



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS NEWTON

PO Box 610207 Newton, MA 02461 · 617-383-4598
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October 11, 2012

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Leslie Burg, Chair
Community Preservation Committee
1000 Commonwealth Ave
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Chairwoman Burg and Committee members:

The *Draft Newton CPC Funding Guidelines*, issued August 28, 2012, are yet another example of the fine and thoughtful work that the League of Women Voters of Newton (LWVN) has come to expect from your discussions.

For example, in **Section 1**, our readers particularly liked the items you highlight for attention: accessibility, durability of funded assets, decisions based on City plans and public participation; **Section 2**: saving for future land acquisitions, encouraging longer-term planning, and encouraging multi-resource projects; **Section 3**: focusing on long-term investments and the ability of stewards to provide maintenance without further CPA funds.

We also applaud the *proposal requirements* outlined on page 3, particularly the focus on probability of success and the presence of the project priorities in two City-wide plans (particularly the Comprehensive Plan), ensuring broad community support and, of course, meeting the legal requirements. Along with you, we have learned of the need for good project management and the difficulties faced by Newton's overstretched City staff when presented with new projects to oversee.

However, LWVN feels that there is room for improvement in two main areas. First, regarding the pre-proposal process, the League would like to see a list of objective requirements on which each pre-proposal will be judged, and that this list is either in the body of the Guidelines or in an appendix that is referred to in the main document. This gives the submitting organizations a very clear idea of what is required to receive an invitation. While many organizations are already experienced in applying for CPA funds, this would greatly help those new to the process.

Secondly, LWVN feels strongly that the minimum allocation of funds as required in the original law is all that is needed as a guideline for the disbursement of funds. By adding target allocations for each of the four allowable areas without regard to the actual proposals each year, the current CPC is encumbering future CPCs and making today's priorities those of future years as well. It could also lead to a situation where a mediocre proposal is funded over far superior proposals simply because of the target allocation as proposed in these guidelines.

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While we recognize that, with the recent changes to the CPA, there is a temptation for municipalities to raid the fund for their own pressing needs, we fully support the independence of the CPC in making the decisions that benefit the community as a whole, and not just divert funds into the maintenance projects listed on the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Further:

- If the CPA is used to fund CIP risk-based priorities, will that mean that it can be used to fund deferred maintenance? Is that wise?
- Are there safeguards to ensure that rehabilitation does not become a back door for the CPA funding the City's operating budget?
- Will the Committee's encouragement that project proponents "raise the maximum possible funding from non-CPA sources" open the door to a Daly Rink-type situation, where public properties are maintained and run by private entities that then restrict public access? How will the Committee ensure that does not happen?
- We applaud the rolling acceptance of real estate proposals to minimize the risk of missing opportunities. Our question is whether that also applies to conservation restrictions or only to outright purchases?

As we have said before, we deeply appreciate the CPC's hard and thoughtful work in adhering to the CPA and preserving Newton's valuable open space, historic resources and recreation assets, while expanding Newton's stock of affordable housing. The CPC continues to be a model for excellent volunteer engagement and government openness and process. We look forward to your deliberations in the future.

Yours,

Anne Borg
Sue Flicop
Co-Presidents
League of Women Voters, Newton