Community Preservation Committee
Town of Needham, Massachusetts

Report to Town Meeting
Annual Town Meeting – May 2010

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. Residents are encouraged to follow the progress of this major project and watch for its anticipated opening in the fall of 2011.

A summary of the CPC's FY 2010 activities follows. The members of the CPC welcome input, questions, and attendance at all meetings and public hearings. The Committee generally meets on the 2nd 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

Sources of Available Funds

State Community Preservation Fund

Needham receives a distribution from the Massachusetts Community Preservation Fund, and to date, has received $3,926,506 from this fund. 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. The fund has a complicated distribution formula based upon the number of communities participating (currently 143) and their respective local surcharges. It is estimated that the October 2010 distribution will be 31-32% for Needham.

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 acceptance of CPA. In FY 2011, it is estimated that Needham will receive approximately $1,538,000 in property tax surcharges dedicated to CPA, equal to the average collected in previous years.

Miscellaneous Receipts

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. In total, these sources contributed $278,560 in FY 2009, and have earned only $17,014 in FY 2010 through the latest reporting period. The decline is due to the appropriation and spending for the Town Hall project and the lower interest rates being paid on cash balances.

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 tax surcharge receipts exceed estimates, Needham remains in compliance with the state mandate.

As a result of previous appropriations, the reserve balances available for appropriation at the May 2010 Annual Town Meeting are as follows:

Community Housing:	$233,380
Open Space:	$ 40,180
Historic Resources:	$ 0
2010 Annual Reserve:	$264,151 (note this balance closes out at the end of the fiscal year)
TOTAL	$537,711

The unspent 2010 Annual Reserve, and remaining administrative funds and interest must go through the free cash certification process before being returned to the CPA Fund.

Should Town Meeting act positively on the proposed articles in the Annual and Special Town Meeting Warrants, the balances in the respective funds, at the conclusion of Town Meeting, would be as follows:

Community Housing:	$ 389,680
Open Space:	$ 201,480
Historic Resources:	$ 143,800
2011 Annual Reserve:	$ 376,600
TOTAL	$1,111,560

Please note the figures above assume that $82,000 has been appropriated for the FY 2011 administrative expenses.

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.. Recently, the CPC voted to contribute towards the salary of the Staff Liaison, paying 2 hours per week towards her 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 assisted with all the paperwork during the creation of Needham's CPA Fund and provides regular consultation services to the CPC. Additionally, the Committee voted to authorize the expenditure of $5,000 from these funds to photograph the historic elements of Town Hall prior to the commencement of the renovation. These photographs will be made available to the public this summer. Finally, the CPC voted to use administrative funds for the $32,500 deposit to purchase property which is refundable if Town Meeting chose not to approve the funding. Up to $3,000 of funds will also be used for soil testing at the property.

Requested Project Funding

Article 28: Appropriate for CPA Project – Historic Artifacts
This request is for $57,500. If approved, artifacts that have been utilized at Town Hall will be restored and put back into use or on display after the renovation. One of the requirements for CPA funding is that the artifacts must be deemed to have historic value to Needham. The Needham Historic Commission has certified that these items meet these criteria. The list of items includes two tables from the Selectmen's chambers, two 18th century maps, legal bookcases from the Selectmen's chambers and Town Clerk's office, a podium from the original stage, and the cabinet for the original weights and measure equipment.

Article 29: Appropriate for CPA Project – Restore Open Space Land
This request is for $40,000. In October 2009, Town Meeting authorized the purchase of two parcels of land at Carol and Brewster Roads. The prior owner cleared the two parcels for potential development, and if left in this state, invasive species will begin to overtake the open area and spread into the adjacent conservation area. Types of invasive species might include oriental bittersweet and European buckthorn. The Board of Selectmen has formed the Carol-Brewster Land Committee to make recommendations for plantings on the property consistent with its purchase and use as open space. Restoration and protection of open space are permissible uses of CPA funding.

Article 30: Appropriate for CPA Project – Charles River Energy
This request is for $45,000. The Charles River Center is requesting the funds to replace the heating systems in three of its original group homes – Mountain House, Salamone House, and Stott House. The new boilers will replace old and inefficient units and reduce the energy costs in the homes. CPA funding may be used to support existing community housing including their capital improvements. These three homes have a total of 25 affordable units thus meet the requirement of supporting community housing. The Charles River Center received support funds last year for window and door replacement at a group home on Webster Street and reported to the CPC that a 20% savings in energy cost has been realized since July.

Special Town Meeting Article 10: Appropriate for CPA – Purchase of Land
A parcel of land, including a house, at 174 Charles River Street has become available for purchase. It is of special interest to the Park and Recreation Commission because it abuts Walker Gordon Field and Town ownership will create additional field space plus access for passive recreation to Walker Pond. The Town has negotiated with the owner and has come to an agreement on a sale price of $650,000, contingent upon approval of Town Meeting. The amount requested in the warrant is $800,000, but the CPC will make a motion to amend that amount to $767,500 to cover the purchase and remediation of the purchased property, with the $32,500 deposit funded through CPC's 2010 Administrative funds. The house will be demolished, with appropriate removal of the oil tank and any other materials common in older homes. (*Note: The Community Preservation Committee, by virtue of state statute, is the only body that can reduce a requested amount of CPA funding as printed in the warrant.)*

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'2011 and increased requests and interest from the residents of the community.

Jane Howard, Chairman
Mark Gluesing, Vice Chairman
Janet Bernardo
Jack Cogswell
John Comando
Bruce Eisenhut
Reg Foster
Brian Nadler
Paul Siegenthaler