

1. Project Name: Angino Barn Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Newton Farm Commission and Public Buildings Commissioner

Category: Historic Resources, Open Space, Recreation

Location: Angino Farm, 303 Nahanton Street, Newton 02459. Ward 8

Cost: \$568,000 from CP funds; \$230,000 from other funds; total cost \$798,000

Description: Aims: Transform the barn interior into a space that will let more people experience first-hand how our food is produced and preserve a historic resource. Permit educational and recreational programs “to accommodate increased community support and presence;” demonstrate the tools & techniques of a working farm; promote at-home growing by residents of all ages.

Project work: Phase I of the renovation stabilized the foundation, installed new windows, added insulation and siding & roofing preserving the “classic appearance of the building,” entirely with privately raised funds. Phase II, which this proposal addresses, is to restore the interior, adding kitchen, 2 bathrooms, elevator, heat, insulation, water, sewer and gas connections, restore floors, new partitions, historically restore doors, etc. Also \$63,000 for new driveway and landscaping. This renovation makes the barn fully wheelchair accessible and available for winter use.

Comments:

Angino Farm is a terrific example of a public-private partnership that has exceeded all expectations. In the application, the proponents have done an excellent job of showing city-wide support for its current functions. We are particularly impressed with the proposal’s map, and with how well this mostly-volunteer organization has succeeded in raising funds and becoming self-supporting.

Further, the applicants have put together a very thorough and complete document, including financial statements. We are particularly appreciative that the final product would be fully accessible, welcoming Newton residents of all abilities.

Questions:

- How pressing is the educational need, in light of the limits to CP funds and the stability of the historic building?
- Will the envisioned educational program be year-round?
- Would the educational offerings just cover Angino, or would they include field trips to other, perhaps more rural farms?

- How would the educational offerings be supported in the long term? Will they be self-supporting, part of the Newton school curriculum, or supported by farm operations?
- What additional parking might be needed if the barn is renovated?

2. Project Name: Preservation of 19th & Early 20th Century Newton Documents/Collections

Submitted by: Newton Free Library, City Clerk and Historic Newton

Category: Historic Resources

Location: Documents are now in various Newton locations. Records would be digitized and posted on World Wide Web via Newton's city website and/or Digital Commonwealth, the state's online digital repository for global access. Presumably microfilmed copies would be available at Newton Free Library.

Cost: \$36,544.75 from CP funds; \$8,676.25 additional grant request to Mass. Library Services & Technology; total \$45,221.

Description: This is a joint effort of 3 entities to protect, preserve and digitize materials that document Newton's cultural, governmental and social history through a time when it went from an agricultural to an industrial suburb of Boston. Included are maps, photographs, city directories, and manuscripts from this historic era. They provide primary sources for researchers. The documents will be cleaned and repaired, stains removed, acidity reduced, and in the case of directories dismantled and scanned on a machine. Once finished, they will be digitized and/or microfilmed. The end results will reduce the need for physical handling and increase access, as well as preserve documents for many future generations.

Comments:

We commend the Newton Free Library, the City Clerk and Historic Newton for working together on this excellent, concise proposal. It supports the City's call for "planning with history" in Newton's Comprehensive Plan (Chapter 9). It fits within the CPA and the current Newton Community Preservation Priorities for FY2010-12.

The League of Women Voters of Newton reiterates its support for making public documents truly accessible and searchable by putting them on the World Wide Web and other digital repositories, as this proposal would do. We are further encouraged that the applicants have applied for outside funding.

The proposal would be strengthened by a more comprehensive description of the entirety of Newton's documents in need of preservation, since it is clear from Ms. Ingerson's list of future proposals that the materials touched upon here are not the sum total of the contents of Newton's archives. While the argument for preserving these documents is made, it could be strengthened by including urgency, usage, and criteria for selecting these particular items.

Questions:

- How accessible are these documents now?
- What condition are they in now?
- Who uses them?
- What kind of protective measures now exist to prevent damage to the physical documents when people want to use them?
- Why were these documents selected over others?
- Of those documents not selected for this proposal, when should the CPC expect to hear about the remaining documents and what is the scope of the project that would digitalize and preserve them?

3. Project Name: Historic Newton Object Collection Preservation and Access Project

Submitted by: Historic Newton (Cindy Stone, Director and Laura Costello Manager 3-D Collection)

Category: Historic Preservation

Location: Historic Newton, 527 Washington St, Newton, MA 02458 Ward 1 **Cost:** \$30,000 from CP funds; \$5000 additional funds to be used

Description: Historic Newton is applying for \$30,000 from the CPA for planning and design for off-site storage at the Craft Street Stables' second floor loft. The finished loft would adequately secure historic objects currently kept at the Jackson Homestead in areas with inadequate temperature and humidity controls.

The city-owned collection of approximately 12,000 items tells the history of Newton from the time of the early Native American settlements through to recent decades. Improved storage of this collection will improve the museum's ability to care for Newton's cultural patrimony and create credible exhibitions based on the material culture of many centuries of Newton History.

Comments:

We commend Historic Newton for their comprehensive summary of the significance of their project to store the collection in a safe and climate controlled area. We also commend the innovative re-use of the nearby stable, another historic gem that Newton needs to preserve.

The application has letters of support from Nicholas Parnell, Commissioner of Public Buildings and Thomas Daley Commissioner of Department of Public Works. Mr. Daley recommends that he and/or a designee from the DPW be closely involved with the project development.

The overall project is definitely allowable under Newton CP Goals and Newton's Comprehensive Plan scope.

Questions:

- The \$35000 budget for the planning of this project lacks detail. How does Historic Newton and how will the city know whether the amounts requested are appropriate and adequate?
- Can this project be accomplished using current city employees or volunteer labor rather than hiring expensive outside architects and engineers?
- The relationship between Historic Newton as developer/tenant and the Department of Public Works as landlord throughout the longer process of

securing the stable loft will need to be outlined carefully. There are questions of management, access to the loft and the collections, security, maintenance, utilities, rents and the adequacy of the 1900 square feet for the collections.

- Has that process been started?
- Will Historic Newton be paying rent, or for maintenance and utilities?
- How will responsibilities and any liability be divided between the departments?

4. Project Name: Historic Public Art

Submitted by: David Olson, City Clerk

Category: Historic

Location: City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Ave,

Cost: \$5,200—all CPA\$

Description: Restore, repair and clean an 1873 portrait of Newton's first mayor, James F.C. Hyde of Newton Highlands, painted by then-Cherry St. resident Nahum Onthank, one of Massachusetts' early acclaimed painters. His work is currently found in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Harvard University and the New England Historic Genealogical Society, among other locations. The painting is dirty, discolored, ripped and has damage to its frame and surface. Once restored, it will be re-hung in City Hall.

Comments:

This application links nicely with the city's Comprehensive Plan/using history to build a sense of place, as the painting in question is of the city's first mayor, as painted by an eminent artist. Mr. Olsen has successfully completed several CPA projects, and can be trusted to see this rather modest one through on time and on budget.

Questions:

- It appears that this is just one of what promises to be several applications for individual city artworks in locations throughout the city.
 - How was this one selected and how was it determined that this was the top priority?
 - How many are there altogether?
- Have applicants attempted to leverage other funds for this and future art preservation projects?
- Can volunteer help from the Museum of Fine Arts or its school be used?
- The cost of this restoration looks high to those of us who have had valuable pieces restored.
 - Will other bids be solicited?
 - Could an equally quality job be completed by a lower-cost vendor?

5. Project Name: Veteran Housing

Submitted by: CAN-DO, Josephine McNeil

Category: Community Housing

Location: 2148-50 Commonwealth Ave. Auburndale MA 02466, Ward 4

Accessible to MBTA express bus, and commuter rail to Boston, allowing easy access for the veteran/residents to meet with case managers at the VA; walking distance to local elementary school (Williams), post office, supermarket, drug store, bank, convenience store.

Cost: \$360,000 CPA funds, \$950,000 total cost including 5 other funding sources

Description: Create 2 deed-restricted affordable rental units for families headed by homeless veterans. Purchase and renovate an existing 2-family house on 8,310 s.f. lot in multi-residence zoned district. Services, provided by partner organizations, will empower veterans to be economically stable. Prospective residents will be identified by CAN-DO working with the Health Care for the Homeless Office of the Boston VA Medical Center Office.

One unit is currently a 2 BR unit, and the other a 3 BR unit. Minor interior repairs including de-leading, hand rails and insulation are planned. Front concrete steps do not meet code and will be removed and rebuilt. Garage and existing driveway on site will be removed, drive will be repaved.

CAN-DO is partnering with The Second Step (TSS) and Newton Community Service Centers (NCSC) to support the families. Services available include domestic violence services, financial and credit planning, tenancy counseling, legal advocacy, daycare and after school and camp referrals.

Residents will pay up to 30% of their income. The remainder will be a rental subsidy under the HUD/VASH voucher program. Section 8 subsidies will be available to veterans who participate in a homeless supportive service program offering case management at the Boston VA Medical Center.

Comments:

We commend the proponents for this innovative partnering of organizations to leverage funding for a network of services and housing for an underserved population. This would be the first such housing that we are aware of in Newton. We appreciate that this would make two more housing units in our city affordable in perpetuity. We also like the range of support services, which should lend stability to the families lucky enough to land one of these homes.

The renovations outlined in the proposal we deem very necessary. More insulation would be beneficial, as it would pay for itself over the long term, saving CAN-DO, (or whomever assumes ownership of the building), operating funding.

Unfortunately, the site makes wheelchair access impossibly expensive. Otherwise, the location is ideal for a very-low-income family, as most needed services and shopping are within walking or transit distance, making the cost of car ownership unnecessary. But if the target population is demonstrably large and able-bodied, the provision of a few homes, even without full wheelchair access, would be a valuable commodity. We would like to see more information to support this last point.

Questions:

- Can the proposers, Newton Housing Authority and the Boston VA Medical Center provide data to document the demand for veteran family housing?
- We are concerned about the lack of wheelchair access, as we would imagine that the number of veterans with access needs might be larger than those without. Are there any data on how much of the city's affordable housing is currently wheelchair accessible?

Recommendation: LWVN believes there will be increasing needs for assisted housing for veterans. We would like to see the statistics on how much of the city's affordable housing is now accessible, and how great the need among veterans for affordable housing is now.

6. Project Name: Historic Building Design Guidelines

Submitted by: Newton Historical Commission (city hall), Brian Lever, Senior Preservation Planner (city hall)

Category: Historic

Location: city-wide

Cost: \$55,000—all CPA\$

Description: Hire a consultant to create detailed design guidelines to standardize and help preservation of the over 800 privately-held Newton buildings in historic districts or with preservation restrictions as they plan changes/additions. Not only will it identify common styles (with pictures), but will clarify the project review requirements for the district commissions. The information will be in the form of recommendations ONLY, but they will be based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

The hope is that these guidelines will be useful for other organizations, such as the Urban Design Commission. They will be made widely available via 1,000 copies distributed to each homeowner in an historic district, and at the library, History Museum and on the web. The web version will be updatable.

LWVN Reviewer Comments:

The applicants argue this proposal fits within the Comprehensive Plan's History in Planning and Preliminary Historic Preservation Plan (2002). Once completed, maintenance is anticipated to be low, and accomplished with volunteer time. The letters of support from historic district commissions and the Urban Design Commission are impressive.

It seems clear that design standards are needed across historic districts, if their purpose is indeed to preserve historic features. Apparently, many decisions are subjective and guidelines would help to make them less so. It would be nice if included in this project a set of directions would be established for the Commissions to document their reviews of projects put before them and a location where these could be uploaded to the Web site. In that way, home owners would be able to review any Commission decisions made and to use past proposals as guidance on how to proceed in preparing documents for the Commissions.

Questions:

The summary mentions that these guidelines will bring Newton "into parity with other communities." Are there models that Newton can adopt, rather than creating its own system? A quick web search reveals the Cambridge Historical Commission guidelines (www.cambridgema.gov/Historic/windowlines_final.pdf).

Can our current set of Village Guides, which include much of the desired material around house styles and Newton examples, be culled with volunteer help at a fraction of this cost?

Our reviewers were taken aback by the cost—for 1,000 copies, of about \$55/copy. While the amount hardly dents the CP fund for this year, a stronger case for the urgency or necessity of this project over the other five proposals, not to mention some that are in the planning stages, needs to be made.

Why are 1,000 hard copies necessary? Where would the web version live? If a proper web version, regularly updated, exists, and facilities at the library exist for making print copies for those without home computers, why print this document at all?

Should the process of developing unique guidelines, if the committee decides that is desirable, be left to a few professionals in the Planning Department, or should the process include more public input? Why or why not?

Our current guidelines for historic landscapes are generally ignored. Why would these guidelines be treated any differently?

Would only privately-owned buildings in an historic district be affected by these guidelines?

The letter of support from Mr. Schwirian of the Upper Falls district seems to us germane and critical to the continued habitability and affordability of historic structures, given the rising costs both financially and environmentally of continuing to heat and light these structures.

Can the historic guidelines specifically address such modern issues as energy efficiency, durability, and adaptability—perhaps using Universal Design where possible to achieve both physical access and the long-term stability of neighborhoods?