

## **Report of the Community Preservation Committee**

The Community Preservation Committee is pleased to submit its annual report of activities for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008.

### **The Community Preservation Process in Wellesley**

In 2002, Wellesley accepted the Community Preservation Act ("CPA") and formed a Community Preservation Committee. Pursuant to the CPA, Wellesley established a surcharge of 1% on the local property tax, and began to set aside the proceeds of the surcharge in order to pursue Community Preservation activities, encompassing four purposes -- open space, historic resources, recreational uses and community housing. Funds raised through the local surcharge are "matched" annually by monies from a Massachusetts Community Preservation Trust Fund, which is made up of revenues from Land Court and Land Registry fees. The State's payment to each CPA community is determined by a statutory formula, but in practice the State match to date has been almost 100%. Because of sharply declining fee revenues as well as the expansion of the number of localities adopting the CPA, the match is expected to decline substantially beginning with the payment to be received in October, 2008.

In each year, a required minimum of 10% of all revenues collected by a CPA community from its surcharge and from the State match must be expended (or "banked" in dedicated reserves for future use) for each of the statute's three primary purposes of open space (excluding recreation), community housing and historic resources. The remaining 70% of all Community Preservation funds raised annually by a community which are not so earmarked may be used currently or retained for future appropriation, at the municipality's discretion, for any of those three primary statutory purposes or for the fourth purpose of recreation.

Community Preservation funding proposals generally consist of capital expenditures for the purposes permitted by the CPA -- maintenance and ordinary operating expenses are not eligible and even capital spending related to recreational and open space properties not acquired with CPA funds are constrained. All expenditures from a local Community Preservation fund are subject to two basic requirements: (1) they may be made only upon appropriation adopted in the usual manner (in Wellesley's case, by vote at an Annual or Special Town Meeting), and (2) only those projects or proposals which receive the affirmative support of the local Community Preservation Committee are eligible for appropriation.

In response to the requirements of the statute, Wellesley's Bylaw provides that the Committee have representatives from five designated boards -- Natural Resources Commission, Planning Board, Recreation Commission, Wellesley Housing Authority and Historical Commission -- and the permitted maximum of four additional members appointed by the Moderator (one of which is, by common understanding, appointed from the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation).

### **An Overview of Community Preservation Activities**

The Committee operates pursuant to a Community Preservation Plan for the Town, including specific Decision Guidelines and Goals which are used in reaching decisions

about whether and to what extent to recommend funding for the proposals submitted to the Committee. A copy of the Community Preservation Plan can be found at the Committee's link on the Town's website at [www.wellesley.ma.gov](http://www.wellesley.ma.gov). Interested residents can also visit the CPC webpage to read a comprehensive report prepared by the CPC for the Selectmen in November, 2006, describing in detail all of the CPC's activities over its first five years as well as other reports the CPC makes to Town Meeting.

To date, the Committee has supported a total of 20 different projects (some in several stages). \$3,344,854 dollars have been appropriated for those projects. Of this total, \$1,791,740 (53.6%) has been appropriated for Recreation, \$755,500 (22.6%) has been appropriated for Affordable Housing, \$499,344 (14.9%) for Historic Resources and \$298,260 (8.9%) for Open Space. The large total for Recreation reflects the appropriation of \$1,500,000 for the Sprague Field project this spring – by far the largest single project ever considered or funded by the Committee. This one project represents 44.8% of the total project appropriations made during the first six years of Town's activities under the Community Preservation Act.

### **Sprague Field Project**

The Committee recommended to the spring 2007 Town Meeting that \$645,000 be allocated from general Community Preservation funds for the purpose of funding a portion of the capital costs of preserving two existing athletic fields adjacent to the Sprague School through remediation activities and the installation of synthetic turf playing fields. The fields were originally built on top of a former municipal disposal site, which has resulted in solid debris (glass, metal objects) working its way to the surface and posing a safety hazard for field users. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) requires remediation of this problem prior to a date in 2009; failure to do so would result in closure of the fields.

The sponsors requested Community Preservation funding as part of a proposed plan of financing by the Town (via borrowing), by user groups and by the CPC to cover the overall costs of remediation and construction of the replacement fields. Because Town Meeting, after extended debate, did not approve the appropriation of Town funds by the requisite two-thirds majority, the CPC did not move forward with its recommendation.

During FY 2008, the School Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Sprague Field, with the assistance of a Sprague Field Task Force representing various Town boards, youth sports organizations and citizens groups, proposed addressing all necessary remediation work within the Remediation Area as part of a broader Plan for the entire Sprague Field complex (the "Master Plan"). The total estimated cost of implementing the full Master Plan is approximately \$4.2 Million, and it was proposed to be financed through a combination of (a) \$700,000 in general Town funds, (b) \$2,000,000 in private fund-raising, and (c) requested CPC funding of \$1.5 Million for those improvements which are CP-eligible (under the CPA, these are limited to the Remediation Area). The entire Remediation Area will be fully excavated and remediated in accordance with all applicable DEP standards. This will entail the screening and removal of hazardous debris and soils, and the installation of an underlying geotextile fabric which would serve as a barrier against further migrating materials. One natural grass field (Field 1, immediately adjacent to the Elementary School) and one synthetic turf field (Field 2), each designed to accommodate soccer, lacrosse and similar sports (Field 2 will also accommodate football), would then be installed as replacement fields for the existing

Fields 1 and 2. A new regulation softball field would also be built within the Remediation Area. Both the natural grass and the synthetic turf field designs are approved by DEP as acceptable remediation solutions for the environmental harm occurring in the Remediation Area.

The Committee recommended, and Town Meeting made the appropriation of \$1.5 million. As the Committee reported to the 2007 Annual Town Meeting:

“The Committee concluded that the Sprague fields are significant Town recreational resources used by hundreds of Town families; that the ability to use the fields will soon be lost unless appropriate remediation action is taken; and that the preservation of the Sprague fields is accordingly a matter of importance to the Town which merits a substantial appropriation of Community Preservation funds.”

Although the Sprague proposal, and its price tag, grew substantially in comparison to last year, a substantial majority of our Committee believed that the CPC portion of the new Master Plan is worthy of strong support, for a number of reasons in addition to those recited last year:

-- The Master Plan as a whole provided an opportunity to reconfigure and improve all of the fields, gain two synthetic turf fields for increased play and new regulation-sized softball and baseball fields, and in general to more fully utilize this most important recreational resource. This takes on particular significance in light of the continuing demand for playing field use throughout the Town .

-- Pursuing opportunities to increase the number of playing fields in the Town is one of the Recreation goals of the Committee's own Community Preservation Plan. Given the considerable difficulties and costs associated with any acquisition of available vacant land for recreational use, the Master Plan may be the best option to add to high-quality playing field capacity in the foreseeable future.

-- Appropriating the full requested sum for the CP-eligible costs associated with the Remediation Area, (i) tends to lower the need for general Town funds, at a time of difficult financial constraints, and (ii) tends to increase the availability of both general Town funds and private donations to be applied toward costs of other portions of the full Master Plan.

-- Consistent with our Decision Guidelines, the Master Plan proposal was developed in an unusually collaborative manner by a wide range of interested boards, groups and individuals, and appears to be directly responsive to each of the major concerns expressed at last year's Town Meeting concerning proposed work at Sprague Field. The Master Plan also met our guideline of offering substantial funding from sources other than the CPC.

-- Although the appropriation is substantially larger than any amount previously proposed by the Committee, we felt that the town-wide importance and broad community support of the Master Plan proposal merited this level of unusual support. We also believed that the amount recommended still leaves sufficient fund balances, coupled with future growth from revenue sources, to assist other important projects in coming years.

## **Morses Pond**

The second largest set of projects which have been funded through CPA funds relate to the preservation of Morses Pond for recreation and open space purposes. \$75,000 was appropriated in FY 2005 for development of the Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan for the preservation of the pond. In FY2007, \$250,000 was appropriated for a weed harvester and in FY2008 \$153,000 was appropriated for a phosphorous deactivation system for storm water runoff. Overall, these projects have been managed well below budget: the development of the plan and the purchase of the weed harvester were completed for \$61,000 less than the amounts appropriated, with the balance returned to the CPA Fund for future projects. However, it appears that the phosphorous inactivation system will cost somewhat more than was originally appropriated. Consequently, the CPC recommended and Town Meeting appropriated an additional \$7,500 for this projects. The entire CPA project funding for Morses Pond has been 50% from Open Space reserves and 50% for Recreation from undesignated reserves.

## **Other Projects Recommended to the 2008 ATM**

The CPC recommended and the 2008 Annual Town Meeting appropriated funds for three other projects from the Historic Resources reserve:

\$1,200 was appropriated for plaques designating the Sprague Clock Tower and the Hills Branch Library as listed on the National Register of Historic Places. CPA funds had previously been used to apply for these listings.

\$30,000 was appropriated for the preservation of marriage license records of the Town from 1881 to 2000.

\$296,000 was appropriated for deconstruction and preservation of elements of the Original Wellesley Town Hall (now contained within the Wellesley Country Club clubhouse which will be demolished later this year). The Historical Commission has been making a concerted effort to investigate the possibility of preserving the "historic core" of the Clubhouse, or as many of its structural elements as possible, for an appropriate adaptive reuse at another location. The project as envisioned would involve the disassembly and storage of at least the most historically significant structural elements of the building at an appropriate interim location, followed by the ultimate reuse of those elements in a new structure at a permanent location within the Town. During the presentation, discussion and approved of this project in April at Town Meeting, there was a frank recognition that the ultimate location and use for the material had not been settled, and that even the plans for initial deconstruction were quite preliminary and would require both negotiation of satisfactory arrangements with the Wellesley Country Club, development of a work plan satisfactory to a number of stakeholders, and successful solicitation of bids allowing the project to be completed within budget. However, the CPC felt and Town Meeting ultimately agreed that the unique importance of the Original Town Hall and the need to carry out any project before the building was demolished in Q4 2008 merited the Town working hard in an attempt to overcome these uncertainties.

\$10,000 was appropriated to retain a consultant in order to carry out a pre-survey of the existing inventories of historic and cultural resources and determine what information

needs to be added to them. The pre-survey will (1) assess the existing condition of properties already listed, (2) determine the accuracy and completeness of the information in the inventories, and what additional information is required, and (3) identify additional properties of historic or cultural significance that have not been surveyed. This information is essential if the Town is to proceed to the next stage of creating a strategic preservation plan. Recent event, including with the Wellesley Inn and the Original Town Hall make it clear that such a strategic preservation plan is critically needed for the Town to carry out effective activities to preserve our historic resources.

### **Looking Forward**

During the coming year, the Community Preservation Committee will continue to work diligently with other Town Boards and community organization to successfully implement already approved projects, consider new projects, and in particular to advance the process of generating long term strategic plans for historic resources, open space, recreation and affordable housing to guide a pro-active program to best utilize the substantial resources generated by the CPA surcharge and State matching funds.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jack Morgan, Chair  
Kathryn Bowry, Vice-Chair  
Bradley Boyd  
James Conlin  
Rose Mary Donahue  
Joan Gaughan  
Dona Kemp  
Theodore Parker  
Helen Robertson