

**Community Preservation Committee  
Town of Needham, Massachusetts**

**Report to Town Meeting  
Annual Town Meeting – May 2013**

**Introduction**

In November 2004, the voters of Needham adopted the legislation known as the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act. Since November 2005, the Needham Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has forwarded numerous projects to Town Meeting for final approval, the largest of which is the preservation and reconstruction of Town Hall.

The committee membership is defined by the requirements of the CPA as adopted by Needham. The nine member committee consists of a member of each of the following boards or committees; Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Park Recreation Commission, Historical Commission, Housing Authority, and two members each appointed by the Town Moderator and Board of Selectmen.

A summary of the CPC's FY 2013 activities follows. The members of the CPC welcome input, questions, and attendance at all meetings and public hearings. The Committee generally meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month, and agendas, minutes and the Needham Community Preservation Plan are available on the Town's website at [www.needhamma.gov/CPC](http://www.needhamma.gov/CPC)

**Legislation**

In July of 2012, the Legislature passed, and Governor Patrick signed, the FY2013 budget that also included changes to the CPA Act legislation. The existing regulations allowed improvements to open space or recreation facilities only on land that was previously purchased with CPA funding. The Act was amended to allow CPA funds to be used to renovate, improve, or develop recreation facilities on existing Town owned properties. This change was a benefit to Needham and other towns with little open space available for purchase, but with existing recreation facilities in need of renovation, and little ability in the Town budget to accomplish this need. This change permitted Town Meeting to approve funding in November 2012 for the renovation of Greene's Field, including the new playgrounds. Open Space funds, held in a required reserve, may also be spent on Recreation projects. The State budget also included an appropriation to the CPA fund of up to \$25 million from any budget surplus at the end of Fiscal Year 2013.

**Sources of Available Funds**

**Tax Surcharge Receipts**

Needham residents are currently billed a 2% surcharge on property taxes after the first \$100,000 valuation, as a result of town-wide vote accepting CPA. In FY 2013, it is estimated that Needham will receive \$1,761,000 in property tax surcharges dedicated to CPA, equivalent to the average collected in previous years. The CPA fund also generates

revenue from penalties and interest assessed on overdue CPA charges and investment income on the CPA funds in the bank

### **State Community Preservation Fund**

Needham receives a distribution from the Massachusetts Community Preservation Fund, and to date, has received \$5,182,143 from this fund. The most recent distribution, in October 2012 was \$437,167, a 26.83% match to local collections. In October 2006 and 2007, Needham received a 100% match to its local collections, with a combined distribution of \$2,557,108. In October 2008, the distribution was 67.62% of local collections for a total of \$888,287. In October 2009, the distribution was 34.8% totaling \$481,111. In October 2010, the distribution was 27.2% totaling \$401,199. In October 2011, the distribution was 26.64% totaling \$417,271. The fund has a complex distribution formula based upon the number of communities participating (currently 155) and their respective local surcharges. It is estimated that the November 2013 distribution will be 26% for Needham, \$429,000. The legislature also voted to place up to \$25 million of the state surplus at the end of the FY'13 budget into the MA Community Preservation Fund. The actual amount will be known by November 2013, and at that time, Needham will be notified of any additional funding.

### **Fund Balances**

State law mandates that, annually, at least 10% of surcharges plus state distribution funds be spent on actual projects, or be allocated for future projects in three specific CPA reserves; Community Housing, Open Space, and Historic Resources. The remainder of the funds, minus funds allocated for administrative expenses, is placed in an Annual Reserve fund, which can only be used for projects in these three areas and/or qualifying recreational projects.

Needham's CPC has elected to target 11% of the estimated receipts for each special reserve. This action is taken to assure that should the MA CPA Trust Fund distribution or the local tax surcharge receipts exceed estimates, Needham remains in compliance with the state mandate.

As a result of previous appropriations, including at the November 2012 Special Town Meeting, the reserve balances available for appropriation at the May 2013 Annual Town Meeting are as follows:

Community Housing:	\$ 498,520
Open Space:	\$ 180,320
Historic Resources:	\$ 68,320
2013 Annual Reserve:	\$3,948,595 (note this balance closes out at the end of the fiscal year)

The unspent 2013 Annual Reserve, and remaining administrative funds and interest must go through the free cash certification process before being returned to the CPA Fund.

The CPC is recommending appropriation of seven (7) projects, to be funded through the existing “buckets,” listed above. After subtracting the appropriations for the seven projects, and adding the FY’14 appropriations from Article 37, the balances in the respective funds would be:

Community Housing:	\$ 669,420
Open Space:	\$ 263,020
Historic Resources:	\$ 68,320
2014 Annual Reserve:	\$ 915,200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,915,960 as of July 1, 2013</b>

Please note the figures above assume that \$82,000 has been appropriated for the FY 2014 administrative expenses. It does not include the eventual Free Cash funds that were approximately \$2,925,435 in January 2013.

### **Administrative Expenses**

The CPC Administrative Funds may be used to pay for the expenses related to the work of the committee, including office supplies, mailings, legal notices, appraisals, consultant fees, property deposits, as well as the recording secretary’s salary and three hours per week for the Staff Liaison’s weekly salary. The Needham CPC is a member of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Coalition and pays annual dues to the association, currently \$3,750. The Coalition provides regular consultation services to the CPC, and monitors and informs member communities on state legislative activity related to the Community Preservation Act.

## **Requested Project Funding**

### **Article 30: Appropriate for Community Housing Specialist**

This article would support the hiring of a part-time Community Housing Specialist. The request for \$70,000 is intended to be spent over a two year period of time, for an average of \$35,000 per year. Working under the supervision of the Director of Planning and Community Development, the Community Housing Specialist would provide technical and administrative support on issues related to affordable housing, including but not limited to the state required monitoring and reporting of local affordable housing units; provision of technical support during the application process for new units under M.G.L Chapter 40B; initiate and pursue collaborative efforts among local, state, federal, and private agencies; serve as liaison to Needham Housing Authority and West Metro Home Consortium; and provide staff support to any Town committees created to support affordable housing.

### **Article 31: Appropriate for Open Space and Recreation Plan**

The Open Space and Recreation Plan is a planning process for municipalities to assess open spaces, recreation parks and facilities, water resources, trails, and critical plant and wildlife habitats, provide a stewardship plan, and assist with making plans on the compatible development within the community. The Commonwealth requires communities to have Open Space and Recreation master plans in order to be eligible for a variety of grant programs, including update every five years. It is time for Needham to update its plan, and the request is for \$25,000 to hire a consultant who will assist the Conservation Commission, Park and Recreation Commission, Board of Selectmen and Planning Board to create an updated plan with revised goals, objectives and priorities.

### **Article 32: Appropriate for Trail Design for Reservoir ADA Trail and Ridge Hill Loop**

The funds requested are for the design of the two projects, and they have been combined into one request in order to increase the number of possible qualified designers with interest in pursuing the project. Representatives of the Conservation Commission, Park and Recreation Commission and Board of Selectmen meet regularly to review the status and condition of trails and the pursuit of the goals and objectives from the Needham Trails Master Plan. Two high priority recommended improvement projects are, (1) the rebuilding of the trail that surrounds the Needham Reservoir, and its access, enabling it to become an all-person trail, along with potential expansion of the other recreation uses at the Reservoir; and (2) the development of a connection of a trail loop at Ridge Hill that will allow trail users to remain on Town property and avoid crossing onto private property. The design estimate for the Reservoir Trail is \$65,000, and the design estimate for the Ridge Hill loop is \$20,000, for a total request of \$85,000. A decision will be made during the design process on whether to request construction funds individually or as a combined project.

### **Article 33: Appropriate for Newman Fields and Eastman Conservation Area Design**

The Needham School Committee is requesting design funds for the athletic fields located at the Newman School and the adjacent Eastman Conservation area. This request is supported by the Park and Recreation Commission, the Board of Selectmen and the Conservation Commission. The Eastman Conservation Area is used by the Needham Science Center for curriculum programs at many grade levels. The viewing areas and trails provide a learning opportunity for many environmental projects, and the rebuilding of the trails will provide an opportunity to connect to the newly created trails at the recently purchased Carol/Brewster properties and the adjacent Anna Volante conservation area. Linking newly created trails to existing trails is a goal of the Trails Master Plan. The athletic fields include two 60' diamonds and a multi-purpose field. The students at Newman and participants in

youth sports programs cannot have consistent use of the fields as they are adjacent to wetlands and don't drain properly. The design requirements for both projects are interrelated and will require a complex permitting process. The combined design request is \$248,000, with an estimate of \$158,000 for the fields and \$90,000 for the conservation area.

### **Article 34: Appropriate for Newman Preschool Playground Surfacing**

The Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) has required that the School Committee replace the surfacing at the Preschool Playground located at the Newman School. Though the current wood fiber surfacing material is considered compliant under federal guidelines, the MAAB has asked for a different surface product at this site. Surfacing products must meet federal requirements for shock absorption, reducing the severity of injuries including life-threatening head injuries. The surface must also meet accessibility needs. The request is for \$60,000 to install a poured-in-place rubber surface which is acceptable to MAAB during the Summer of 2013.

### **Article 35: Appropriate for Mills Field Park Design**

The Department of Public Works in conjunction with the Park and Recreation Commission is requesting \$40,000 for design of improvement projects at Mills Field. The major cost of the project will be to create parking within the park, to relieve parking congestion on neighborhood roads. The concept is to build parallel parking within the park on Hampton Avenue, and remove the circular drive for additional spaces near the playground and basketball court. The turf surface area in the 60' diamond would be improved and sod installed. The basketball court would be renovated, and picnic tables and grills would be replaced.

### **Article 36: Appropriate for Community Farm Soil Improvements**

Needham Community Farm, Inc. is requesting \$8,200 to improve the soil at their location at the Nike Site. The farm area soil is overly compacted and the mix of soils drains poorly, impacting the productivity of the farm. The property is under the jurisdiction of the School Committee and the farm operates under a license from the School Committee, which has stated its support for this project. This will be a multiyear process to break up the soil and add nutrients. Compost from Needham's Recycling and Transfer Station would be one of the products likely to be used to improve the quality of the soil. The majority of the produce harvested is made available through the Community Council Food Bank. The Needham Community Farm provides free educational programs for students in Needham Public Schools and Minuteman Regional High School, as well as small fee based programs for other Needham residents.

### **Article 37: Appropriate to Community Preservation Fund**

This article appropriates the estimated FY 2014 CPA receipts.

Administration	\$ 82,000
Annual Reserve	\$ 915,200
Community Housing Reserve	\$ 240,900
Historic Resources Reserve*	\$ 0
Open Space Reserve	\$ 240,900

\* The required annual funding or appropriation for Historic Resources is the \$711,000 payment of the debt service, voted on within Article 9.

### **Conclusion**

Needham is fortunate to have the use of CPA funds which have funded numerous successful projects for the community. Appreciation is extended to the citizens of Needham and specifically Needham's Town Meeting members for their support. The Committee looks forward to FY 2014 and new requests and interest from the residents of the community. The Needham Community Preservation Plan will be updated in 2013, to reflect the updated legislation. Residents will be invited to participate in discussions and give input.

Mark Gluesing, Chairman  
Janet Carter Bernardo, Vice Chairman  
Carol Boulris  
Gary Crossen  
Reg Foster

Mike Retzky  
Paul Siegenthaler  
Sam Bass Warner  
Lita Young