



TOWN OF NEEDHAM
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
1471 Highland Avenue
Needham, Massachusetts 02492
Telephone 781-455-7500 www.needhamma.gov

Memorandum

To: Select Board
CC: Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager; David Davison, Deputy Town Manager/Director of Finance;
Katie King, Deputy Town Manager; Carys Lustig, Director of Public Works; Stacey Mulroy,
Director of Park and Recreation
From: Cecilia Simchak, Assistant Director of Finance
Date: September 20, 2024
Re: High School Tennis Court Improvements (Special Town Meeting)

At the Special Town Meeting scheduled for October 21, 2024, there will be an article requesting funding for the Needham High School (NHS) tennis courts. In December of 2021, the Departments of Park and Recreation and Public Works submitted an application to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for \$50,000 to fund the design of High School tennis courts. The funding was approved under article 20 of the 2022 Annual Town Meeting. The design work began the following year.

Park and Recreation and DPW started reviewing two options with the designer, Activitas in September of 2023. While still reviewing the two options, the departments submitted an application in November 2023 to the CPC requesting \$2,600,000 to fund the construction phase of the NHS tennis courts. This funding request included the replacement of the existing four tennis courts and to add four new courts, for a total of eight tennis courts. Currently, the four tennis courts do not allow for regulation tennis tournaments to take place at the High School. The proposal included a change in materials to post-tension concrete, which has a longer life span, requires less maintenance and staff time to do the maintenance, and has become the industry norm. The request also included installing an existing shade structure at the tennis courts.

Park and Recreation and DPW met with and responded to questions from the CPC during the application process and conducted a site visit with the CPC project liaisons. On January 10, 2024, the departments presented their project application to the CPC. During the process, Park and Recreation and DPW provided information, including cost estimates for four different options: (1) eight courts with post-tension concrete; (2) eight courts with asphalt; (3) six courts with post-tension concrete; (4) six courts with asphalt.

At the end of January 2024, the departments requested that Town Counsel prepare the application for a major project site plan special permit to the Planning Board. While drafting the application, the departments provided the Planning Board with multiple sets of plans, including ones updated to include the Stormwater Report and the addition of BigBelly trash receptacles. Town Counsel submitted the application to the Planning Board of February 26, 2024.

In February of 2024 the request was revised to request \$1,440,000 from CPA funding and the remaining \$1,160,000 to be funded from other Town sources. On February 21, 2024, the CPC had

its annual consultation with the Finance Committee. Following that, on February 27, 2024, the CPC had its annual consultation with the Select Board.

The CPC held a Public Hearing on March 13, 2024, which was an opportunity for the public to provide feedback on all pending funding applications. At the Public Hearing, and prior, via email, the CPC heard many comments in favor of the tennis court improvement project. A common concern raised was whether the tennis courts would allow for pickleball. A decision was made that pickleball would not be allowed on the tennis courts. On March 20, 2024, the CPC voted to recommend CPA funding at the Annual May 2024 Town Meeting. The final breakdown of funding in Article 21 was \$1,440,000 from CPA Free Cash, \$1,000,000 from the Athletic Facility Stabilization Fund, \$149,196 from Overlay Surplus, and \$10,804 from Article 43 of the 2015 Annual Town Meeting.

On April 2, 2024, Park and Recreation and DPW met with the Planning Board. During this meeting, five distinct requests were discussed. First, why eight courts were needed and how the loss of existing grass field would not negatively impact users. Second, investigate moving the new bank of four courts towards the parking area. Third, investigate what additional screening could be provided to address potential sound concerns. Fourth, consider netting to help keep fly balls out of the neighbors' yards. Fifth, investigate a new location for the shade shelter. The discussion was continued to a second Planning Board meeting. Prior to the second meeting with the Planning Board, on April 12, 2024, the departments held an on-site meeting with the abutters. The second Planning Board meeting was held on April 24, 2024. Updated site plans were provided based on the input. The Planning Board made three requests. First, consider shifting the courts further toward the school and the parking lot. Second, prepare a planting plan that shows landscape screening between the neighbors and the tennis courts. Third, prepare a presentation that includes photos of the existing property line to review existing screening and discuss drainage to assure the abutters that stormwater will not be directed towards their properties.

On May 1, 2024, the Park and Recreation Committee voted to withdraw the funding request from the Annual Town Meeting warrant. On May 3, 2024, in a joint memo from Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager; Dan Gutekanst, Superintendent of Schools; Carys Lustig, Director of Public Works; and Stacey Mulroy, Director of Park and Recreation, requested that CPC consider the funding request for the High School tennis court project off-cycle so that it could be placed on the warrant for the October 2024 Special Town Meeting. On May 7, 2024, Town Counsel requested a continuance from the Planning Board to June 6, 2024.

DPW staked the location of the proposed tennis courts onsite and Activitas continued to update the plans and cost estimates. On May 24, 2024, Town Counsel filed the plans with the Planning Board in advance of the third meeting, scheduled for May 29, 2024. On July 11, 2024, the Planning Board approved the amendment to major project site plan special permit (permit number 2004-01). Changes from the original plans to the approved plans include the removal of the shade structure, the addition of trees and plantings in between the tennis courts and the neighbors, a change in the layout of the additional four courts, and no change in the parking lot. The project also includes improved stormwater management, fencing upgrades, signage, and ADA accessible walkways. The initial number of eight courts was approved, as the need for eight was validated and supported, primarily to improve the high school tennis program and allow them to host tournaments.

Park and Recreation and DPW resubmitted their CPC application in July of 2024 with an updated overall funding request of \$2,800,000, with \$1,400,000 being requested from CPC (\$1,100,000 from the CPA General Reserve and \$300,000 from CPA Free Cash). The increase reflected the updated

plans approved by the Planning Board. On July 31, 2024, Park and Recreation and DPW presented the revised project to the CPC. On September 11, 2024, CPC held another Public Hearing during which the Committee heard many comments in favor of the revised tennis court renovation. During the CPC's meeting held September 18, 2024, the Committee voted to fund the revised High School tennis court project at the requested CPA amount of \$1,400,000 with the balance of the project to be funded from other Town sources. The CPC's met with the Finance Committee on September 18, 2024 and are scheduled to meet with the Select Board on September 24, 2024.

The finalized request is \$3,000,000, which is based on the most up to date cost estimate, including the funding for the additional landscape plantings in between the tennis courts and the neighbors as well as the additional drainage. To fully fund the request, \$1,100,000 is to be funded from CPA General Reserve, \$300,000 is to be funded from CPA Free Cash, \$1,100,000 is to be funded from the Athletic Facility Stabilization Fund, and \$500,000 is to be funded from Overlay Surplus.

Please feel free to reach out with any further questions regarding this project or the proposed funding.