

Newsletter

Community Preservation Act Matures

AS REQUESTS RISE, COMMITTEE REFINES POLICIES

By Andreae Downs

For the 2004 round of grants, the Community Preservation Commission received the largest number of proposals since the passage of the Community Preservation Act in 2001. In addition, requests for CPA funds exceeded the amount in CPA coffers for the first time in its three-year history.

Part of the reason that funds are limited this year is the CPC's decision to purchase Angino Farm and Kessler Woods. These will require CPA funds into future years. The CPA's discretionary budget available for 2004 grants is \$4.2 million.

Amelia Koch volunteered to chair the League's efforts to review the 22 proposals. Members Priscilla Leith, Andreae Downs, Andrea Kelley, Myra Tattenbaum, AnnaMaria Abernathy, Jody Klein, Barbara Bix, Deb Crossley, Linda Morrison, and Ruby Ajanee joined Amelia in reading the proposals and making recommendations to the LWVN Board.

The proposals include five that can be called affordable housing, six that are primarily recreation or open space, and six that are primarily historic preservation. One proposal, to preserve the church of Mary Immaculate of Lourdes in Newton Upper Falls, was put on hold until its status with the Archdiocese is cleared up.

The LWVN Board reviewed the committee's recommendations at its Nov. 18 meeting, and approved six of the remaining proposals – one of them conditionally, opposed four others, and submitted questions on the remaining six.

Amelia Koch drafted a letter that was sent to the CPC along with the recommendations. It raised concerns that a number of proposals were missing critical documentation and often showed no support for historic importance or community support. It also suggested that the Newton Parks and Recreation Department draft a master plan for parks and playgrounds it maintains so that the CPC might better judge where its funds might best be allocated.

THE PROPOSALS THAT THE LWVN BOARD VOTED TO RECOMMEND ARE:

1. **Wyman Street** – the Newton Housing authority has purchased a 10-unit building within walking distance of the T and shops in Waban (Ward 5), where little affordable housing is now available. These 2-bedroom apartments would be rented to federal Section 8 voucher holders. The NHA requested \$1 million to buy-down its mortgage.

The CPC recommended approval of this proposal to the Board of Aldermen at its Dec. 15 meeting.

2. **Millhouse Commons** – CAN-DO requested funds to purchase and renovate a 2-family home at 1093-1101 Chestnut St., Newton Upper Falls (Ward 5). The non-profit would renovate the current home and create another, for a total of six units, which would be sold as condominiums, three at market rate.

CAN-DO has put this proposal on hold for the time being.

3. **Accessory Apartment Incentive Program** – Community Living Network with the Planning and Development Department asks for \$515,000 to subsidize the costs related to creating code compliant accessory housing units. In return for receiving funding, participating homeowners will agree to provide accessory housing units that are affordable to low and moderate income households.

4. **Accessibility/Shade at Gath Pool** – The Playground Project at Albemarle, Inc. along with Newton Parks & Recreation Dept. and Friends of Albemarle request \$120,875 to upgrade aspects of the Gath Pool to meet requirements of the American Disabilities Act. The project includes grab bar installations, ADA compliant drinking fountains and in-pool benches, non slip rubber flooring installation in the public passage and locker rooms, and a custom, semi permanent awning/shading structure (\$47,000) that will expand

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Newsletter

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The LWVN Newsletter is published nine times per year. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization open to all citizens of voting age. For more information about the League of Women Voters, call 617-964-0014.

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Advancing Medical Research

Valentine's Day, Father's Day, July 4th, and especially, Thanksgiving. Every holiday at our home is marked by the arrival of a large package of treats. Patty never forgets a special occasion. She can not express her gratitude often enough.

Seven years ago Patty thought that her dreams of enjoying an early retirement would never come to fruition. Just two months after accepting an early retirement plan Patty was diagnosed with leukemia. Eighteen months of treatments followed and still Patty grew weaker with little hope of seeing another fall. Patty's last hope for a cure resided in another person. Her only chance was to find bone marrow from a healthy donor with the same blood type. These hopes were vanquished when the only matching donor changed her mind about her desire to donate to a stranger. Patty's condition worsened and the local hospital in Ohio said she would have to gain strength before they would try any new procedures.

Undaunted, Patty's fiancé Greg refused to give up. Greg took Patty to the Mayo Clinic. The Minnesota hospital was willing to treat Patty by "killing" her cancerous blood cells and replacing them with donor bone marrow even though the newly found donor was not a perfect match. Patty's determination and the donor's desire to help a stranger were both rewarded. Patty recalls watching the infusion of the donor marrow with a magical feeling. She said it was like watching gold drip through the intravenous line and into her eager body.

A year passed by and Patty's health continued to improve with only a few minor setbacks. Every three months Patty kept her fingers crossed that the blood test results would confirm that all of her blood cells were still "donor cells" and that her own sick cells had not returned. Patty's fortune had definitely changed for the better and she could not wait to meet her "hero."

The donor received a letter from the Red Cross requesting "him" to reveal his identity. Reluctant to do so, David was happy to have helped but didn't want any accolades. Unlike Patty, he didn't consider his actions heroic. I convinced David (my husband) that someone wanted to be able to say "thank you" and he finally agreed. The thank you notes and the packages continue to arrive to this day.

Three years after Patty received the bone marrow, she and Greg found themselves in Boston and wanted to meet David face to face. It was not like a meeting of two strangers; there was an immediate connection. Patty and Greg both connected with our entire family instantly.

David told Patty that the packages were not necessary but Patty finds this small measure helps her express her appreciation for extending her life.

Miracles like this are made possible by medical research. The debate about the ethics of stem cell research threatens to slow the advancement of medical miracles. Transferring DNA from a healthy cell to a "defective cell" may help alleviate some of the health problems that affect people with a variety of diseases. Unfortunately, some people fear this will open the door to ghoulish possibilities such as human cloning.

As reported recently in the Boston Globe by our State Senator, Cynthia Kreem, and her colleague Robert Travaligni; California and New Jersey have joined progressive countries such as England and South Korea by passing legislation that embraces the type of research that may lead to a cure for several human diseases.

The United States was founded by our ancestors that believed in the separation of church and State, yet the laws that threaten to ban this research are based primarily on the invocation of religious doctrine. Ironically, the majority of the religious laws advocate saving lives. If I haven't convinced you that Massachusetts laws should not be so restrictive with regard to medical research practices, I'll give you Patty's number.

Sue Rosenbaum

CPC *Continued from page one***THE PROPOSALS THAT THE LWVN BOARD VOTED TO RECOMMEND ARE:**

use of the kiddie pool and deck areas for bathers needing to reduce sun exposure. Currently, there is no shaded area to protect pool users or supervisors.

5. Flowed Meadows Improvement Project – The Newton Conservation Commission requests \$30,700 to provide planning funds for improving access to Flowed Meadows Conservation Area. Once complete the project would provide an entrance to Flowed Meadows across the street from the Burr School. There would also be a boardwalk and an informational kiosk.

6. Wellington Park Improvements – Citizens for Wellington Park and Newton Parks and Recreation requested \$64,000 to finish an already-underway project to fix the foundations of the tennis and basketball courts in Ward 3.

The CPC recommended approval of this proposal to the Board of Aldermen at its Jan. 12 meeting.

7. Newton Historic Burying Grounds Restoration Phase II (conditional approval) – the Newton History Museum and Newton Parks & Recreation Dept. ask for \$739,297 for the second part of a \$1,569,715 project to repair and clean 246 gravestones and markers identified as most at risk. This is a 5-year restoration project begun in 2003 with a CPA grant. These burying grounds form a unique open-air museum of Newton's heritage, are repositories of information about Newton's earliest residents, and open spaces of beauty and peace. A Master Plan exists and is being carried out. The LWVN Board recommended that the CPC ask the interested parties to draft a maintenance plan and explore partial funding of the request.

At its Jan. 12 meeting, the CPC recommended a partial funding of this request to the Board of Aldermen.

The CPC approved a proposal requesting \$138,000 for housing at **Falmouth/Jackson**, a CAN-DO project to provide four rental units for families holding Section 8 vouchers in two neighborhoods. The houses are located at 20-22 Falmouth Road in West Newton and 163 Jackson Road in Nonantum. The LWVN Board had reviewed and raised questions about the proposal, but these were finished after the CPC's vote.

For the CPC, staffer Jennifer Goldson put together a chart comparing housing grants awarded or requested from the CPA, showing how many units were created, and how much other monies the CPA funds leveraged. In general, the CPC supports spending about \$100,000 per new unit of housing.

CPA funded housing projects

Project Name	Fiscal Year	Total CPA Funds (for housing portion only)	# of off./comm. housing units	CPA Cost per Unit
Millhouse Commons	05	\$525,000	3	\$175,000
248 Elliot Street/Linden Green	05	\$512,000	3	\$171,000
Falmouth/Jackson	05	\$550,000	4	\$138,000
19 West Street	04	\$263,000	2	\$132,000
Forte Property/76 Webster Park	04	\$377,000	3	\$126,000
Accessory Apt. Incentive Program	05	\$515,000	5 min.	\$103,000
Wyman Street	05	\$1,000,000	10	\$100,000
Cambria Road	03	\$200,000	2	\$100,000
Reverse Mortgage Program	05	\$468,000	5 min.	\$94,000
Pelham House	04	\$312,000	10	\$31,000
Nonantum Village Place	03	\$850,000	34	\$25,000
Real Estate Tax Credit Program	05	\$176,000	183	\$963

THE LWVN BOARD HAD QUESTIONS ABOUT:

1. Real Estate Tax Credit Program for Seniors – a proposal to provide financial assistance to income eligible seniors by providing a tax credit of up to \$820 on their property tax bills starting July 1, 2005. The League had several concerns, including whether the proposal is legal. The Law Department subsequently advised the committee that it was.

2. Reverse Mortgage Program for Seniors – this is a monthly advance paid to the homeowner that can be used to pay housing expenses: mortgage, insurance, property insurance and taxes, and is repayable with accrued interest ONLY upon transfer of ownership, a permanent move or death. The loan is secured against equity, and goal is to enable these persons to remain in their homes. Among other things, the League asked

about its legality as well as whether this is an efficient use of CPA funds.

3. The Park at Newton Senior Center– this would re-create the original entryway with a park area of trees, benches, tables, shrubs on either side of a central walkway up to the front door - a "pocket park". Among the League's questions was whether this would genuinely be a public park.

The CPC referred this proposal to the Aldermen at its 2/10 meeting.

4. Grace Church Clerestory Windows – this proposal was also submitted last year. It would fund restoration of the Clerestory stained glass windows and frames.

CPC *Continued from page three*

\$113,410 is sought to disassemble, clean, restore, and reassemble current components and install fiber optic lighting to allow viewing from outside the building. Among the League's questions were whether public money is well spent on a private building that may later be sold.

5. **Washington Park Historic Lighting** – \$131,000 would partly fund lights which would “replicate the gaslights

which graced the park after its inception.” Here the League was interested in the lights’ energy efficiency and whether their installation would mean losing trees in this neighborhood park, although they otherwise supported the project.

The CPC approved this project to be referred to the Aldermen at its 2/16 meeting.

The LWVN Board opposed:

1. **Access Plan for Newton Centre Playground Newton Centre Playground Accessibility Plan** – this proposal requests \$40,000 for design fees and up to \$25,000 (estimate) for a topographical survey, to assess and solve a range of issues which prevent the use of this park and playground by seniors and disabled. The LWVN Board expressed support for the general idea, but felt the applicants should take more time to develop community support and input, further documentation of how funds would be spent, and more exploration of other funding sources
2. **City Hall, Landscape Preservation Project** – The Parks & Recreation Department asks for \$60,000 in Phase I for development of plans for the historic restoration of the Newton City Hall and War Memorial Landscape “to reflect the intent of the original Olmsted design balanced with current uses and needs, and dealing with the geese, invasive plants, and Parks & Recreation’s limited maintenance resources.” However, the LWVN Board is concerned that this project is a request to address deferred maintenance, and that funding this proposal implies support for Phase II at an unknown but clearly seven-figure cost. The application lacks proper detail on several of the questions. It also appeared that other funding sources had not been explored, nor is it geared to historic restoration.
3. **City Hall and War Memorial Stair Preservation** – Over \$19,000 request to fund preparation of construction documents for repairs required to preserve the Newton Civil War Monument. The purpose of the project is restoration and prevention of further damage. The justification given is that this is the highest priority outstanding preservation project for the City Hall and War Memorial. The League recognizes that it is important to maintain our historic city property, and doing so now would avoid further deterioration and greater cost. But the LWVN Board noted that the purpose of this request is to fund an application for a larger project and the total cost of the project is much higher than the stated \$19,000. To properly assess the range of projects before the CPC, it is essential that the city understand the full cost, or at least an estimate of the completed project
4. **Design Services for the Restoration of the Civil War Memorial** – With \$19,000, fund preparation of construction documents for repairs required to preserve the Newton Civil War Monument. The proposal mentions a number of required repairs from light cleaning to what sounds like reconstruction. The purpose of the project is restoration and prevention of further damage and to secure the safety of the site. This appears to be a lower priority for the supporters of the proposal than the steps to the War Memorial that is the subject of another proposal. The LWVN Board opposed for the same reasons as the above proposal for the City Hall stairs.
5. **Crafts Street Stable Building Restoration** – Roughly \$500,000 would be used to renovate, replace, and restore key exterior elements of the Crafts Street Stable. This would include masonry, exterior doors and windows. The application was incomplete.
6. **Newton Health Dept Building Improvements** – \$175,000 sought to repair, renovate, and restore key interior and exterior elements of the Health Department. The focus is on the renovation, restoration and/or replacement of various exterior building elements including the masonry, windows, sidewalks, and internal termite damage. The LWVN Board felt that the proposal was incomplete.
7. **Farlow Park-Chaffin Park Historic Preservation and Recreation Study: Phase 1** – The Friends of Farlow Park and Newton Parks & Recreation Commission ask for \$65,500 to fund a study, which would represent Phase I of an estimated three phase project, to restore a man made pond/skating rink, bridge and gazebo to Farlow Park. Phase I is a Study; Phase II is restoration of Farlow Bridge and reconstruction of Farlow Pond; Phase III is additional restoration and construction. Funding to be sought from CPC and other agencies for these.

The League would like to see the Friends of Farlow Park strengthen their base of support in the community as well as investigating other possible ways of accomplishing their goal. There is currently no outside funding. Would it be possible to contact a local architectural school and interest them in this project? We are concerned that funding this proposal implies support for Phase II and III at an unknown cost.

Local Action



Feb. 1, 2005

Doug Dickson, Chair
 Community Preservation Committee
 Newton City Hall
 1000 Commonwealth Ave.
 Newton Centre, MA 02459

Dear Committee Members:

Doubt has been cast on whether some proposals that went before the Newton Parks and Recreation Commission (P&RC) were properly approved and voted by that body. According to League of Women Voters of Newton (LWVN) Observer notes*, the proposals for Wellington Park, Gath Pool and Farlow Park were all properly presented and voted during the October 18 and November 15 commission meetings.

Open and accountable public process depends on all public bodies keeping accurate records and minutes. We urge that P&RC records be made available routinely to the CPC, which needs this information to make informed and timely decisions.

Hearings were held on both Gath Pool and Wellington Park proposals on November 15; in the case of Wellington Park, positive comments were made by neighbors appearing on behalf of the proposal, representing community support. Parks and Recreation Commission members who were present can verify this.

Regarding the ongoing discussion of a Master Plan and priority list for Newton's park and recreational facilities, the LWVN believes this should be a top priority for the Parks & Recreation Department and the Commission. These bodies received professional assistance and should now know how to proceed. Marion Pressley, a landscape architect and planner who resides in Newton, briefed the city on the specifics of such a plan, and how to go about completing it.

The LWVN urges that no new proposals from Parks & Recreation be entertained for CPA funding until the master plan is complete and heard in public. For this round, we suggest the CPC consider well-documented, thorough proposals from Parks and Rec. that demonstrate community support, but not proposals that seek planning funds, until the department has completed its planning.

Sincerely,
 Amelia Koch
 League of Women Voters of Newton Steering Committee

Committees - in - Action

Local Action

Contact Deb Crossley, Chair 617-244-7597

Election Commission

Nancy Criscitiello Bonnie Carter

Finance Committee, Board of Alderman

Ruby Ajanee Amelia Koch

Newton Citizen Commission on Energy

Deb Crossley, LWVN Representative

Newton Free Library Board

Mary Adelstein

Parks and Recreation Commission

Priscilla Leith

Community Preservation Committee

Focus To follow the process of the granting of Community Preservations funds adopted by Newton voters in the Community Preservation Act.

CPC Observers

Andreae Downs Amelia Koch
 Andrea Kelley Priscilla Leith

CPC Review Committee

Anna Maria Abernathy Jody Klein
 Barbara Bix Myra Tattenbaum
 Deb Crossley

Environmental Issues Committee

Focus Promoting source reduction, and recycling programs in municipal offices and public schools

Members Deb Crossley Barbara Herson
 Katherine Gekas Sharyn Roberts
 Beth Lowd

Contact Martha Richmond,
 Co-Chair 617-244-2076

Linda Walden,
 Co-Chair 617-630-9538

Nominating Committee

Members Ruby Ajanee Sharyn Roberts
 Barbara Lietzke Carol Ann Shea

Contact Janet Stearns, Chair 617-559-9987

You may call committee contacts or a Board officer or director to learn more about current committee work. All are welcome to participate.

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

My Email address may be shared with State and National LWV

- I would like to join the League of Women voters of Newton. Enclosed is my check for \$50 payable to LWVN.
- Lifetime membership \$1000**
- I would like to receive materials about the League.
- I would like to be contacted by a League member to talk about LWVN.

Mail this form (and your check, if joining) to:
 Andrea Kozinetz Holtz at 8 Stoney Brae Road,
 Newton Highlands, MA 02461



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Observer Corps
ELECTION COMMISSION

January 6, 2005

The meeting, chaired by David Mofensen, took up the following issues:

- 1) **Review of State Primary and State Election:** Executive Secretary Karg reported to be pleased with both elections, particularly the State General Election at which there was an 89% turnout with approximately 43,000 people voting. 4,500 absentee ballots were sent out and almost all of them were returned. There was a huge effort by the Election Commission staff which worked nights and weekends to ensure that all absentee ballots were handled properly and that the materials explaining the "new" (to most voters) machines and provisional ballots were clear to all election workers and thereby to voters.
- 2) **Proposed Election Calendar:** There will be a City Preliminary Election and a City Municipal Election, tentatively scheduled for September 20th and November 8th respectively. These dates must be approved by the Board of Aldermen.
- 3) **Discussion of Letter from Nancy Criscitiello regarding recruiting, training, sustaining and retaining of Election workers.** After a lengthy conversation, Faye Cohen was appointed to gather a committee to study the issues raised by Ms. Criscitiello.
- 4) **Voting rights for Permanent Resident Aliens:** Alderman Hess-Mahan has proposed that Newton permit PRA's to vote in Municipal elections. 7.8% or (6,500) of Newton residents are not citizens, but they do own property and pay taxes to the City. The initial reaction of Mr. Karg and Dede Forgione was that it would be a challenge to extrapolate that information from what is now asked in the City Census, and the State would have to be involved. A lengthy discussion ensued, but there were no conclusions, other than that if the idea passes the Board of Aldermen, then procedures would have to be worked out at the local and State levels to implement it. Alderman Hess-Mahan argued that his proposal would ensure fairness as well as perhaps helping in the demographic numbers when State/Federal monies are distributed.

Nancy Criscitiello

**Looking for
 Jane Leighton Award Nominations**

The Jane Leighton Award was established to honor Jane Leighton, a long time league volunteer, for her wonderful good humor and hard work. Each year a volunteer is honored at our annual meeting. If you have a nomination to make please contact Ann Grantham by email at magrantham@aol.com or by phone at 617-964-0333.

Nominations should be received by April 14th.

LWVN CALENDAR

March

- 3 Thursday, 7:00 p.m., **Working Board/Potluck Meeting** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Parkway, 617-964-0333, Chair- Sue Rosenbaum
- 9 Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., **Unit Meeting**, The Community Preservation Act, Coordinators- Priscilla Leith and Andreae Downs, at the home of Andreae Downs, 854 Chestnut St., Waban, 617-969-7123. Brown Bagging encouraged.
- 10 Thursday, 7:30 p.m., **Unit Meeting**, The Community Preservation Act, Coordinators- Amelia Koch and Andrea Kelley, at the home of Jane Leighton, 31 Colgate Rd., Newton Lower Falls, 617-527-4018
- 14 Monday, **April Newsletter Deadline**
- 17 Thursday, 7:15 p.m., **Board Meeting**, at the home of Sue Rosenbaum, 121 Winslow Rd., Waban, 617-332-0306, Chair - Sue Rosenbaum
- 23 Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 a.m., **LWVM Day on the Hill**, State House, Boston, Beyond Election 2004: Every Voice Heard, Every Vote Counted, Join Us, Sue Rosenbaum, 617-332-0306

April

- 7 Thursday, 7:00 p.m., **Working Board/Potluck Meeting** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Parkway, 617-964-0333, Chair- Amelia Koch
 - 10 Sunday, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m., **Making Democracy Work Awards Event**, Faneuil Hall; Teresa Heinz Kerry, Keynote Speaker plus Ellen Goodmans Q&A with winners.
 - 13 Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., **Unit Meeting**, Finances of the City of Newton, Coordinator: Ruby Ajanee, at the home of Mary Adelstein, 63 Gammons Road, Waban 617-527-5503, Brown Bagging encouraged.
 - 14 Thursday, 7:30 p.m., **Local Program Planning**, at the home of Bonnie Carter, 177 Homer Street, Newton Centre, 617-969-0686
- Deadline for Newsletter**
- Deadline for Jane Leighton Nominee**
- 28 Thursday, 7:15, **Board Meeting**, at the home of Andrea Kelley, 29 Putnam St., West Newton, 617 964-4609, Chair-Amelia Koch

Legislative Roundtable



For current schedule log on to www.newtv.org

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