

## **2. Crocker Farm Pre-School Playground — \$276,000?**

- **What is the exact amount of this CPA funds requested?**

The Crocker Farm Pre-School program is requesting that the total cost of playground rehabilitation—up to \$276,000—be covered by the CPA. The program is looking into ways to help share this cost, either through in-kind services and private donations, and other possible sources of funding. Earlier this year the program applied for and received a \$14,000 grant for outside storage equipment.

- **How does the \$276,000 budget compare to the cost of renovating the primary Crocker Farm playground several years ago or the cost of renovating the Wildwood playground some 10 years back?**

The primary Crocker Farm playground was renovated in 2009 and the cost was approximately \$80,000 dollars and \$45,000 dollars of in kind services. The costs were further reduced because additional equipment was moved from Marks Meadow School and landscaping costs were covered by the school as well as private donations. The Wildwood Playground has aged quickly and staff, student and parent turnover has been rapid so we do not have a lot of history about that playground. The play structure at Wildwood would not be compliant according to today's laws and standards; pressure treated lumber is not an approved material.

- **The proposal states that the preschool can serve up to 80 children, with 76 currently enrolled. What is the maximum number of children that would use the playground at any one time?**

The newly expanded space would be able to accommodate all 5 morning classes concurrently. Currently, only 2 classes can be on the playground at the same time.

- **This seems very lavish as proposed—For example, a Fossil Dig Pit for \$1500—why is this so expensive and how would it work?**

Much of the cost associated with the project is associated with making the space ADA compliant and accessible to the many students who attend the preschool program. Significant landscaping is necessary to make the surfaces accessible and functional. The range of play structures and pieces were selected by the preschool program through research and due diligence in order to have quality, durable pieces that work to meet the physical and social needs of the diverse student population.

A fossil dig pit is a number of precast concrete elements that look like actual fossils. These pieces integrate play and learning as they can be dug up on the playground and they also come with historical facts about fossils to be incorporated into a lesson. On the playground, they are

buried in sand at various depths and the kids can uncover them while exploring. The fossils can also be moved around during the year once they are “found” to encourage future exploration.

The attached spreadsheet provides an example of 15 playground improvement projects funded in part with by the CPA since 2012. The costs associated with the improvements varies, ranging from \$50,000 for one new play structure (Lincoln) to \$600,000 for a whole renovation (Cambridge and Stoughton).

**• Is this a permitted CPA project? I know that there is now allowable use of funds on non-CPA required land—but is such a school project OK?**

Yes, given that the play space would be open to the public after school hours. Other local communities including Sunderland and Deerfield have recently renovated their Elementary School playgrounds with CPA funds. Many other communities across the Commonwealth (Cambridge, Brewster, Barnstable, Hubbardston, Leverett, Lincoln, Longmeadow, Needham) have used CPA funds since 2012 to renovate school playgrounds. See attached spreadsheet for example projects.

**• The budget calls for \$6000 for new shade trees. To save money could trees be planted from the inventory of the Public Shade Tree Committee?**

Yes, shade trees from the Public Shade Tree Farm could be planted but they would be much smaller than the specifications. The plans call for 4” caliper trees that would be approximately 25’ in height and provide immediate shade while the public shade tree farm has trees that are much smaller and would not provide much shade until future years.

**• This is a very expensive project that does not appear to have been well maintained from the creation of the playground in 2001 until the present. Who will oversee that this project will be well maintained into the future? Will it be a Town or School responsibility?**

When Crocker Farm School was renovated, the Preschool play space was not considered. The building committee worked with the assumption that preschool students would share the back playgrounds with Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students. The front fenced area was constructed as a play space with only wood chips and no equipment, and had accessibility issues from the start. This play area was never fitted with proper equipment for Preschool children. Over the years, families donated pieces of backyard playground pieces that their children had outgrown and a makeshift playground was created. However, this does not meet current standards and regulations and many of these pieces have been removed. The space evolved into a highly utilized space as more students came into the program with medical, behavioral and/or physical needs that did not allow them to safely play on the back playground. Teachers and

staff have been concerned about the safety and inaccessibility of the space for years but, financial constraints prohibited earlier renovation.

Crocker Farm maintenance staff and Town of Amherst facilities have all been involved in the planning process and will be charged with maintaining the space going forward. Each year all playgrounds are consistently maintained. New England weather and playground materials require ongoing maintenance. Additionally, all play grounds are used heavily during and after school.

**• How have Crocker Farm teachers and parents been involved in the development of this proposal?**

Preschool Teachers and staff initiated the process in June 2014. There has been a team of up to fifteen teachers, staff and parents working on this project. Some are dual role teacher and special education parent. There has also been additional input by administration and special education professionals including Occupational and Physical Therapists. Parents have been apprised of the efforts and shown proposals throughout the process.

**• How can the cost of this project be reduced by using volunteer help and creative alternatives to some of the very elements (Engineered wood fiber mulch \$15,483, "Play" Boulders \$1250, Sand Box \$4,600, Shade Trees \$6,000, etc.)?**

Elements can be removed or replaced with less expensive units. However, the chosen units are specified because it was felt that these are the best for the students (past and present) being served by this play area. A high percentage of students in the preschool program have some type of physical, social or emotional need that can be supported and engaged by the specified elements.

**• Have local contractors, businesses, Amherst Garden Club, others been contacted for donations of funds, materials, or services?**

Curb to Curb Landscaping has generously agreed to help with the demolition work. The Preschool Program plans to contact additional businesses and private individuals/organizations this Fall to seek donations.

**• Which other local communities have preschool playgrounds and how to they compare with what is proposed here?**

Deerfield completed a total renovation of their preschool playground this summer at a cost of \$160,000 for design and equipment and estimated \$80-100,000 in donated time and equipment. The playground has a poured-in-place rubberized surface and a number of new play pieces and structures.

Other communities have playgrounds that combine preschool play space with other ages, making a direct comparison difficult. Belchertown, Greenfield and Northampton have recently updated playgrounds with similar facilities as well as additional amenities such as spray/splash areas and much larger play structures.

- **There is a large amount of money reserved for “Contractor O & P (15%)” and “Contingency (5%)” totaling \$46,160.11. Explain what this means. Why would the 15% & 5% include the \$97,590 in site furnishings?**

A standard Contractor Overhead and Profit “O & P” is anywhere between 12% up to 20%. The overhead and profit applies to materials that are purchased by the contractor. The contingency number of 5% is also very standard for a project like this. It covers any unforeseen conditions that might encounter during construction. An unforeseen condition might be finding unsuitable soils while installing the improvements.

- **Describe how the playgrounds at the other two elementary schools compare; how accessible they are; what are the plans for their improvement?**

Wildwood School and Fort River do not have Pre School programs so the equipment and playgrounds are different, being subjected to different rules and regulations by the State. In 2005 the older pressure treated structure at Fort River was removed by school and town staff and a new structure was installed. The playground at Wildwood is the oldest and will need updating in the next few years. The grounds at both schools are accessible with limited accessible equipment.

The Crocker Farm School Preschool Playground will be the only preschool specific playground in town, available for use by students at the preschool program and the public.

- **Also what is the plan for the playgrounds at the three main parks if any: Mill River, Groff and Community Field?**

Town staff and boards and committee continue to assess the existing parks and playgrounds. The newly appointed Town Center Recreation Working Group will be assessing Community Field along with the School fields in the next year and will develop recommendations for future improvements. At this time there are no immediate plans for improvements to these playgrounds.

- **Given the fact that the preschool has already received \$25,000 plus \$14,000, what is the reason this project must be funded now rather than during the regular funding cycle?**

Securing funding this Fall is vital to the timely completion of this project next summer. Because of the major landscaping involved and time needed for construction, the project will start in spring 2016 with the goal of being complete by the time school starts in the Fall. Waiting for the regular funding cycle would delay the project an additional year because funding would not be available until July and because of the lead time (3 months) it takes to procure services and finalize contracts.

Completing the project in the summer will be more cost effective and faster because fewer students (up to 30) use the preschool play area for summer school. During the school year, a contingency plan would need to be developed to provide appropriate play spaces for the 75 or so students who utilize the space the majority of the year.

Playground Improvement Projects Funded by CPA since 2012

Community	Year approved	Project Name	Description	CPA	Other	Total Cost
Leverett	2013	Leverett Elementary School Preschool Playground	Restoration of the preschool playground at the Leverett Elementary School by replacing the old wooden climbing structure, replacing the decaying split rail fence, and acquiring a now-required sand box cover.	\$ 17,000		\$ 17,000
Lincoln	2014	Smith School Playground	Replacement of existing structure that was installed in 1994	\$ 50,000		\$ 50,000
Needham	2013	Newman Preschool Playground Surfacing	Replace surfacing at Newman Preschool Playground with poured-in-place rubber surface.	\$ 60,000		\$ 60,000
Longmeadow	2013	Center School Playground Equipment Replacement	To replace various playground equipment and rubberized surfaces at Center School. A portion of the playground at Center School is supposed to be a grassy area. Since the school was renovated in 1995, three attempts to restore grass to this area have been unsuccessful. The purpose of this project is to remove 8 inches of highly compacted gravel and replace with subsoil and loam prior to seeding. This project will also replace the irrigation system which failed long ago.	\$ 87,500		\$ 87,500
Sunderland	2014	Sunderland Elementary School Playground	To resurface, remodel and equip the only playground in town. Project includes improving drainage, adding accessible elements, improving safety and adding more opportunities for recreation.	\$ 95,578	\$ 22,904	\$ 118,482
Hubbardston	2013	Center School Playground	Build a playground at Hubbardston Center School including installation of equipment, fencing and footing.	\$ 40,000	\$ 83,000	\$ 123,000
Barnstable	2014	Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School Playground	Rehabilitation and capital improvements to play structures including handicapped accessible structures and features for the Barnstable Community Horace Mann Charter Public School	\$ 60,000	\$ 71,000	\$ 131,000
North Andover	2014	Sargent School Playground	Replacement of existing equipment at Sargent School playground	\$ 92,300	\$ 60,000	\$ 152,300
Deerfield	2014	Community Playground	Community Playground and Structure; Upgrading of Play Equipment; Installation of Seating and Shade Areas.	\$ 160,000		\$ 160,000
Holliston	2012	Miller School Playground	Support the funding of a new playground equipment structure and surface.	\$ 90,484	\$ 124,968	\$ 215,452
Boxford	2013	Cole School Playground	To fund site preparation and construction of a new pre-school playground and a new elementary school playground at the Cole School	\$ 222,000	\$ 8,000	\$ 230,000
Cambridge	2012	Graham and Parks School Palyground	Accessibility upgrades to the playground area of the Graham and Parks School in Neighborhoods Nine.	\$ 300,000		\$ 300,000
Brewster	2013	Recreation: 5. Eddy Elementary School Playground: Additional Accessibility	The total project is to redesign, improve and replace site elements at Eddy Elementary School in order to create a safe, innovative, and visually appealing recreational play space. The CPA funds were approved for a portion of the project - to design and install an accessible playground on the Eddy School grounds. The specific components of the project covered by Community Preservation funding includes playground site preparation, playground components with installation, playground surfacing, fencing around the playground, and other playground elements such as benches, tables and pavers up to the \$200,000.00 approved. Since the initial application, the Playground subcommittee has improved accessibility of the playground via ramps and by adding wheelchair-accessible components. The new elements of the project include these redesigned elements, plus installation of a fence surrounding the playground and along two sides of the sitting area, as well as benches, tables and pavers for the sitting area.	\$ 239,400	\$ 189,400	\$ 428,800
Cambridge	2013	Haggerty School (playground)	Renovations of schoolyard playground including equipment, surfacing, and other features.	\$ 600,000		\$ 600,000
Stoughton	2013, 2014	Pierce Street Playground Rehabilitation	Architectural services for the final design, construction and bid documents for the replacement / refurbishment of the CAPP playground on Pierce street in Stoughton. Rehabilitation of the Pierce Street Playground.	\$ 610,000		\$ 610,000