



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts

Department of Planning and Development
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

#280-21

Telephone
(617) 796-1120
Telefax
(617) 796-1142
TDD/TTY
(617) 796-1089
www.newtonma.gov

Barney S. Heath
Director

Community Preservation Committee Revised Funding Recommendation for the Grace Episcopal Tower Restoration Project

Date: June 21, 2021
From: Community Preservation Committee
To: The Honorable City Council
CC: The Honorable Mayor Ruthanne Fuller

This recommendation is a continuation of the Community Preservation Committee's (CPC) January 2021 recommendation to use CPA funding to complete the Grace Episcopal Tower Restoration Project. The funding recommendation proposed to use the CPA program's Historic Reserve Accounts to cover all of the project's costs, including \$441,755.29 from the FY22 Historic Resource Reserves which the Committee later learned could not be approved for use until after July 1, 2021. On April 20, 2021, City Council approved the use of \$991,244.71 in existing Historic Resource Reserve funds for the project with the understanding that the remaining funding would be docketed for approval at the start of FY22. The intent of the present recommendation is to request approval for the allocation of the FY22 Historic Resource funding to the Grace Episcopal Church's Tower Restoration project as originally requested.

PROJECT GOALS & ELIGIBILITY Grace Episcopal Church submitted a proposal in August 2020 for CPA historic resource funding in the amount of \$1,433,000 for the stabilization and preservation of the conical stone tower located in the southeast corner of the structure. Due to a structural defect, the tower has deteriorated to the extent that it is now a public safety risk. Designed by Architect Alexander Rice Esty, the ca. 1872 stone tower and surrounding campus is considered to be of "outstanding architectural quality" (Newton NRHP Nomination) and is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places as part of the Farlow and Kenrick Parks National Register Historic District. The tower is a prominent historic resource and a significant element of the neighborhood's visual landscape.

This project is eligible for CPA funding for the restoration/rehabilitation of an Historic Resource as it is listed on both the State and National Historic Registers and is also supported by the Newton Historical Commission as a locally significant structure.

www.newtonma.gov/cpa

Lara Kritzer, Community Preservation Program Manager
lkritzer@newtonma.gov 617.796.1144

RECOMMENDED FUNDING At the CPC’s regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, October 13, 2020, the Community Preservation Committee recommended, with a vote of 6 to 2 with one abstention, the appropriation of \$1,433,000 in Community Preservation Act historic resource funds to the control of the Planning & Development Department for the completion of the tower restoration project at Grace Episcopal Church. As previously noted, the CPC’s recommendation proposed that all of the funding come from the City’s Historic Resource Reserve Accounts and in April 2021, the \$991,244.71 already in those accounts was allocated towards this work. The current recommendation requests that the final \$441,755.29 remaining from the original recommendation be allocated to the project from the FY22 Historic Resource Reserve Account.

Sources of CPA Funding	
Current Funding Request to come from FY22 Historic Resource Reserve	\$441,755.29
Funding Allocated to Project in FY21	\$991,244.71
Total CPA Funding	\$1,433,000

SPECIAL ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE CPC

In bringing forward its original recommendation for this project, the CPC addressed the question of whether or not public CPA funding should be provided for the preservation of an historic property owned by a religious entity. Members agreed that there was no question that the tower was a significant historic and architectural resource within the community, a prominent visual and audible element of the neighborhood since its construction, and contributed to the historic character of the adjacent historic Farlow Park. After thoroughly discussing the elements listed below, the CPC made their determination based primarily on the fact that the project preserves a significant historic resource and met the requirements established by the enabling legislation for funding.

Funding of Private/Religious Institutions: During their review of the project, the CPC heard legal arguments both for and against the use of CPA public funding for religious institutions. It was noted that 91 CPA communities, including Boston and Cambridge, have funded the restoration of significant historic religious and institutional buildings based on their historic and architectural contributions to their neighborhoods and communities. The Massachusetts Anti-Aid amendment and its impact on the CPA funding of religious institutions was also reviewed during these meetings.

Architectural and Historical Significance: Grace Episcopal Church has been considered to be of architecturally and historically significance for as long as Newton has tracked its historic resources. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Farlow and Kenrick Parks National Register District in 1999, having previously been noted for its “outstanding architectural quality” in the 1986 Historic Resource Inventory of Newton. The property has been a local landmark in Newton Corner since its construction, as shown on the 1878 bird’s eye view Map of Newton Corner included in the proposal. When the property was included in the Newton Corner Historic Neighborhood Walking Tour in 2002, the corner tower was again noted as an important local landmark. Numerous other planning and historic preservation documents prepared by the City over the years have noted the importance of its design, the prominence of its architect, Alexander Rice Esty, and the need to protect and preserve Newton’s many churches not only for their architectural and historical contributions to the area, but for their service as important community gathering spaces, polling centers, and multi-use open space facilities.

Funding leverage & project costs: This project meets the CPC's guidelines for public-private partnerships which request a 50/50 match to the CPA funds. The Applicant is currently working to meet this commitment through fundraising and has already received some state grant funding. The existing funding conditions require the Applicant to use less of the approved CPA funding if they raise more funds than initially expected.

In making this recommendation, the CPC also considered that while the CPA program's annual spending goal is to use at least 20% of its CPA funding for Historic Resource projects, only 17% of CPA funding has been used for this purpose over the life of the program.

Community spaces & services: The proposal details the extensive public use of this property as a meeting center, performance venue and local polling location. Grace Episcopal also has a long history of allowing non-profits to use other structures on their site, and an additional letter detailing the congregation's history in community engagement can be found on the website at: www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/106924. The CPC also noted during their discussion that many historic resources provide a benefit to their neighborhood and community by contributing to the community's architectural and historic landscape and character.

Project design & permitting: The Applicant spent several years working closely with Structures North and other preservation and masonry experts to complete a thorough evaluation of the tower's existing condition and develop the proposed solutions. The resulting set of detailed elevations and drawings of the tower show where the damage is located and the proposed treatment methods. The proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation and Restoration as it will be restored and repaired using existing and in-kind materials, with new structural materials to be used only as needed on the interior of the structure.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS (*funding conditions*)

The following funding conditions were applied to the project when the original funding was approved in April 2021. No new conditions are proposed at this time.

1. Recommended CPA funds should be appropriated within 6 months and the project should be completed within 3 years after the date of its approval by City Council, with the understanding that these deadlines may be extended by submitting a written request to the CPC outlining the reason the extension is necessary and the proposed new deadline.
2. The Applicant has committed to raising funding for 50% of the project budget. If through grants or donations more funding is raised than is currently estimated, those additional funds will be used to reduce the CPA funding contribution to the project.
3. All funding for this project will be taken from the City's CPA Historic Resource Reserve accounts.
4. All CPA funding will be used solely for the restoration of the tower as a public element of the building which is visible from all surrounding public ways and park spaces. No funding can be used for the support of any religious activities, or for the restoration of any other elements of the building which are solely used for religious purposes.
5. The Applicant will be asked to update the CPC on the status of the project at regular intervals as requested. Periodic site visits to check the status of the restoration work may also be requested.
6. The CPC will hold 10% of the project's CPA funding until all restoration work is complete, at which time a final report and updated project budget must be submitted to the CPC for approval. The Applicant will be expected to present these materials at a public meeting of the CPC for their review and approval before the final funds are released.

7. The release of CPA funds will be governed by a grant agreement that includes but is not limited to the usual conditions for the phased release of CPA funds for historic resource projects, including a final report to the CPC and the return of unspent funds.
8. Any CPA funds appropriated but not used for the purposes stated herein should be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.
9. The Applicant will give a preservation restriction to the City on the exterior elements of the building which are being restored with public funds and meet the other conditions usual for CPA-funded private construction projects (City-approved procurement process, final construction contract, building permit, etc.)
10. As the Applicant has committed to raising 50% of the project costs through grants, donations and other sources, CPA funding for this project will be released based on the percentage of funding raised by the Applicant at the time of the funding request using an agreed upon funding approval process to be included in the grant agreement.

KEY OUTCOMES The successful outcomes of this project will be the interior stabilization of the tower, using a patented system to replace the failing interior supports and prevent further deterioration, and the exterior restoration of the facades by repointing and replacing failed masonry elements to prevent water infiltration and damage in the future. The ultimate goal of this project is to fully restore the tower so that it can continue to be viewed and accessed again by the public.

ATTACHMENTS

- Tower Restoration Proposal submitted by Grace Episcopal Church on Aug. 14, 2020. (Due to the size of this document, a link has been included to its location on the project website: <http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/105631>)
- October 13, 2020 Presentation by Grace Episcopal Church to the Community Preservation Committee

Additional information not attached to this recommendation, including petitions and letters of support, are available on the CPC's website at:

<http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/cpa/projects/gecsr.asp>