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Community Preservation Committee Funding Recommendation for Levingston Cove Improvements Project

Date: June 17, 2021
From: Community Preservation Committee
To: The Honorable City Council
CC: Her Honor Mayor Ruthanne Fuller

PROJECT GOALS & ELIGIBILITY

This proposal requests CPA funding to construct new accessibility, erosion, and passive recreation improvements at Levingston Cove. Levingston Cove is one of four public open space parcels set along the shore of Crystal Lake, a 33-acre glacial kettle pond and Newton's only Great Pond. The crescent shaped cove is bordered by a grassy slope which over time has become severely eroded. Its shoreline pathways are considered to be inaccessible and must serve a combination of needs in several locations to meet the walking, fishing, active and passive recreation demands of the community. The City has actively studied the area for several years now and held public meetings in 2018 and 2019 to gather input which has led to the creation of the current 60% design plan. This is an important site to many in Newton, and the proposed plans attempt to balance the environmental needs of the site with the recreational goals of the community. The recommended CPA funding will allow the City to correct erosion damage, provide accessible walkways and seating areas, install new features such as rain gardens to better deal with water runoff, and establish new passive recreational elements in the landscape.

The project is eligible for CPA funding for the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of both a city-wide Recreation resource and a unique Open Space natural resource.

RECOMMENDED FUNDING

At its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 8, the Community Preservation Committee unanimously recommended, with a vote of 8 to 0, the appropriation of \$1,440,344 in Community Preservation Act funding to the control of the Planning & Development Department for the implementation of the approved and permitted designs for Levingston Cove including the construction of new erosion controls, plantings, and accessibility improvements, and the installation of new public amenities including new pathways, benches and decks.

The CPC recommends that the funding of the project be divided between Open Space (20%) and Recreation (80%). The Open Space funding is proposed to be taken out of the Open Space Prior Year

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Reserve Account, while the Recreation category funding would come from the Prior Year Undesignated Funds as proposed below:

Proposed CPA Funding Accounts for the Levingston Cove Improvements Project			
Account Name	Account Number	Amount Currently Available	Proposed Amount for Levingston Cove Project
Open Space Prior Year Reserve Account	#5840-3599	\$409,689	\$288,068.80
Prior Year Undesignated Funds	#5800-3599	\$5,651,255.95	\$1,152,275.20
Total Project Funds			\$1,440,344.00

SPECIAL ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE CPC

Community Needs: Crystal Lake is an important recreational resource not only for the surrounding neighborhood but for the City as a whole. Levingston Cove provides opportunities for fishing and direct water access as well as walking paths and park space. The park has been badly damaged by water erosion and suffers from many of the same over-use and environmental stresses which affect the Crystal Lake area as a whole. The City has been working with Weston and Sampson for several years now to study the existing conditions of the site and develop restoration plans which address the community's needs and goals. Initial public meetings were held on the project in 2018 and a preliminary plan for the site was reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission in 2019.

This project is #26 in the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) with a score of 53.8 out of 100 and a stated benefit of improving the area's accessibility, drainage, and water quality and preventing further erosion. Improving the existing shoreline at Levingston Cove meets the City's CIP goal (page 11) to protect existing woods and open spaces and care for the City's Parks and Recreational Spaces. Additionally, the project will meet several goals of the Open Space and Recreation Plan including Goal 3, Objective 3A (Increased accessibility in the City's park land) of Section 8, and Goal 2, Objective 2B #26 (Implement recommendations from the...Restoration of Levingston Cove, Crystal Lake, Weston & Sampson (2019)) of Section 9.

Funding Uses and Sources: The recommended CPA funding will be used to cover the construction and material costs associated with implementing the approved Weston and Sampson plans for the Levingston Cove Improvements. As previously noted, the City has already spent several years working on the design documents, which are now at 60%. The City, with some State assistance, has already funded the design costs for the project and City staff will complete the survey work needed for the plans and their permitting. The City will continue to provide staff support throughout the final design, requisition, and bidding processes and will oversee the construction through completion.

Project Finances: The funding requested will cover the final construction phase of the project, allowing the City to install accessible features and trails, drainage improvements, erosion controls, and site amenities including benches, a viewing and fishing platform, at-grade access to the pond, and seating areas. The City has provided the funding and staff time to complete the public review and design process and will continue to provide support for the permitting of this project. State funding has been requested to cover the construction oversight for the project, with the City overseeing the work if this funding does not become available. This is the first request to use CPA funding at Levingston Cove.

Accessibility: The pathways currently running through Levingston Cove have been degraded by erosion and are not accessible. A major component of this project is the creation of fully accessible walkways and viewing areas for use by all of the City's residents. The City also plans to make accessibility improvements to the pathway connecting Levingston Cove to the Crystal Lake Beach as part of a separate project.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS *(funding conditions)*

1. CPA funding will be used for the construction of the Levingston Cove Improvements and the purchase of any materials necessary to complete the approved plans.
2. The CPC shall receive a copy of the 100% construction documents as soon as they are available.
3. Any periodic reports or interim deliverables prepared as part of this project, and any City or State reviews of those deliverables, must be shared with the CPC for online posting.
4. The CPC or its staff may conduct periodic site visits to the project and request photos or updates from time to time for the Committee and public's information.
5. All recommended CPA funds should be appropriated by the City Council within 6 months and expended within two years of the date of any CPC recommendation. If either deadline cannot be met, the applicant should request a written extension from the CPC, which the CPC may grant at its discretion.
6. Any CPA funds appropriated but not used for the purposes stated herein shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.

KEY OUTCOMES

The Community Preservation Committee will evaluate this project based on its success in completing the finalized and permitted designs for the Levingston Cove Improvements and their ability to address both the environmental needs of the site by controlling erosion and rainwater, and the recreational needs of the site by providing improved views and access to Crystal Lake and its amenities.

ATTACHMENTS

- May 21, 2021 Proposal and selected attachments submitted to the CPC for the June 8, 2021 public hearing
- Project Presentation given at the June 8 CPC meeting.

Additional information not attached to this recommendation, including petitions and letters of support, are available on the CPC's website at: <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/community-preservation-program/proposals-projects/levingston-cove-improvements-project>