Station renovation for \$100,000, Article 28(c). The project includes replacement of the rubber roof on the rear of the building; it was last done 12 years ago, and now leaks. Also, the basement needs a drain to prevent water buildup and growth of mold from the damp conditions. Finally, the floor where the apparatus is kept needs to be shored up: new equipment creates 2000 pounds more weight of pressure on the infrastructure. The estimated costs are \$50,000 for the roof and drainage, and \$50,000 for shoring up the flooring. The Historical Commission has determined that the Fire Station meets the criteria of the definition of “historic resources” in the CPA, and therefore these expenses are eligible for CPA funding.

In addition to these Warrant Article projects, the CPC recommends approval of an allocation for administrative expenses. The CPC is allowed to use up to 5% of yearly receipts for expenses, or approximately \$115,000, and we are now requesting \$25,000. Of this amount, \$5,000 will be spent on general administrative expenses such as mailings and notice publication. \$20,000 will be allocated for an update of the Town’s open space/ recreation plan, needed as a planning tool for the CPC.

According to Karen Mullins, Conservation Commission Administrator and Karen Simmons, Director of Recreation, the Town’s Open Space Plan was last updated in 1997. Although the State Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) requires an update every five years, ours expired in 2002. The plan is an important historical document because it keeps track of land acquisition history and use in town. We need to update maps and information, making the plan compatible with GIS. As part of the process, the Commission will conduct new surveys and research. The plan must then be copied and widely distributed.

Once updated, the open space/recreation plan can be used to obtain grant money. Commonwealth Capital, a state funding source, has a scoring program for grant applications. Because our plan is out of date, we do not get points that would affect the Town’s ability to receive grants for land acquisition reimbursement. A town can receive up to 50% reimbursement, and we have funded many of our past open space purchases using this program. For example, the Town might be eligible to receive grant aid toward acquisition of Lot One, off Walnut Street, a part of the Western Greenway.

The Plan would also provide an inventory of our recreation space, including playing fields, to assist in future planning. It can help the Town qualify for grant funding on

projects like treating the Old Reservoir for water quality and vegetation control or even in acquiring additional recreational land.

The Community Preservation Act requires that 10% of CPA funds raised (estimated at \$230,000 for FY 07) must be allocated to open space, 10% to affordable housing and 10% to historic preservation. The funds may be spent or banked for use in future years. In addition to funding the projects which have just been described, the CPC recommends that the following reserves be approved by Town Meeting: \$230,000 for open space, \$230,000 for affordable housing, and \$25,000 for historic preservation. (The CPC is recommending more than the required 10% historic preservation allocation in the projects we have proposed.) The CPC recommends that the remaining \$1,530,000 (after accounting for administrative expenses of \$25,000 and the \$260,000 for capital projects) be deposited in the general unreserved fund balance of the Lexington Community Preservation Fund.

All of these amounts that are spent on approved projects or allocated and reserved for future CPA projects will be matched by the State, with the projected first payment of \$2.3 million to occur in October, 2007 (the funds are paid out with a one-year delay). We anticipate that our FY07 appropriations will be matched 100% with State funds at that time.

We are pleased that our recommended capital projects, which were tax levy items, can now receive CPA funds, resulting in a savings of \$260,000 in the Capital Plan Budget (\$160,000 from the cash funded capital budget and \$100,000 from the bond funded capital budget). The CPC would like to add that although we had wanted to renovate the Center Playground using CPA funds, current interpretations by the Department of Revenue of the allowable uses for recreation under the CPA statute do not allow it at this time.

The CPC is in the process of putting together an application form for new CPA projects that should be ready for distribution by May 15th. New projects will be reviewed by the CPC by late summer for the probable fall Town Meeting. Projects will also be considered on a regular basis in the fall and the CPC's recommended projects will be placed on the Warrant by Dec. 30th, for consideration at the annual spring Town Meeting in 2007.

April 19, 2006