More Designs on CPA Dollars

By Andreae Downs

A n increasing number of applicants are taking advantage of a previously little-known clause in Newton’s Community Preservation Act, which allows late submissions of any housing or planning applications.

Since the October 2005 deadline for applications, two housing and two planning applications have been submitted, and the Community Preservation Committee heard two in January. Another two are scheduled for the early-March hearing.

League readers have diligently read everything as soon as they could, and made recommendations. Below are three recommendations that the League Board has reviewed and approved.

Cambria Road #2

Submitted by: CAN-DO
Location: 11-13 Cambria Road, West Newton, Ward 3. (Between Parmenter Rd and Falmouth Rd. and a small corner of the back yard is in Waltham.)
Cost: $320,000 out of $816,129 estimated total development cost. Other funding sought from Community Development Block Grant ($280,000), and other grant programs. Combined funds will be used to pay down the existing mortgage to $176,000 and costs of renovations needed.
Description: The project would create two 1,200 square-foot affordable two-bedroom apartments in an 125-year-old two-family house located in a neighborhood of mainly two-family houses near the Newton-Waltham line. Rents would be $1,300 each, and would be covered by Section 8. The house requires de-leading and minor renovations (electrical wiring, rug removal, window replacements, painting). CPA funds would be used to reduce the mortgage for the acquisition cost.

Comments/Questions: The proposal leverages funds from a number of other sources. It seems well thought out.
- The annual net cash flow is only $625. What happens if maintenance costs are higher than estimated?
- The operating budget has no replacement reserve fund. CAN-DO will apply for grants to establish a $10,000 reserve. What happens if grant applications are not successful or if the fund is depleted?

Recommendation: This is the kind of in-fill affordable housing that several Newton forums have brought forward as the ideal for this fully built-out city. It would be in line with the character of the surrounding neighborhood. The League supports the creation of more affordable housing, and this kind of development in particular.

Developments: The Newton Housing Partnership recommended that CAN-DO increase the budget to allow for management costs and to provide for the possibility of Section 8 cuts. The Community Development Committee raised the request to $350,000 to allow “moderate income” renters, working people who make 80% of the area median income. It is now before the aldermanic CPA subcommittee.

The League of Women Voters of Newton cordially invites you to the fifth Champagne and Chocolate Reception
SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 2006 3:00 - 5:00 PM
For further information, please call (617) 969-9588
F rom Members of the Board

LOCAL PROGRAM PLANNING

What issues would you like the Newton League to focus on next year? Come to local program planning on Thursday, March 30 and help us decide. The meeting will be held at the home of Alice Wolpert, 260 Lake Street in Newton Highlands at 7:15 p.m. We will discuss what has been happening in the city and what the League’s priorities should be for next year.

“The League program” is jargon for issues that the League has selected for study and action. The League engages in political action or advocacy after reaching consensus on a given issue. The Local Program, which encompasses a long list of issues, is included in the Newton League Handbook. (Also included are the positions in brief for the state and national levels of the League.)

The League prides itself on being a grassroots organization and program planning starts at the grassroots. At the meeting on March 30 we will start the process of adopting the League program for the next year. The suggestions from the meeting will be reported to the Board and, based on this, the Board will submit its recommendation to the members in the Annual Meeting Workbook. The program will be voted on at Annual Meeting.

Bonnie Carter, Steering Committee member

NEW HANDBOOK

It’s here! The 2006 League Handbook has been completed and is in the mail. Our admiration and gratitude go to Robin Maltz for volunteering to take on this task. Even in the age of electronic data processing this job can turn out to be more tricky than one would think! Thanks for your perseverance, Robin!

The LWVN Board

Curriculum & Standards in the Newton Schools

Superintendent Jeff Young, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Carolyn Wyatt, and Mary Eich and Janet Buerklin, coordinators for Math and Social Studies, respectively, will be among those discussing changes to the NPS K-12 curriculum, at the March 15 Informational Meeting at the Windsor Club, 1601 Beacon Stree, Waban; 11:30 am - 1:30 pm. Anyone with questions about Newton’s curriculum, or state and national standards is welcome. Brown bagging encouraged. Please RSVP - 617-969-7123.
Covenant Residences on Commonwealth

Submitted by: B’nai B’rith Housing New England, Inc.

Location: 27-35 Commonwealth Avenue, Ward 7

Cost: $1.2 million out of $17,430,712 estimated total development cost

Description: The project proposes renovation of an existing 12-unit brick apartment building into 12 condominiums and new construction of a four-story, wood-frame building containing 44 condominiums. Fourteen units (seven each one- and two-bedroom) would be reserved for purchase by people at or below 80% of median income. Eleven affordable units would be in the new building and three in the old one. Deed-restricted appreciation is planned to maintain affordability. Prices would be approximately $140,000-$160,000 for the affordable units and $300,000-$430,000 for the market units. Monthly condo fees are estimated at $150 for the affordable units and $350 for the market units. Three of the units will be accessible.

Comments/Questions: B’nai B’rith has been extremely responsive to community feedback and considerably revised its first two proposals. The current proposal is a tremendous improvement over the original, and we commend the applicants for listening to feedback on a 40B project.

The site is an excellent location for multi-family housing, and fits with the city’s draft Comprehensive Plan by locating denser housing near transit. The Boston College MBTA Green Line, a row of stores and two other small apartment buildings are nearby.

Newton currently has only 26 affordable ownership units. There is a clear need for more affordable ownership units as well as more reasonably-priced market units.

B’nai B’rith is generously proposing to share its developer’s allowance (if there is one after all costs are met) with the city. According to distribution criteria, the city could receive up to $300,000 for future affordable housing.

The League readers had a number of questions not answered in the otherwise well-written proposal:

• The applicants have scaled back the development from 136 to 56 units, and have created more one-bedroom units, which cannot be used by families. We wonder if it is worthwhile to save the old building in front, or whether the applicants might be able to enhance the streetscape as well as increase the number or size of the units by replacing this structure?

• Reducing annual operating costs and ensuring the long-term affordability of the condominiums created are in the interests of the developer, the future owners and the city. In both public and private buildings, Newton is discussing higher performance standards for energy and durability. What measures have the applicants considered to assure the long-term sustainability of the project?

What measures have the applicants considered to assure the long-term sustainability of the project?

• Is the estimate of what it will take to renovate the old building and create 12 quality, marketable units realistic?

• Do the applicants have enough units in the development to make it financially viable in the long term?

• The requested CPA subsidy per unit is $86,000. The remaining subsidy would be funded internally through sale of affordable units and application for a $500,000 grant from the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Trust Fund. But, no funding options are presented if this grant is not received. What happens in this case?

• The League would love to see more green in the landscape plan. The city allows developers to allocate fewer parking spaces for affordable units, and the building is near public transit. Would it be possible to add more trees, perhaps to screen the parking area from the sidewalk and to give parked cars the benefit of shade? Could a play-area be added?

Recommendation: The proposal is in line with the League’s support for affordable housing.

Developments: The CPC approved this application March first. It is now before the aldermanic subcommittee.

Durant Kenrick Homestead

Submitted by: Newton History Museum, Newton Historical Society, Durant Homestead Foundation

Location: 286 Waverly Avenue, Ward 7. On the corner of Kenrick/Sargent Street, near the Brighton border

Cost: $77,500 in planning/assessment funds. Eventual work on the property would be paid for with a combination of CPA, grants, contributions and sale of easements.

Description: The Durant Homestead Foundation would donate the house, original furnishings and land to the Newton History Museum/Historical Society as well as a $300,000 maintenance endowment, if the new owners can provide an appropriate level of stewardship, preservation and community education. The museum/historical society sees this as an opportunity to preserve this pre-Revolutionary property and open it to educate the public on many aspects of 18th century life in Newton and nearby. The funds would assess the current condition of the property, develop a master plan for it and its use in public/education programs, develop budgets and raise funds and an endowment.

Comments/Questions: The information available to the League was unfortunately still very preliminary. However, it is clear even at this stage that this is just the kind of opportunity for which the CPA was created. We commend the applicants for working quickly to seize the opportunity to preserve this kind of resource.

• The estimated planning budget seems modest. It would be advisable to have other sources of funding for the property identified as soon as possible. It is also critical that the committee know ahead of time whether the Newton
Traffic, Parking and its Discontents

Andreae Downs

Congestion, safety, speed and competition for parking spaces held the interest of roughly 20 League members as Alderman Christine Samuelson and Candace Havens, chair of the city’s Public Safety/Transportation Committee and Traffic Council respectively, spoke on January 11.

The two Aldermanic committees are in the throes of classifying streets for parking and traffic calming purposes, and setting standard policies for where certain traffic or accident mitigation measures might be installed.

Until now, Samuelson explained, the committees had been dealing with streets piecemeal and without a plan for the whole city. Samuelson and Havens are hoping coherent policies will:

- preserve the viability of village centers,
- protect residential streets,
- make walking and driving safe for all users, and
- encourage the use of public transit.

They are particularly interested in making transit accessible for Newton residents. But over 40,000 cars are driven into Newton daily, and compete for spaces near transit.

Part of the cause is parking restrictions in Boston and Brookline, Samuelson noted.

Havens has been exploring the possibility of Parking Benefit Zones—where abutters of a popular block for parking can allow the city to issue annual parking permits to non-neighbors. The city would set aside the funds raised for street improvements selected by the abutters—examples might include landscaping, improved sidewalks or curbs, or snow plowing. The question is who would administer the districts, and how they could be enforced. Belmont Street in Newton Corner is being considered for such a district.

The committees have also been working to increase the cost and reduce the time that cars can park right in front of businesses, and reduce the cost and increase the time cars can be parked further away from village centers, Havens said.

League members inquired about how Newton Corner might be made safer and easier to navigate, and both speakers mentioned improving the signage. Needham Street was also raised. Samuelson said that for the businesses on the street, slower traffic was a benefit—as it meant more shoppers. She favors improving pedestrian safety on the street so that shoppers can park and walk to more of their destinations.
Ask the Professor

Sue Rosenbaum

Take the opportunity to hear about the origins and consequences of the war in Iraq - from the first Gulf War in 1991 through the 9/11 attacks, Bush’s National Security Statement of September 2002, to the present.

“President Bush, National Security, and the Perils of Regime Change.” is the title of the talk being brought to us by Professor Arnie Offner at the Champagne and Chocolate reception, Sunday afternoon, March 26, 2006.

Arnold A. Offner is Cornelia F. Hugel Professor of History at Lafayette College, and is also a past president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. He is author of many scholarly books and articles on U.S. foreign policy, including Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953 and The Origins of the Second World War: U.S. Foreign Policy and World Politics, 1917-1941.

Keeping to tradition, our fifth Champagne and Chocolate fundraising reception will be held in a gorgeous setting, as Laurie and Paul Gershkowitz have graciously opened their home to us this year. Along with the opportunity to meet friends and make new acquaintances, we should come away with new perspectives on interesting topics from our guest speaker.

Tickets to the event provide support for the operating expenses of the LWVN.

Special thanks go to Sharyn Roberts for her leadership in this event.

Membership Application

Name

Address

Telephone

Email

☐ I would like to join the League of Women Voters of Newton. Enclosed is my check for $35 payable to LWVN.

☐ Lifet ime 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 Stony Brae Road,
Newton Highlands, MA 02461

☐ My email address may be shared with State and National LWV
Welcome New Members!

Pia K. Bertelli  31 Locke Road  Waban, MA 02468  p.bertelli@comcast.net
Leslie Burg  75 Fuller Terrace  West Newton  02465 617-969-0361  laburg@rcn.com
Rhanna Kidwell  56 Kenwood Avenue  Newton, MA 02459  617 244-3832  rhannakidwell@comcast.net
Mindy Frankel Peckler  188 Franklin Street  Newton, MA 02458  617 969-0991  mpeckler@hotmail.com
Terrie Savage  211 Plymouth Road  Newton 02461  617 527-4032  besavage@aol.com
**LWVN CALENDAR**

### March

8 Wednesday, 7:15 p.m., Local Action Committee meeting at the home of Myra Tattenbaum, 210 Upland Ave., Newton Highlands, 617-527-2830

9 Thursday 6:30 p.m., Working Board Meeting/Potluck at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Pkwy, Newtonville, 617-964-0333

15 Wednesday, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Day on the Hill 2006, State House Boston, Contact- Sharyn Roberts 617-969-9588

Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Informational Meeting: Education Curriculum standards, state and federal mandates, what Newton has changed & why. RSVP Andreae Downs, 617-969-7125, Brown Bagging encouraged.

16 Thursday, 7:15 p.m., LWVN Board Meeting at the home of Roberta Leviton, 54 Sumner St., Newton Centre, 617-965-0016, Chair - Sharyn Roberts

26 Sunday, Champagne and Chocolate Reception 3:00-5:00 p.m., at the home of Laurie and Paul Gereshkowitz, 50 Green Park, Newton Corner. Contact- Sharyn Roberts 617-969-9588

(Snow Date Sunday, April 2)

30 Thursday, 7:15 p.m., Local Program Planning at the home of Alice Wolpert, 260 Lake Ave., Newton Highlands, 617-964-0333

(Parking on the North side of Lake Ave.)

### April

3 Monday, 7:15 p.m., Local Action Committee meeting at the home of Priscilla Leith, 162 Islington Rd., Auburndale, 617-969-6837.

5 Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Informational Meeting: City Finances at the home of Nancy Crowley, 77 Kirkstall Rd., Newtonville, 617-965-0818, Brown Bagging encouraged.

6 Thursday, 6:30 p.m., Working Board Meeting/Potluck at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Pkwy, Newtonville, 617-964-0333

26 Wednesday, 7:15 p.m., LWVN Board Meeting, at the home of Amelia Koch, 117 High St., Newton Upper Falls, 617-244-2647., Chair Sue Rosenbaum

### Upcoming Dates

May 20 LWVM Council
May 25 LWVN Annual Meeting
June 10-13 LWVUS Convention, Minneapolis, MN

### Legislative Roundtable

For current schedule log on to www.newtv.org

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**Think Green...Save Trees!**

Join our LWVNSaveTrees listserv and you will receive an electronic message to view the Newsletter. Send a blank e-mail to: LWVNSaveTrees-subscribe@yahooogroups.com and save trees! ♻️

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League of Women Voters of Newton

PO Box 610207
Newton, MA 02461
617-964-0014
www.lwvn.ma.lwvnet.org

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