



Town of Lexington
Community Preservation Committee

Report to 2013 Special Town Meeting
March 18, 2013

ARTICLE 2: LAND PURCHASE – OFF
MARRETT ROAD

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Town of Lexington Community Preservation Committee

Report on Article 2

This report addresses the application to the Community Preservation Committee by the Board of Selectmen for CPA funding for the acquisition of land off Marrett Road known as the Scottish Rite property.

ARTICLE 2 – LAND PURCHASE – OFF MARRETT ROAD

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) received the application for this project in the form of a “place holder” on October 30, 2012 for the “33 Marrett Road Purchase”. The Town commissioned two appraisals of the property, which were received by the Selectmen in December, 2012. These appraisals were requested in the fall of 2012 and were funded from the CPA administrative budget. Funds from this account were also used to hire an architect to evaluate the property and the buildings for their suitability for Town use.

Negotiations were ongoing throughout the winter of 2012/2013. On December 19, 2012, the CPC voted in Executive Session (8-0) to support the acquisition in concept, understanding that the cost of acquisition and potential future renovations would be substantial. On February 20, 2013, the CPC met in Executive Session to discuss the proposal, and voted (8-1) to recommend the designation of “some” CPA funds for the acquisition, should negotiations prove successful. On March 5, 2013, the CPC met with the Assistant Town Manager for Finance in Executive Session and was informed that the Town’s outstanding offer at that time was \$10,500,000. Notwithstanding the offer – which was a function of the bidding process - the highest appraised value of the property was \$8.2 million, which as a matter of law, establishes the upper limit of funding that can come from CPA funds. Further, of the \$8.2 million, it was determined that only \$7.39 million of the appraised value is eligible for funding with CPA funds, the difference being the value of the Commander’s lot, and land set aside for the possible construction of a gymnasium, which are excluded from the sale. (The pine grove, noted in the aerial photo on page 6, is not part of the proposed acquisition.) The CPC voted (7-1) at its March 5th meeting to approve \$7,390,000 in CPA funds for the acquisition of the Scottish Rite property, and on March 14th, reaffirmed this vote for historic resource purposes by a vote of (7-0).

Subsequent to March 5th, as a result of continuing negotiations, the Town’s offer was raised to \$10,950,000, with the CPC contribution remaining at \$7,390,000. The CPC

continues to support the acquisition of the property and the use of CPA funds to pay for it.

Over and above the acquisition cost, there are costs that are ancillary to the acquisition, totaling \$362,500. Of this amount, \$262,500 will be recommended under Article 2 for CPA funding and includes:

Survey Costs	\$ 15,000
Legal Costs	\$ 120,000
Site Assessment Costs	\$ 12,500
Short Term Debt Service and Debt Issuance Costs	<u>\$ 115,000</u>
	\$262,500

These costs were approved by a (7-0) vote on March 14th. Also approved in the same vote was a recommendation to use \$100,000 of CPA funds to be voted under Article 14(n) of the Annual Town Meeting for design and engineering for code compliance and future building improvements.

In total, the proposed use of CPA funds for Article 2 is as follows:

Acquisition Cost	\$ 7,390,000
Survey Costs	\$ 15,000
Legal Costs	\$ 120,000
Site Assessment Costs	\$ 12,500
Short Term Debt Service and Debt Issuance Costs	<u>\$ 115,000</u>
	\$ 7,652,500

ARTICLE 2

Project:	Land Purchase – off Marrett Road
CPA Category:	Historical Resources
Amount Requested:	\$7,652,500
Amount Recommended:	\$7,652,500
CPC Vote:	(7-1) for the \$7,390,000 land acquisition (March 5th) (7-0) for \$362,500 in ancillary costs (March 14th)

Project Description:

This CPA request by the Board of Selectmen is for partial funding for the acquisition of the Scottish Rite property, approximately 9.5 acres located at 33 Marrett Road. (See accompanying aerial photo on page 6.) The property is being considered for a Community Center, and current negotiations for acquisition include the historic mansion with its addition, a carriage house, and surrounding land. While at one time, the house on Marrett Road, referred to as the Commander’s House, was discussed as part of the acquisition, it is no longer part of the prospective purchase. The pine grove, located adjacent to the main parking area, is also not included in the acquisition. The request for the use of \$7,390,000, therefore, is for the portion of the purchase price deemed eligible for funding with CPA funds. As required by the CPA statute, a preservation restriction will be placed upon all buildings and land acquired with CPA funds.

The property is the combined holdings of the former estates of Charles Nunn and Richard Tower, and was purchased by the Scottish Rite in 1968 and later used for their headquarters. The main building proposed for purchase is 17,840 square feet, and has an accompanying “carriage house” of 5,260 square feet which was moved to the site from the Tower property to the west. The property under consideration lies west of the contemporary National Heritage Museum, which is owned and operated by the Scottish Rite.

Brief History of the Scottish Rite Building and Grounds

The historic centerpiece of the Scottish Rite headquarters is a Colonial Revival brick mansion built in 1905. It has a semicircular portico at its front, an impressive focal point for the building. It is believed that at one time the approach to the building was via a tree-lined drive, still in existence today as part of the sweeping landscape on the property. Currently used as the headquarters for the Scottish Rite, the historic home contains offices, meeting space, a dining area and an outside patio. It was designed by Boston architects Carl Fehmer and Samuel Page. Carl Fehmer was distinguished by a long career, which included the architectural work for Massachusetts General Hospital, McLean Hospital and homeowners in Back Bay, Brookline, Weston and Easton.

In 2002-2003, a significant addition was constructed on the west and north side of the main mansion to make the building suitable for the national headquarters of the Scottish Rite. The addition, designed by Flansburgh Architects and referred to as the “Training Center”, includes offices, meeting rooms and exhibition space. The basement houses climate controlled storage for Scottish Rite documents and artifacts.

The landscaped grounds of the Scottish Rite property complement the historic Colonial Revival mansion and its addition. There is a scenic tree-lined view from the historic house, and acres of lawn surrounding the building. Pines have been planted in the area of the

Carriage House and parking area.

The entire property, including the historic mansion, its addition, the carriage house and the surrounding grounds are listed on the Lexington Historical Commission's Comprehensive Cultural Resources Inventory (the Inventory).

Evaluation of the Property by the Town

In September 2013, the Board of Selectmen created the ad hoc Town wide Facilities Master Planning Committee to evaluate the Town's facilities needs and to propose a ten-year plan for meeting these needs. At about the same time that the Facilities Master Planning Committee was formed, the Scottish Rite confirmed their plans to sell approximately ten acres of land, including the historic mansion/annex and carriage house. Previously, the Scottish Rite had been informed that the Town might have an interest in buying the property if it were to be offered for sale. Given the ongoing Facilities Master Planning study, the Selectmen asked the Facilities Master Planning Committee to evaluate whether this property would help meet the Town's long-term facility needs. To assist the Facilities Master Planning Committee in this effort, the Selectmen also requested \$40,000 in funding from the Community Preservation Committee's administrative budget to retain an architect to evaluate the property and buildings, and to obtain two appraisals. The architect and Facilities Master Planning Committee evaluated whether this property could be used as a location for a new main fire station, new police headquarters or a community center to replace the Muzzey Senior Center. The Facilities Master Planning Committee also considered whether the Town should purchase and rent the facility for private uses, including an event center or adult living and care facility. The Facilities Master Planning Committee found that the community center use was the most appropriate for the site and made that recommendation to the Board of Selectmen on December 17, 2012.

Concurrent with the Master Planning study, the Community Center Task Force Committee was charged with studying the concept of a community center that would serve the intellectual, physical, and social needs of seniors, other adults, teens and youth. The Community Center Committee provided its report and recommendations to the Board of Selectmen on November 26, 2012 and found, in part, the need for a new building or the repurposing of an existing facility that would have:

- Dedicated space for seniors and teens;
- Offices for the Human Services and Recreation Departments;
- Centralized information and volunteer services;
- Flexible rooms for meetings, casual gathering space with food service for drop-in activities, and exercise space for all;
- Centrally located or on public transportation routes; and
- Ample parking.

Project Goals and Objectives

- To preserve an important historical property, as listed on the Historical Commission's Comprehensive Cultural Resources Inventory; and
- To provide a site and facility for a community center that will serve the needs of all age groups within the community.

Project Benefit:

This project will benefit the residents of Lexington by providing an opportunity for a long-sought after community center facility, to replace in part, the dated and undersized Senior Center. It will also protect an important historic resource in the Town.

Funding Request:

The funding request for the acquisition of the 33 Marrett Road parcel is \$7,390,000 for the acquisition of the property, and \$362,500 in ancillary costs, for a total of \$7,752,500 in CPA funding. If this request is approved by Special Town Meeting, it is anticipated that the cost of the acquisition will be bonded at terms to be determined by the Board of Selectmen with input from the CPC and other Town financial committees. If the Scottish Rite property is acquired, it is anticipated that there will be requests for CPA funding in FY 15 and thereafter for renovation costs.

33 Marrett Road Property



Approximate property line of land to be purchased shown in red. Also outlined in red are two areas to be *excluded* from the purchase; the Commander House lot, and the pine grove. (Note the tree-lined entrance to original Tower mansion.)



The historic Colonial Revival home and its associated addition. Both the former Tower home and the addition are now used as the National headquarters for the Scottish Rite. (Photo by Flansburgh Architects)