

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

**Report to Town Meeting  
Special Town Meeting – October 2020**

**Introduction**

In November 2004, the voters of Needham adopted the legislation known as the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA), a funding mechanism for Cities and Towns to award grants to applicants to support community housing, preservation of historic resources, acquisition and preservation of open Space, and restoration and investment in recreational resources. The Needham Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is responsible for implementing Needham's Community Preservation Plan pursuant to the requirements of the CPA. Since November 2005, the 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 2020 activities follows. Applications for this year were received in December of 2019. These applications were vetted and voted on by the CPC initially for eligibility for funding under the CPA. The applications were then assigned liaisons who worked with proponents to answer committee questions. The CPC Chair met with the Select Board to consult on the proposals in February. Due to the coronavirus pandemic the public hearing usually scheduled in March was postponed and the CPC determined to postpone the consideration of these proposal for Town Meeting until the Fall Town Meeting.

Agendas, minutes and the Needham Community Preservation Plan are available on the Town's website at <http://needhamma.gov/425/Community-Preservation-Commitee>

**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 2020, it is estimated that Needham will receive \$2,646,000 in property tax surcharges dedicated to CPA. 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 Trust Fund, and to date, has received \$9,030,785 from this fund. The most recent distribution, in November 2019 and January 2020 was \$592,379 a 23.9% match to local collections. The match over the years has fluctuated from 100% after initial passage of adoption to as low as 17.2% during November 2017. Additional communities passing CPA adoption in their communities, including the City of Boston in 2016, has resulted in an increase in the number of communities that are eligible for the match thereby reducing the match percentage that Needham has received over time. Legislation was recently passed that provides for an increase in fees that go towards the Community Preservation Trust Fund, which should help to stabilize the match moving forward.

## **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 to insure staying compliant with the mandate.

As a result of previous appropriations, the reserve balances available for appropriation at the October 2020 Special Town Meeting, are as follows:

Community Housing:	\$ 2,194,975
Open Space:	\$ 1,200,356
Historic Resources:	\$ 15,820

The unspent 2020 Annual Reserve and remaining administrative funds and interest must go through the free cash certification process before being returned to the CPA Fund. That process as of the date of this report has not been completed. Consequently, the 2021 annual reserve hasn't been established.

The CPC is recommending appropriation of six (6) projects, to be funded at the October 2020 Annual Town Meeting. After subtracting the appropriations for the six (6) projects, and adding the FY'21 appropriations from Article 16, the balances in the respective funds would be:

Community Housing:	\$ 2,459,763
Open Space:	\$ 1,558,944
Historic Resources:	\$ 15,820
2021 Annual Reserve:	\$ 817,977

**TOTAL** **\$ 4,852,504 as of November 1, 2020**

Please note the figures above assume that \$82,000 has been appropriated for the FY 2021 administrative expenses. *It does not include the eventual Free Cash funds that will be finalized in late 2020.*

### **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 funds were recently utilized to pay for the addition of conservation restrictions on properties purchased with CPA funds. The Needham CPC is a member of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Coalition and pays annual dues to the association, currently \$7,900. 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 10: Needham Emergency Rental Assistance Program**

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$120,000 to establish a short-term emergency rental assistance program for qualifying Needham renter households who have suffered a reduction in income due to the pandemic. This program is being proposed by the Needham Affordable Housing Trust. Participation guidelines would restrict eligibility to households with incomes at or below 80% of area median income (AMI), with a preference given for those at or below 50% AMI. Applicants must provide documentation of income reductions due to Covid-19. The program will cover 50% of a household's monthly rent with a maximum monthly assistance of \$1,500 for three months of payments. The Program would be administered by a non-profit housing organization responsible for accepting applications, determining eligibility, selecting beneficiaries, entering into agreements with participants and landlords, disbursing checks to landlords, and providing regular reporting on progress.

#### **Article 11: First Baptist Church – Needham Front Porch Preservation & Restoration**

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$90,200 for the historic preservation of the street facing front porch and columns of the First Baptist Church. The First Baptist Church is on the Town's historic register and has historic significance to the Town of Needham. The front porch of First Baptist Church in Needham is a prominent and identifying feature of the Great Plain Avenue streetscape. The First Baptist Church was originally located on the corner of Highland Avenue and Great Plain Avenue and was moved to the current location in 1928. Dr. Samuel Francis Smith, the author of "America", was the pastor at First Baptist Church from 1866-1873 and 1877-1880. The

requested funds will help restore the historic capstone, steps, and landing of the front porch, the porch columns, architectural detailing around the roof line and of the porch façade, as well a cornice piece on the east wing of the church.

**Article 12: First Parish Church – Steeple Preservation**

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$50,000 for the historic preservation of the steeple of the First Parish Church. The First Parish Church is on the Town’s historic register and has historic significance to the Town of Needham. The steeple houses a historic Paul Revere Bell that still rings on special occasions. The First Parish Church is Needham’s oldest public building and hosted Needham’s original Town Meeting and still hosts community events throughout the year. The requested funds would help preserve the steeple to ensure continued protection of this historic building.

**Article 13: Needham Community Farm – Growing Bed Area Expansion**

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$6,200 to expand the growing area of the community farm to enhance the current recreational growing beds at the Needham Community Farm. The Needham Community Farm offers community gardening classes, public volunteer participants and community activities and supplies fresh produce to the Needham Food Pantry and Needham Housing Authority sites. The requested funding would result in approximately a 20% increase in growing area.

**Article 14: Claxton Field Lights & Skin Renovation - Design**

The CPC voted to approve for Town Meeting consideration \$101,500 to design two key improvements to Claxton Field. The current fields were constructed on a closed landfill that was not properly graded due to the site conditions, settling of materials, and age. The requested funds to the Town would focus on key improvements to the design of the fields at Claxton and the field lighting. The first part of this design project would involve removal the existing skins and evaluating the conditions, and design amendments and grade improvements as necessary to prevent future puddling after heavy rains and reduce field closures. The second part of this design project would address upgrading the field lighting system to more energy efficient lights and evaluating the lighting needs of the field and make recommendations for improvements.

**Article 16: Appropriate to Community Preservation Fund**

This article appropriates the estimated FY 2020 CPA receipts.

Administration	\$ 82,000
Annual Reserve	\$ 817,977
Community Housing Reserve	\$ 364,788
Historic Resources Reserve*	\$ 0
Open Space Reserve	\$ 364,788

\* The required annual funding or appropriation for Historic Resources is the \$416,675 payment of the debt service, voted on within Article 16.

## **Conclusion**

Needham is fortunate to have the use of CPA funds which have funded numerous successful projects for the community. Our appreciation is extended to the citizens of Needham and specifically Needham's Town Meeting members for their support. The Committee looks forward to FY 2021 and new requests and interest from the residents of the community.

Peter Pingitore, Chairman  
Artie Crocker, Vice Chairman  
Paul Alpert  
Joseph Barnes  
Bob Dermody

Laura Dorfman  
Chris Gerstel  
Penny Kirk  
Richard Zimbone