

Community Preservation Committee Town of Needham, Massachusetts

Report to Town Meeting Special Town Meeting – May 2021

Introduction

In November 2004, the voters of Needham adopted the legislation known as the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA), a funding mechanism for Cities and Towns to award grants to applicants to support community housing, preservation of historic resources, acquisition and preservation of open Space, and restoration and investment in recreational resources. The Needham Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is responsible for implementing Needham's Community Preservation Plan pursuant to the requirements of the CPA. Since November 2005, the CPC has forwarded numerous projects to Town Meeting for final approval, the largest of which is the preservation and reconstruction of Town Hall.

The committee membership is defined by the requirements of the CPA as adopted by Needham. The nine member committee consists of a member of each of the following boards or committees: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Park Recreation Commission, Historical Commission, Housing Authority, and two members each appointed by the Town Moderator and Board of Selectmen.

A summary of the CPC's FY 2021 activities follows. Applications for this year were received in December of 2020. These applications were vetted and voted on by the CPC initially for eligibility for funding under the CPA. The applications were then assigned liaisons who worked with proponents to answer committee questions. In March the CPC Chair met with the Select Board and the Finance Committee to consult on the proposals and a public hearing was held remotely on March 17, 2021.

Agendas, minutes and the Needham Community Preservation Plan are available on the Town's website at <http://needhamma.gov/CPC>

Sources of Available Funds

Tax Surcharge Receipts

Needham residents are currently billed a 2% surcharge on property taxes after the first \$100,000 valuation, as a result of town-wide vote accepting CPA. In FY 2021, it is estimated that Needham will receive \$2,837,768 in property tax surcharges dedicated to CPA. The CPA fund also generates revenue from penalties and interest assessed on overdue CPA charges and investment income on the CPA funds in the bank

State Community Preservation Fund

Needham receives a distribution from the Massachusetts Community Preservation Trust Fund, and to date, has received \$9,784,080 from this fund. The most recent distribution, in November 2020 was \$754,080, a 28.63% match to local collection.

The match over the years has fluctuated from 100% after initial passage of adoption of the CPA by Needham, to as low as 17.2% in FY2018. Additional communities passing CPA adoption in their communities, including the City of Boston in 2016, has resulted in an increase in the number of communities that are eligible for the match thereby reducing the match percentage that Needham has received over time. Legislation was passed in July 2019 that provides for an increase in fees that go toward the Community Preservation Trust Fund, which should help to stabilize the match moving forward.

Fund Balances

State law mandates that, annually, at least 10% of surcharges plus state distribution funds be spent on actual projects, or be allocated for future projects in three specific CPA reserves; Community Housing, Open Space, and Historic Resources. The remainder of the funds, minus funds allocated for administrative expenses, is placed in an Annual Reserve fund, which can only be used for projects in these three areas and/or qualifying recreational projects.

Needham's CPC has elected to target 11% of the estimated receipts for each special reserve to insure staying compliant with the mandate. This year the CPC has decided to recommend an increase of 22% for the Community Housing reserve to hold aside funds for future housing needs.

As a result of previous appropriations, the reserve balances available for appropriation at the May 2021 Special Town Meeting, are as follows:

Community Housing:	\$ 2,459,763
Open Space:	\$ 1,441,944
Historic Resources:	\$ 15,820
2021 Annual Reserve:	\$ 817,977
Free Cash:	\$ 2,599,154
TOTAL	\$ 7,334,658 as of May 1, 2021

The unspent 2021 Annual Reserve and remaining administrative funds and interest must go through the free cash certification process before being returned to the CPA Fund.

The CPC is recommending appropriation of seven (7) projects, to be funded at the October 2020 Annual Town Meeting. After subtracting the appropriations for the seven (7) projects, and adding the FY 2021 appropriations from Article 32 and a slight adjustment to reserve contributions from increased state match revenue in Article 33, the balances in the respective funds would be:

Community Housing:	\$ 3,236,481
Open Space:	\$1,661,810
Historic Resources:	\$ 15,820

2021 Annual Reserve: \$ 1,786,691

Please note the figures above assume that \$82,000 has been appropriated for the FY 2021 administrative expenses. *It does not include the eventual Free Cash funds that will be finalized in late 2021.*

Administrative Expenses

The CPC Administrative Funds may be used to pay for the expenses related to the work of the committee, including office supplies, mailings, legal notices, appraisals, consultant fees, property deposits, as well as the recording secretary's salary and three hours per week for the Staff Liaison's weekly salary. The funds were recently utilized to pay for the addition of conservation restrictions on properties purchased with CPA funds. The Needham CPC is a member of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Coalition and pays annual dues to the association, currently \$7,900. The Coalition provides regular consultation services to the CPC, and monitors and informs member communities on state legislative activity related to the Community Preservation Act.

Requested Project Funding

Article 25: Preservation of Town Marriage Records

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$25,000 for the historic preservation of the Town of Needham's historic marriage records. The Town Clerk's Office has insured that all marriage certificates are preserved and bound since 1919 and has preserved the documents from 1711 to 1919 through a previous Community Preservation appropriation. This request is to scan and index the documents from the 1919 to 1970s and upload them onto a content management system. Companies under the state contract will be solicited to contract for this work, and an estimate has been received to support the requested amount. The Town Clerk has sought a recommendation from Needham Historic Commission Chair to review the historic significance of these documents. This project, if funded, would enable immediate access to the records which would help ensure a higher level of access for those who need these documents.

Article 26: Town Common Historic Redesign & Renovation

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$1,000,000 for the construction of the Town Common Redesign and Beautification project. The Town Common has long been used for a gathering spot for the community. This reconstruction will focus on making this space beautiful as well as functional. The area in this project includes the green space between the southern curb line of Garrity Way to the curb line of Great Plain Avenue to the south and from the curb lines of Chapel Street and Highland Avenue. Garrity Way and the parking area are not included in this project. The Town completed an internal design process for the Town Common and drafted a scope of services which includes improved hardscape, landscaping, amenities, tree plantings, and utility upgrades that are consistent with the historic nature of the Common and the new Downtown Streetscape Improvement

Project. This project will install new sod, trees, plantings, low maintenance hardscape materials, and increase handicap accessibility. The pathways and landscaping will be adjusted to become more aesthetically pleasing and functionally enhanced. There will be increased electrical and sound capacity to accommodate Town-wide events. The balance of this project will be funded through non-CPA sources.

Article 27: Fisher Street Trailhead – Construction

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$15,000 to construct the Fisher St Trailhead at the Needham corridor of the Bay Colony Rail Trail. This trailhead was designed by the Needham Engineering Department and consists of a stone driveway and parking area, a guardrail, and landscaping. The proposed trailhead at Fisher Street will not only improve the accessibility of the Rail Trail, its proximity to Red Wing Bay and the Charles River Peninsula will make the area more of a destination for passive recreation.

Article 28: Resurfacing the Synthetic Track at DeFazio

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$166,000 to resurface the track at the DeFazio Field. Parks and Forestry Superintendent and a consultant evaluated the synthetic track at DeFazio and determined there was delamination. If funded, this proactive capital improvement, along with basic maintenance, could extend this life of this track by approximately 10 additional years, thereby delaying a full replacement. Providing this proactive repair will reduce the need for total replacement.

Article 29: McLeod Field Renovation Design

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$45,000 in design funding to investigate the appropriate method to address the issue that continuously create sinkholes in the outfield. The outfield of McLeod field, within the DeFazio complex, has been plagued with sinkholes due to the 4' drainpipe that runs through the field. Following heavy rains, large holes appear throughout the outfield that require emergency repairs to allow the field to be used by permitted user groups and the greater public. This has caused the field to fail prematurely, and a full renovation of the subsurface, surface, and improved amenities will be the focus of this design. This project will address the impact of this failing drainage system and create a new subsurface and improved playing surface as well as upgraded amenities in at this playing field. The balance of this project will be funded through non-CPA sources.

Article 30: Trail Identification - Design

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$6,000 for design to address a long-standing goal of the Conservation Commission and is identified as a priority in the Town of Needham – Trails Master Plan. This project is for the design of a system of identification signage for the trailheads, information kiosks, and directional signage, including trail markers, for the various trail systems throughout the Town. Having cohesive, easy to follow, signage and markers, as well as, additional kiosks will encourage the public and visitors to enjoy our trails and all the trail properties have to offer.

Article 31: Town Reservoir Sediment Removal

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$175,000 in design funding to determine the best way to address the impairments affecting the Town Reservoir. The Town Reservoir is used for many recreational purposes such as model boating, fishing, and ice skating. Identifying and creating a design to remedy the impairments will improve both the Town Reservoir and the waterway that it discharges water to Alder Brook. Alder Brook is designated as a category 5 impaired water body, under National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). The balance of this project will be funded through non-CPA sources.

Article 32: Appropriate to Community Preservation Fund

This article appropriates the estimated FY 2022 CPA receipts.

Annual Reserve	\$ 1,225,714
Community Housing Reserve	\$ 764,783
Historic Resources Reserve*	\$ 0
Open Space Reserve	\$ 382,931

* The required annual funding or appropriation for Historic Resources is the \$405,041 payment of the debt service, voted on within Article 32.

Article 33: Appropriate to Community Preservation Fund Supplement

In January 2020 a supplemental payment of State matching funds was received by the Town. To achieve the appropriate 10% minimum contribution to the various reserve accounts this will appropriate an additional \$11,935 into the Open Space Reserve and \$11,935 into the Community Housing reserve.

Conclusion

Needham is fortunate to have the use of CPA funds which have funded numerous successful projects for the community. Our appreciation is extended to the citizens of Needham and specifically Needham's Town Meeting members for their support. The Committee looks forward to FY 2022 and new requests and interest from the residents of the community.

Peter Pingitore, Chair
Artie Crocker, Vice Chair
Paul Alpert
Joseph Barnes
Bob Dermody

Laura Dorfman
Chris Gerstel
Penny Kirk
Richard Zimbone