



# AMHERST *Massachusetts*

## COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT COMMITTEE

### COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT COMMITTEE (CPAC) REPORT TO FALL SPECIAL TOWN MEETING NOVEMBER 2015 ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016

The Community Preservation Act Committee is pleased to present this report to Fall Town Meeting.

At the Annual Town Meeting there was \$841,633 recommended, approved and voted for the FY2016 budget cycle. At the Fall Town Meeting we are recommending two additional projects totaling \$430,148 for the FY 16 funding year. These projects were brought to CPAC this summer 2015. The North Common project is contingent on a P.A.R.C. Grant. The CPA Committee strongly urges the Preschool project applicants to seek additional funding to reduce the total amount to come from CPA funds. The opportunity to match grant funds with local CPA dollars strengthens these proposals. The CPAC voted unanimously to recommend these projects. The total CPA funds appropriated for the FY2016 budget will be \$1,271,781, with Town Meeting approval.

	<b>A. Crocker Farm Preschool Playground</b>	<b>B. North Common</b>
CPA Funds	\$240,000	\$190,148
Grant	14,000	400,000
JCPC (Town)	25,000	
Total	\$279,000	\$590,148
Town CPA Match	86%	32%

## ARTICLE 10 Community Preservation Act

### Historical Preservation and Recreation

#### **A. North Common, \$190,148 (CPAC Vote 9-0)**

The Town requested funds to help with the historic rehabilitation of the North Common to provide the community with a more flexible, programmable space that continues to respect the historic integrity of a landscape that is central to the civic and social activity of Amherst's downtown. The funds requested are to hire a professional engineering/landscape architecture firm to complete a revitalized design of the North Common as well as funds for construction to implement the design and improvements.

Rehabilitation of the North Common will follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Cultural Landscapes, which defines Rehabilitation as standards that acknowledge the need to alter or add to a cultural landscape to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the landscape's historic character.

Based on a detailed analysis completed by the engineering staff at the Department of Public Works (DPW) the costs include design and engineering, drafting of plans, construction oversight and the cost of construction with prevailing wage.

The Town submitted a Parkland Acquisition and Renovation for Communities (PARC) grant application in July 2015 to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation Services (DCS). The grant reimburses seventy percent (70%) of the total project cost up to \$400,000, so that the final expenditure by the Town would be \$190,148, contingent upon receipt of the grant funding.

The opportunity to match grant funds with local CPA dollars for the North Common made this a very compelling proposal.

The PARC grant and CPA funds would be spent over two fiscal years, with a specific amount for design the first year and the remaining balance for construction during the second year.

Phase I Design: December 2015 - June 30, 2016      \$ 50,000

Phase II Construction: July 1, 2016 –June 30, 2017      \$540,148

## **B. Crocker Farm Pre-School Playground, \$240,000 (CPAC Vote 9-0)**

The development of a new playground addresses the dire need for an appropriate play space for the preschool children who are enrolled in the Amherst Public Schools Preschool Program, located at Crocker Farm Elementary School. This is the only public playground for preschool aged children in Amherst. The ARPS Preschool Programs have been located at Crocker Farm since the addition was built in 2001. There is a fenced in play yard that is not ADA accessible, does not meet state and national playground standards for early childhood, and does not provide preschool age children with the kind of stimulating motor and social interactions that are critical for their overall development.

The funds are requested at this time so that construction can begin immediately following the end of the school year in June 2016; it cannot wait until July because of the estimated duration of construction.

While there are two additional playgrounds at Crocker Farm, they are both designed for children ages 5 – 12. Preschool children with significant motor delays are not able to access the play structures and equipment. Also, both are located near parking lots and lack fencing, which is a state and federal requirement for early childhood play spaces.

A June 2014 review of the space found that the play yard equipment was not in compliance with State and Federal guidelines, posed significant safety risks to the

children. Equipment that was found to be deficient—which was most of the play structures meant for homes such as plastic slides not secured to the ground, sandbox, large plastic vehicles—has since been removed, thereby limiting ways students and the public can engage in play that develops a range of muscle groups and facilitates pretend play.

The goal is to have a safe ADA compliant and accessible playground with materials that meet current standards and regulations and are open-ended and provide children with the opportunity to develop a variety of skills including:

- large and small muscle motor activities
- social skills as they plan and play together
- executive functioning as develop a play plan and then follow-through
- math and science skills and concepts, as they use sand and water materials, and access raised garden beds to learn about life science
- communication, as they have opportunities to communicate with one another as they participate in pretend play, negotiate turn-taking and sharing of equipment and materials.

This will benefit all children and all learners—preschool aged children from the community and public—as the design and materials address areas of early childhood development that benefit this age group. All children will be able to access and use this equipment and materials. This play space would be open to the public outside of school hours as are all other school playgrounds.

The 2015 Annual Town Meeting voted \$25,000 in Joint Capital Planning Funds toward this project. In addition the Amherst Education Foundation awarded a grant of \$14,000 to purchase “Outlast Blocks” for the playground.

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**Respectfully submitted:**

Marilyn Blaustein	at Large	253-5963
Paris Boice (Vice Chair)	Conservation Commission	687-2048
Jim Brissette	LSSE Commission	
Peter Jessop	Housing Authority	549-1440
Laura Lovett	Historical Commission	
Jim Oldham	at Large	
Pari Riahi	Planning Board	695-8969
Diana Stein	at Large	253-7690
Mary Streeter (Chair)	at Large	253-2441