

The Community Preservation Committee is pleased to submit its annual report of activities for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015.

The Role of the Community Preservation Committee In Wellesley

In 2002, the Town of Wellesley accepted the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA) and formed a Community Preservation Committee (CPC). The membership of Wellesley's CPC is determined by Town bylaw. There are nine members, including representatives from five designated boards: Natural Resources Commission, Planning Board, Recreation Commission, Housing Authority and Historical Commission. Four additional members are appointed by the Moderator, with one of those appointees traditionally recommended by the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation.

In accordance with the CPA, Wellesley set a 1% surcharge on the local property tax. (Taxes on the first \$100,000 of a property's value are exempt from the surcharge as are taxes on certain low income housing.) The proceeds from the surcharge are used to pursue Community Preservation activities which fall into four categories: open space, historic resources, community housing and recreation.

The Wellesley CPA fund retains 100% of this surcharge revenue. These funds are then matched on an annual basis by monies from the Massachusetts Community Preservation Trust Fund which is made up of revenues collected statewide from Land Court and Land Registry fees. The State's payment to each CPA community is determined by a statutory formula. For the first five years, that match was 100% but because of declining fee revenues and a growing number of communities adopting the CPA, the match has declined over the last several years. State funds received in FY15, \$319,760, reflect a 31.4% match.

By statute, the CPC is required to allocate a minimum of 10% of all revenues to be expended or placed in a designated reserve for later use in each of three major categories: open space, community housing, and historic resources. At the municipality's discretion, the remaining portion of annual CPA revenues may be used currently or placed in a general reserve fund for future use in any of these three categories as well as for recreation projects. The Town may also appropriate up to 5% of annual CPA funds for "administrative" purposes. Administrative funds are used for clerical support and for professional services in helping to define and analyze potential projects. Administrative funds not expended in any fiscal year are returned to the undesignated fund balance.

To date, forty six projects in Wellesley have been funded, partially or in total, with CPA funds. To see the list of Wellesley CPA projects, go to the Community Preservation Coalition website (and select Wellesley):

<http://www.communitypreservation.org/projects/report?town=Wellesley>.

Community Preservation Committee Activities

Two extraordinarily significant projects have had major effects on Wellesley's CPC and its financial plan this year.

Special Town Meeting – October 2014 – Return of CPA Funds from 900 Worcester Purchase

Through an act at the 2014 Fall Special Town Meeting, Town Meeting rescinded an earlier appropriation of \$2.9 million of CPA funds to be used for the purchase of a portion of the 900 Worcester Street property. It was the consensus of the Town that unwinding the use of CPA funds for the purchase of this site allowed for maximum flexibility in utilizing the site. As a result, these funds were returned to the CPC undesignated fund balance. An additional \$900,000 that had been carried over a number of years in the five year plan for the development of a multi-use playing field at 900 Worcester has been removed.

Special Town Meeting – January 2015 – Purchase of North 40 with \$10 million in CPA Funds

In the spring of 2014, Wellesley College announced its plan to sell a 46-acre tract of land, bordered by Weston Road and Route 135, otherwise known as "The North 40." After a competitive bidding process, the College and the Town of Wellesley reached a purchase and sale agreement in late 2014 and in January 2015, a STM enthusiastically approved this agreement. In March of 2015, residents approved the town-wide debt exclusion to purchase the land. A portion of the financing of this major land purchase will come from a borrowing of up to \$10 million by the CPC against future revenues collected from surcharges, as allowed under Chapter 44B of the State statute. The CPC has determined that debt service payments of up to \$610,000 annually over a 30-year borrowing period can be supported without undermining the Committee's ability to participate in other worthy CPC projects. In addition, the financial plan for Wellesley's CPC carries a \$250,000 entry beginning in FY17, for potential CPA-eligible projects on the North 40 parcel.

Actions Taken at the 2015 ATM

Administrative Funds and Appropriations to Designated Reserves

The Town may appropriate up to 5% of estimated annual revenues for administrative purposes. These funds are utilized primarily for consultants and engineers to help analyze and define potential projects which may receive CPA funding. In addition, these funds finance a part-time administrative assistant who is responsible for all CPC clerical and reporting duties, including maintaining the CPC's website and on-line access to CPC applications, meeting reports and related materials.

The CPC requested and Town Meeting approved an appropriation of \$65,000. Unused funds appropriated for administrative purposes will revert to the CPA fund undesignated balance.

Under the State CPA, the Town is required to appropriate or reserve for future appropriations a minimum of 10% of the estimated annual revenues for three designated purposes: Open Space, Historic Resources and Community Housing.

The CPC requested and Town Meeting approved the appropriation of \$150,000 to the Open Space Reserve, the Historic Resources Reserve and the Community Housing Reserve.

Appropriation to the Wellesley Historical Society

Sponsor: Wellesley Historical Society, Kathleen Fahey – Curator

Project: Processing and Preservation of the Margaret Urann Archival Collection

The goal of this project is to ensure the long-term preservation of this collection and make it accessible to researchers, students and the community. Margaret Urann was a resident of Wellesley for almost eighty years and passed away in 1993. Ms. Urann was a writer and historian who regularly chronicled the Town's history for the *Wellesley Townsman*, where she was an employee for over forty years. As a longtime volunteer for the Wellesley Historical Society, Ms. Urann was dedicated to researching all aspects of Wellesley history. As a writer, she authored many poems, short stories and plays.

The Urann Collection contains over 20 linear feet of historic materials including manuscripts, historic photographs, personal correspondence, diaries and scrapbooks. If this appropriation is approved, the collection will be processed according to current archival standards, with files organized and labeled for use by researchers and a Finding Aid created that will be submitted to the Library of Congress/World Cat search engine.

The CPC recommended and Town meeting approved \$6,200 from the Historic Resources Reserve for this project.

Appropriation to Wellesley Historical Commission

Sponsor: Wellesley Historical Commission, Tadd Heuer – Chair

Project: Wellesley Historical Commission Historic Plaque Program

In the Spring of 2014, the Wellesley Historical Commission (WHC) authorized an extension of its historic plaque program to make eligible all structures constructed over 100 years ago. Previously, only structures from 1881 (the year of the Town's incorporation) or before were eligible for a WHC plaque. The WHC estimates that approximately 600 additional structures became eligible as a result of the expansion, with another 150 joining this list between 2015 and 2019. Also, WHC estimates that approximately 150 of the pre-1881 structures have missing or deteriorated plaques that need to be replaced.

The WHC estimates the total cost for researching and manufacturing a plaque at approximately \$155. As a point of comparison, the combined cost of Weston's plaque research and

manufacture is \$180; Newton charges over \$200 for the same. In both cases, residents pay the full costs.

A portion of the WHC request is to fund the research required to accurately date each structure (if such research has not already been conducted). This involves at minimum a full deed search, a review of the Town assessment records, and a search in the Townsman archives for references to the property. A brief, consolidated report is generated for each structure. WHC estimates approximately five hours of research per structure, or an average research cost of \$100 per structure.

The manufacturing and administrative costs for each plaque are approximately \$50 for manufacturing and \$5 for outreach, postage and printing costs.

Under the WHC proposal, each owner who requests a plaque will be asked to make a suggested contribution of \$25, with CPA funds being used to establish a fund to underwrite the remaining costs and to cover a limited number of hardship exemptions. Owners will also be responsible for covering the costs of installation.

The goal of the plaque program is to increase the recognition and appreciation of Wellesley's history, and to ensure that every owner of an eligible structure can afford to display a plaque. WHC believes that the recognition conferred on structures through the plaque program encourages pride amongst owners and encourages the preservation and maintenance of Wellesley's historic structures.

CPC recommended and Town Meeting approved \$82,000 from the Historic Resources Reserve for this project.

Appropriations to the Natural Resources Commission

Sponsor: Natural Resources Commission, Brandon Schmitt, Director

Project: Morses Pond Erosion Study

This request is for the funding of a study to evaluate evidence of Morses Pond shore-line deterioration due to erosion and to determine those areas of shoreline requiring preservation. Such shoreline erosion can threaten trees, recreation areas, and wildlife habitats. Disturbances due to heavy foot traffic, informal boat launches and heavy storm runoff are threatening the stability of the bank and the water quality in some areas. This study would include a pond-wide survey and the development of a preservation plan.

CPC recommended and Town Meeting approved \$20,000 from the Open Space Reserve for this study.

Sponsor: Natural Resources Commission, Brandon Schmitt, Director

Project: Comprehensive Pond Management Plan

This request will allow the NRC to conduct a comprehensive pond management planning process to assess and prioritize the preservation of the Town's smaller ponds. Modeled on the success of the Morses Pond management program, a comprehensive plan will enable the Town to be more proactive and less likely to lose sight of these precious natural resources. This capital request has been in the NRC's capital plan for the last five years and is strongly supported by the DPW. The ponds to be addressed, Abbotts, Duck, Longfellow, Reeds, Rockridge, Farm Station and Bezanson, are important to the Town for recreation and aesthetic reasons, but also for storm water management. Without proper long-term management, the Town runs the risk of the ponds becoming wetlands and encumbering the much more restrictive regulations that go with wetlands designations.

CPC recommended and Town Meeting approved \$100,000 from the Open Space Reserve for the development of a comprehensive pond management plan for Wellesley.

Appropriation to the Library Board of Trustees/Board of Selectmen

Sponsor: Library Board of Trustees, Beth Woods-Sullivan; Board of Selectmen, Barbara Searle

Project: Study of the South Chimney Wall of Hills Branch Library

This purpose of this appropriation is to hire Judith Selwyn of Preservation Technologies, the preservation expert who oversaw the repairs to the east chimney wall of the Hills Branch Library, to study the repairs needed on the second chimney wall. The funding will enable Ms. Selwyn to assess the repairs needed and formulate an estimate of the costs of those repairs.

This appropriation will come from funds on hand in the Historic Resources Reserve in the current fiscal year so that the study can be completed this Spring. The CPC is proud to play an important role in the preservation of important Town assets such as the Hills Branch Library.

CPC recommended and Town Meeting approved \$2,750 from the Undesignated Reserves for this project.

Appropriation to Playing Fields Task Force

Sponsor: Playing Fields Task Force, Tripp Sheehan, Chair

Project: Design and Permitting Phase of the Rehabilitation of the High School Track and Playing Field

This request will fund the design and permitting phase of a project to rehabilitate the track and field on Rice Street, across from Wellesley High School. The current track is in danger of failing

and the playing field is deemed unusable for long periods of time during the various playing seasons.

The need for playing fields in Town has been well-documented and discussed at length. This field at the high school is a resource that is largely under-utilized, forcing a greater intensity of use of the Sprague fields. The track has deteriorated to the point where before long it will not meet MIAA standards. The PFTF conducted a study of Town athletic fields and concluded that irrespective of what happens at the North 40 or 900 Worcester, the high school track and field need to be a priority for the Town.

The rehabilitation of this resource was recommended over ten years ago in a comprehensive report compiled by the firm of Geller Sport as part of their evaluation of the Hunnewell Field complex. The project was set aside as the need to address the conditions at Sprague Field necessarily took precedence. Although the intention was to include the rehabilitation of this facility as part of the construction of the new Wellesley High School, due to regulations of the then new MA School Building Authority, this could not be included.

The total cost of the rehabilitation of the track and field is estimated at \$2,490,483. The proposed plan for funding the construction costs will likely include a combination of Town resources, CPA funds and private fundraising. The PFTF expects to return to the CPC and other Town boards at the 2016 ATM to seek appropriations for the construction funds.

CPC recommended and Town Meeting approved \$166,000 from the Undesignated Reserve to fund this request.

Looking Ahead

Last year, the CPC made a significant financial commitment to the restoration of the Fuller Brook Project and will continue to monitor the progress of this undertaking. In addition, the CPC looks forward to actively participating in the discussions surrounding plans for the preservation and development of the land purchased, utilizing CPA funds, from Wellesley College.

The CPC will continue its collaboration with Town boards, committees and private citizens to identify worthy CPA-eligible projects and to help advance the process of long-term strategic planning for preserving historic resources and supporting open space, recreation and community housing.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara McMahan, Chair

Allan Port, Vice Chair

Stephen Burt

Deborah Carpenter

Kathy Egan

Joan Gaughan

Tad Heuer

Susan Hurwitz

Susan Troy