

# Historic Grafton Common Improvements Plan - 2019



**Submitted by the Historic District Commission:**

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**John Morgan - Chair  
Bill Nicholson - Vice Chair  
Paul Scarlett - Clerk  
Brad Schlapak  
John Stephens**

# Introduction

As the town of Grafton continues to grow, the importance of our quintessentially New England town common must be considered. For centuries, Grafton Common has served as a central location for recreation, farmers markets, concerts, town events, weddings and more. It is a beautiful and unique setting that enhances our entire community.

The Common has seen many changes over the course of centuries: pathway configurations and materials, plantings, fencing, lighting styles and even the bandstand have been somewhat altered with time. The Historic District Commission (HDC), as stewards of this town-owned asset, see a pressing need for the Town to address a lack of adequate lighting, degrading unattractive and historically inappropriate asphalt pathways, a bandstand and fencing in need of repairs and painting, as well as benches and trash barrels that are either worn out, inadequate in number, or both.

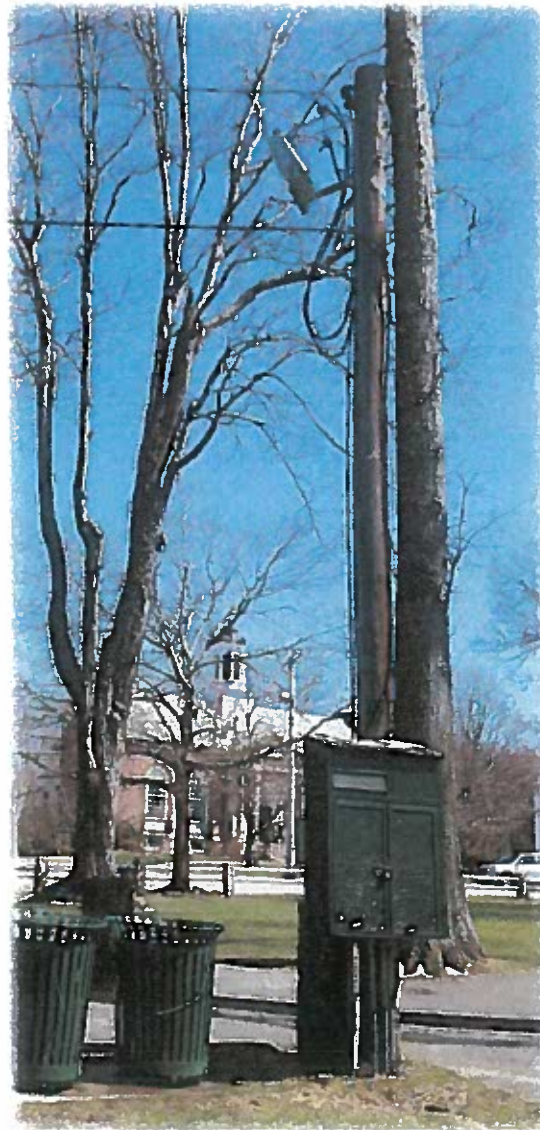
Addressing these items requires a master plan that takes into account the growth of our community and the need to maintain the historic charm and functionality of our Common.



# Identifying the problems

Over time, Grafton Common has been subtly changed to fit the needs of the Town. As a result, certain aspects of the park no longer serve as part of a unified design but, rather, serve as a collection of disparate elements. The following bullet points outline the problem areas that need to be addressed.

- Unattractive electric utilities visible in center of park.
- No real lighting; the only light in the park is a single light on a telephone pole.





- An inadequate number of benches that have no unity of design or historic relevance.
- Current benches are placed far from walkways and in seemingly random locations.



- Pathways are unattractive asphalt that is not a historically relevant material befitting an historic district.
- The bandstand and fence railings are in need of painting and repair.



- Trash barrels are sparsely located and should match the benches to create unity of design throughout the Common.





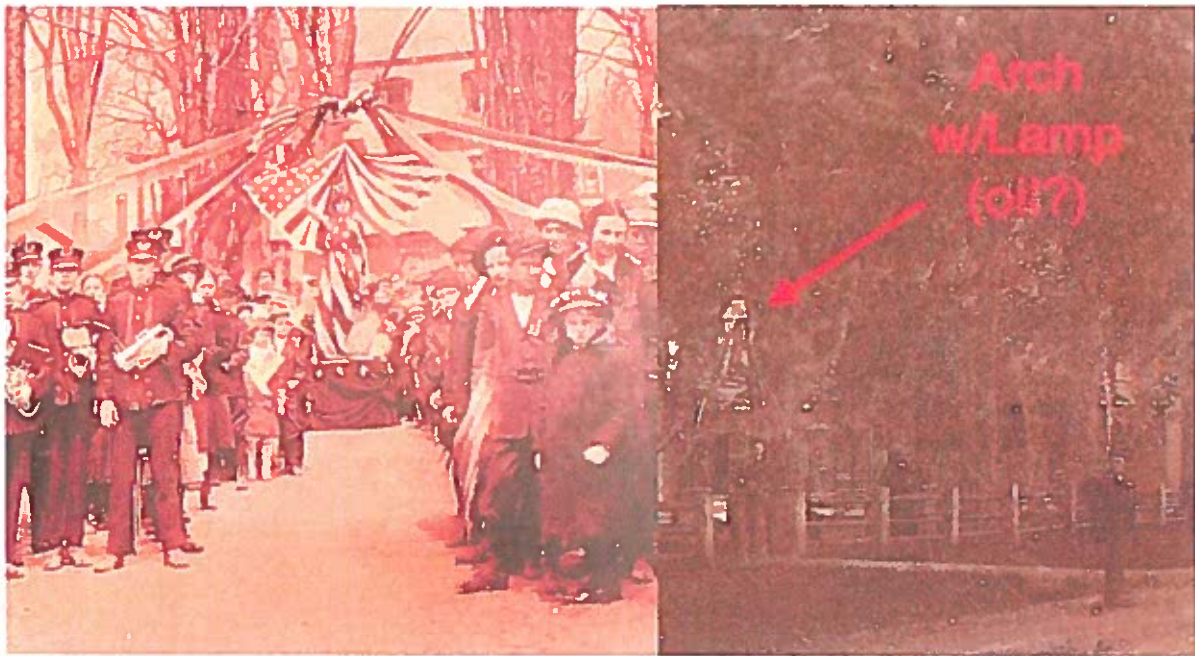
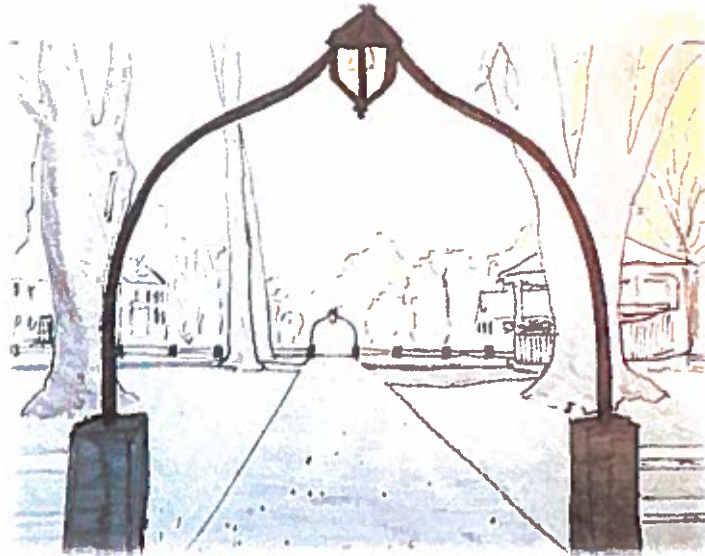
- Old trees have started to die off, leaving large empty spots in the Common. Some trees have been replaced with exotic invasive tree species that are harmful to the grass and not historically appropriate.



# Proposed Improvements...

- Remove asphalt pathways and replace with brick. This will create a permeable walking surface using an historically accurate material.
- Move utilities underground and remove unattractive pole and relocate junction box.
- Expand brick area in the center of the Common to create a half circle: this will create a central destination and a unity of design, as well as creating a larger viewing area for the bandstand.
- Remove old benches and replace with an increased number of new historic-style benches throughout the Common. This will invite people to stop and sit, making the park more user friendly.
- Add historic-style lighting. This will not only create a safer environment but will allow for extended hours of use while also creating an historic feel.
- Install lighted metal archways at each entrance to the Common. Entrance archways were once a key feature to the Common that unfortunately were lost to time. Reintroduction of this unique and very noticeable feature will enhance the beauty and historical integrity of the Common.
- Install historic-style trash barrels that align with the look and feel of the new benches and lighting.
- Repair and repaint the bandstand and fence railings.
- Remove exotic/invasive Norway maples and replace them with historically accurate native species such as red maples. This is an investment in the future not only of the Common but for the region as well.
- Add trees along walkways where they are missing.

# Bringing Back the Past...



The top illustration is a conceptual drawing of a lighted metal archway that is being proposed to be installed at each of the four entrances to the Common. These archways will be designed to mirror the ones that once stood in these locations. The two photographs (courtesy of the Grafton Historical Society) are among the very few showing what the original archways looked like.



# Revitalized Pathways and Expanded Brick Area...

- Walkways will leverage a historical building material to provide ADA appropriate accessibility and a beautiful new look for the Common.



# New Lighting...

- The addition of new lighting in a historic style will create a safer space and extend the use of the grounds as well as improve the overall ambiance of the park. These new lampposts will complement the planned entrance archways and also align nicely with the lighting fixtures in place at the Congregational Church and Town House.



# New Benches...

- A classic style of bench such as this one shown in both a traditional and backless variety using synthetic wood slats.





# New Trash Barrels...



# Budget

- This budget reflects current market prices for goods and services and is based on estimates provided by local contractors, designers and engineers.

Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Cost
Bid documents and construction details	N/A	N/A	8,000
Electrical engineering	N/A	N/A	18,000
Excavation and site prep*	N/A	N/A	52,000
Labor for brick installation	N/A	N/A	351,000
Cost of brick	6,500 sq. ft.	7	45,500
New lights on poles	10	3,000	30,000
New light fixtures for archways	4	1,700	6,800
New custom archways for entrances with installation	4	3,125	12,500
New granite posts to mount arches	8	1,593	12,740
Cost of electrical installation	N/A	N/A	48,200
New benches	16	681	10,896
New trash receptacles	6	595	3,570
Shipping for benches and trash barrels	1	N/A	1,691
Installation of benches and trash barrels*	N/A	N/A	4,420
Oak trees 3.5 inch caliper	8	460	3,680
Maple trees 3.5 inch caliper	8	470	3,760
Slow release watering bags for trees	16	19	304
Removal of problem trees and installation of new trees*	N/A	N/A	6,000
Paint	30	40	1,200
Repair and painting*	N/A	N/A	5,616
Contingency 15%	N/A	N/A	93,882
Subtotal	N/A	N/A	719,759
Less In-Town/In-Kind Services	N/A	N/A	68,036
<b>Total</b>	N/A	N/A	<b>651,723</b>





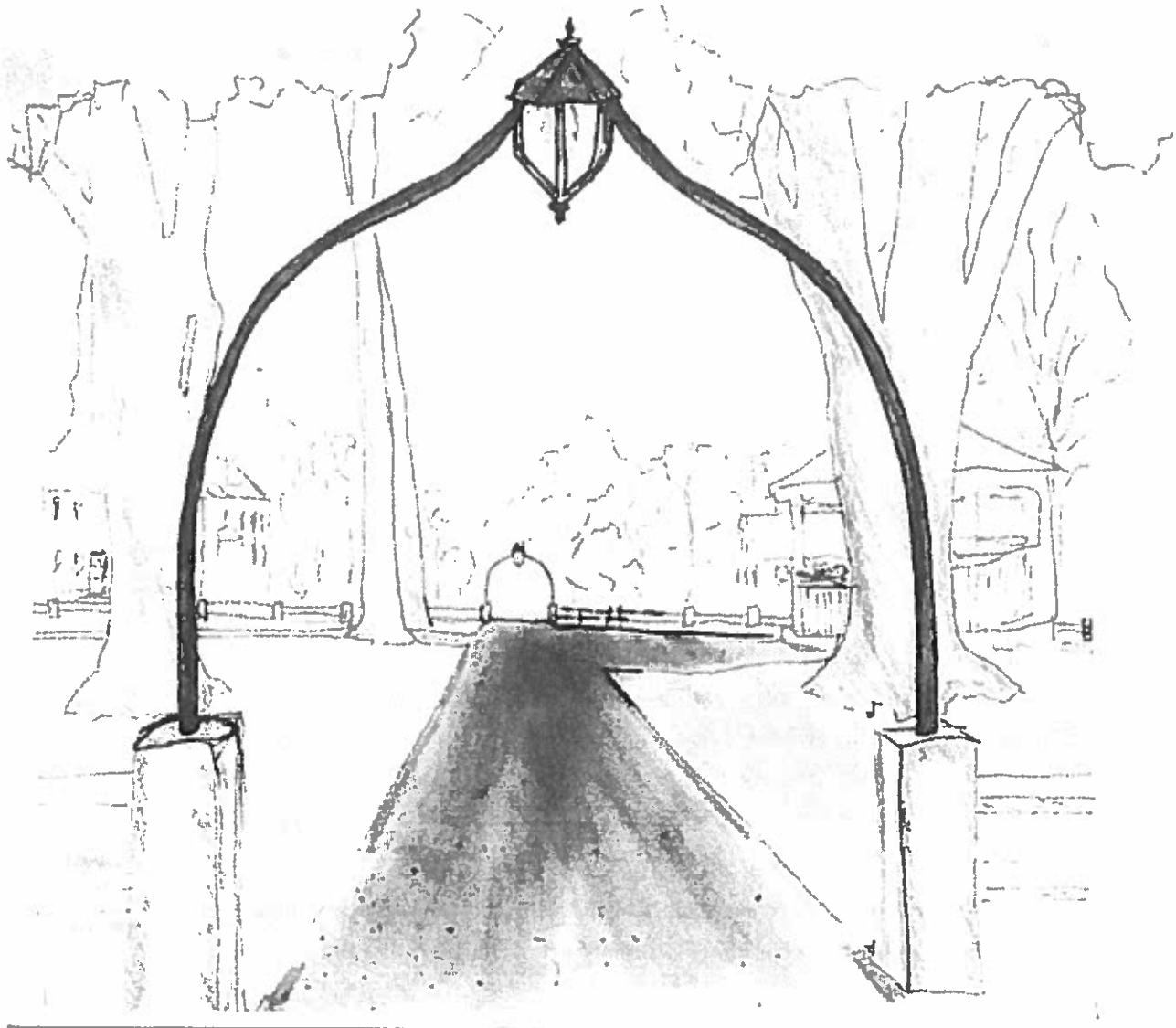
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\*Denotes work designated for completion as an in-kind service.





# Grafton Common Improvements Plan

Grafton Historic District Commission

February 28, 2019

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Objective

The Grafton Historic District Commission (HDC) is dedicated to preserving what is one of the most intact town commons in the state of Massachusetts. While the Grafton Common Historic District includes the surrounding buildings, this project is specifically focused on the Common itself, which is a focal point and source of pride for this community. Through the use of historically relevant materials and designs that leverage modern technologies, the HDC has developed a plan for updating and enhancing the Common to create a safer more user-friendly park that preserves and even enhances its historic integrity by both introducing and bringing back some highly visible features.

## Issues

Currently, the pathways within the Common are paved with asphalt, which is unattractive and not a historically appropriate material choice and thus detracts significantly from the overall look and feel of this historic setting. The Common only has one large and unattractive light on an electric pole in the center of the park, which is inadequate lighting from a safety perspective and also takes away from the ambiance of the Common. Electrical service is provided via a large wooden box mounted to this same light pole further diminishing the beauty of this setting. There are a limited number of benches within the Common and those present lack a unity of design and are also not historically relevant. Trash receptacles are too limited in number. Certain historic elements have also been lost to time, including lit archways that once framed each entrance. Finally, over the years trees have died and been replaced with invasive and non-historically accurate species. These trees pose problems for grass growth and, in some instances, detract from the Common's original design.

## Solution

Remove asphalt and replace with clay bricks. Add new lights with an historic design and modern technology. Remove the electrical pole and place the electrical wires underground. Install a new electrical service in a less obtrusive location. Remove all benches and replace and add to these new benches with a single style reflecting the historic character of the Common. Replace and add to the number of trash barrels using a consistent style that enhances rather than detracts from the aesthetics of the park. Fabricate and install new archway lighting reflecting the original design that once adorned each entrance. Finally, create and implement a long-term plan for removal and replacement of invasive tree species with historically relevant species where feasible.

*See attached updated Executive Summary*

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## **Grafton Common Improvements Plan to be Decided at Town Meeting**

A plan for significant improvements to the historic Grafton Common is among the warrant articles up for consideration at this spring's town meeting. The proposed plan is being put forth by the Historic District Commission (HDC), a town government entity entrusted with preserving the Grafton Common Historic District, which is one of the most intact town commons within the state of Massachusetts.

Using historically relevant materials and designs leveraging modern technologies, the HDC has developed a plan for creating a safer more user-friendly park that they advise will both preserve and enhance its historic integrity.

The proposed plans include the return of lit archways that once framed each entrance to the park along with the addition of lampposts to provide both safely lit walkways and ambiance. Also included are the replacement of existing asphalt walkways with clay brick, moving electric and cable services underground, new benches and trash barrels, bandstand and fence repairs/painting, and the implementation of a long-term plan for tree planting to align with the Common's original design.

These improvements will improve safety while enhancing both the historical relevance and aesthetic beauty of the Common. The functionality of the park will not be impacted by these improvements. Access to the Common will not be impeded by the archways nor by the use of brick for the walkways. Brick is one of only two historically appropriate materials available and the only one that is ADA compliant. While the initial cost to install brick is higher than some non-historically appropriate alternatives, it wears far better over time and will look beautiful for generations.

Funding for the project is the subject of the aforementioned town meeting warrant. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is putting forth an article recommending use of \$651,723 in Community Preservation Act (CPA) dollars to pay for this work. This funding is to be augmented with in-kind services to cover the balance of the estimated \$720,000 total cost of the project.

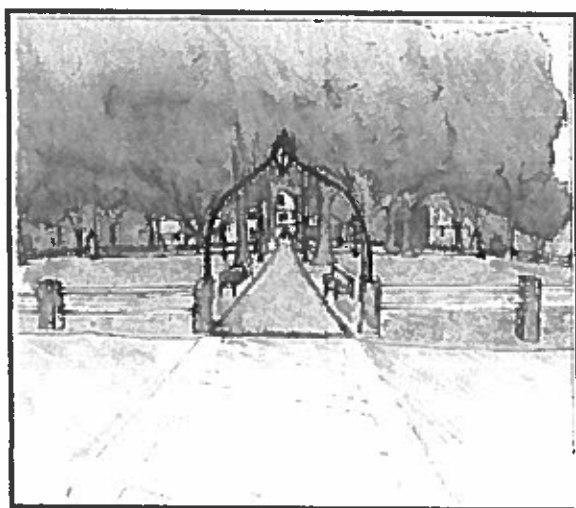
CPA monies derive from a 1.5% property tax surcharge and state matching dollars set aside exclusively for use on projects involving historic preservation, open space, recreation and/or affordable housing. The intent of the CPA is to provide a funding mechanism for these types of projects, which otherwise typically have a difficult time getting completed.



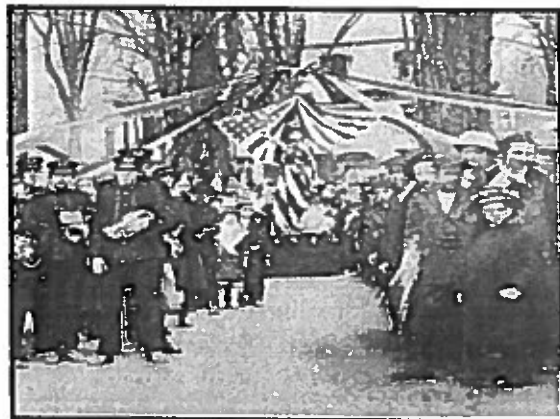
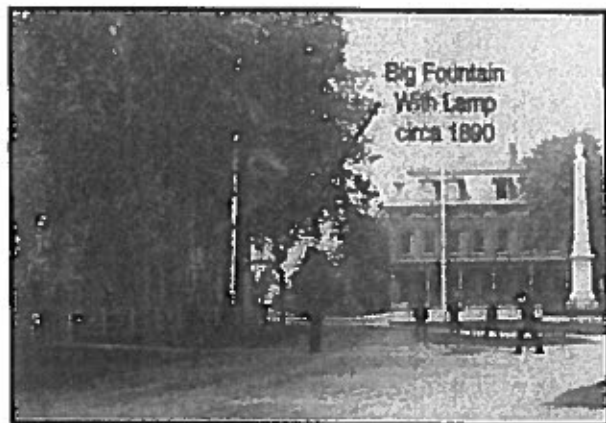


# HISTORIC GRAFTON COMMON

*PRESERVING OUR PAST...*



*TO ENJOY INTO THE FUTURE...*



# BUDGET

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COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Application for Community Preservation Funding  
(Application Cover Page)

DATE: 2/28/19

APPLICANT NAME: Grafton Historical Commission

ADDRESS: 30 Providence Rd.  
Grafton MA 01519

PHONE: 508-864-9675

EMAIL: capnscarlett@yahoo.com

SITE INFORMATION

PROJECT NAME: Grafton Common Improvements Plan

FULL ADDRESS: Grafton Common has no mailing address  
other than the Town Offices, 30  
Providence Rd., Grafton MA 01519

★ ASSESSOR'S MAP # LOT# N/A

PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: Town of Grafton MA.

★ Deed recorded in the Worcester District Registry of Deeds in Book: N/A Page: N/A

CPA CATEGORY (check all that apply)

Open Space  Historic Preservation  Recreation  Community Housing

★ Total Project Cost  CPA Funding Request

Project Summary (a detailed description will be required with your supporting information)

See attached proposal.

★ Project Budget:

Fiscal Year

2019

2020

Total Project Cost

\$ 719,759

CPA Funds Requested

\$ 651,723

Other Funding

Sources

\$ 68,036

2021  
2022  
2023

	—	—	—
	—	—	—
	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 719,759</b>	<b>\$ 651,723</b>	<b>\$ 68,036</b>

For Community Preservation Committee Use:

Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_ Approved Town Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_ Sunset Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

### Guidelines for Project Submission

- Project requests must be submitted via email to: [duncanj@graffton-ma.gov](mailto:duncanj@graffton-ma.gov) or in writing (10 copies) to the Community Preservation Committee.
- Requests must include a statement of need and be documented with appropriate support information. The use of maps, visual aids and other supplemental information is encouraged.
- Obtain quotes for project costs whenever possible. If not available, estimates may be used provided the basis of the estimate is fully explained.
- Requests must be received at least three months prior to the spring or fall semi-annual Town Meeting. Complex projects may need more advance time.
- If the request is part of a multi- year project, include the total project cost and allocations.
- For applicants that have multiple project requests, please prioritize projects.
- Applicants must be present at a CPC meeting to answer questions. The CPC meets the second Tuesday of each month.

Please note that there are legal limitations on the use of CPA funds. Additional information on the CPA and the Community Preservation Committee can be found at [www.communitypreservation.org](http://www.communitypreservation.org). If you are in doubt about your project's eligibility you are encouraged to submit an application so that the Committee can determine eligibility.

Please submit the project proposal and accompanying documentation to:

Community Preservation Committee  
Grafton Municipal Center  
30 Providence Road  
Grafton, MA 01519



## General Criteria

The Grafton Community Preservation Committee will give preference to proposals which address as many of the following general criteria as possible:

- Are eligible for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding according to the requirements described in the CPA legislation; specifically:
  - The acquisition, creation, and preservation of open space.
  - The acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic resources.
  - The acquisition, creation, and preservation of land for recreational use.
  - The creation, preservation, and support of community housing (including items such as annual payments to the housing authority to preserve or expand the affordable housing supply).
  - The rehabilitation and restoration of open space, land for recreational use, and community housing that is acquired or created using monies from the fund.
  - Is consistent with the current Master Plan and other planning documents that have received wide scrutiny and input and have been adopted by the town;
  - Preserve the essential character of the town as described in the Master Plan;
  - Save resources that would otherwise be threatened and/or serve a currently underserved population;
  - Either serve more than one CPA purpose (especially in linking open space, recreation and community housing) or demonstrate why serving multiple needs is not feasible;
  - Demonstrate practicality and feasibility, and demonstrate that they can be implemented expeditiously and within budget;
  - Produce an advantageous cost/benefit value;
  - Leverage additional public and/or private funds;
  - Preserve or utilize currently owned town assets; and
  - Receive endorsement by other municipal boards or departments.

## Category Specific Criteria

**Open Space** proposals which address as many of the following specific criteria as possible will receive preference:

- Permanently protect important wildlife habitat, including areas that:
  - are of local significance for biodiversity;

- contain a variety of habitats, with a diversity of geologic features and types of vegetation;
- contain a habitat type that is in danger of vanishing from Grafton; or
- preserve habitat for threatened or endangered species of plants or animals.
- Preserve Grafton's rural and agricultural character.
- Provide opportunities for passive recreation and environmental education.
- Protect or enhance wildlife corridors, promote connectivity of habitat or prevent fragmentation of habitats.
- Provide connections with existing trails or potential trail linkages.
- Preserve scenic views.
- Border a scenic road.
- Protect drinking water quantity and quality.
- Provide flood control/storage.
- Preserve important surface water bodies, including wetlands, vernal pools or riparian zones.
- Preserve a primary or secondary priority parcel in the Open Space Plan.

**Historical** proposals which address as many of the following criteria as possible will receive preference:

- Protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate historic, cultural, architectural or archaeological resources of significance, especially those that are threatened;
- Protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate town-owned properties, features or resources of historical significance;
- Protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate the historical function of a property or site;
- Project is within a Grafton Historic District, on a State or National Historic Register, or eligible for placement on such registers, or on the Grafton Historic Properties Survey;
- Project demonstrates a public benefit; or
- Project demonstrates the ability to provide permanent protection for maintaining the historic resource.

**Affordable Housing** proposals which address as many of the following criteria as possible will receive preference:

- Contribute to the goal of achieving 10% affordable housing;
- Promote a socioeconomic environment that encourages a diversity of income, ethnicity, religion and age;
- Provide housing that is harmonious in design and scale with the surrounding community;
- Intermingle affordable and market rate housing at levels that exceed state requirements for percentage of affordable units;
- Ensure long-term affordability;
- Promote use of existing buildings or construction on previously-developed or Town-owned sites;
- Convert market rate to affordable units; or
- Give priority to local residents, Town employees, and employees of local businesses.

**Recreation** proposals which address as many of the following criteria as possible will receive preference:

- Support multiple active and passive recreation uses;
- Serve a significant number of residents;
- Expand the range of recreational opportunities available to Grafton residents of all ages;
- Jointly benefit Conservation Commission and Park and Recreation Commission initiatives by promoting a variety of recreational activities;
- Maximize the utility of land already owned by Grafton (e.g. school property); or
- Promote the creative use of railway and other corridors to create safe and healthful non-motorized transportation opportunities.

## Funding Rating General Criteria

The project must meet all the legal criteria of the Community Preservation Act. The project must be well documented and provide sufficient information to be feasible. The following criteria will be considered as the project is evaluated. However, meeting all of the criteria does not guarantee CPC support for the project. In addition to filling out the Funding Rating General Criteria, there are individual category rating criteria.

Answer each line as it applies (Yes/ No):

- 1.) Does the project have other sources of funding? *Yes*  
If so, indicate percentage: *~10%*
- 2.) Does the project require urgent attention? *No.*
- 3.) Does the project serve a currently underserved population? *No.*
- 4.) Does the project preserve a threatened resource? *No.*
- 5.) Is the project consistent with existing Grafton Planning Documents such as the Master Plan or Open Space Plan? *Yes.*
- 6.) Does the project fit within the current or already proposed zoning regulations? *Yes.*
- 7.) Does the project have a means of support for maintenance and upkeep? *Yes.*
- 8.) Does the project involve currently owned municipal assets? *Yes.*
- 9.) Does the project have two other sources of funding? *Yes.*

- 10.) Does the project have more than two other sources of funding? *No.*
- 11.) Does the project involve two core concerns of the CPA? *Yes.*
- 12.) Does the project involve all three-core concerns of the CPA? *Yes.*
- 13.) Does the project have community support? *Yes.*
- 14.) Does the project have sufficient supporting documentation? *Yes.*
- 15.) Does the project have support from another Board or Committee? *Yes.*
- 16.) Does the project provide a positive impact to the community? *Yes.*
- 17.) Does the project have the support of the majority of immediate abutters? *Yes.*
- 18.) Does the project reclaim abandoned or previously developed lands? *No.*
- 19.) Does the project require special permitting? *No.*

## Open Space Criteria for Parcel Selection

Answer each line as it applies to the parcel of land under consideration (Yes/ No):

- 1.) Is it within a delineated wellhead protection area? *No.*  
If so, is it Zone I or Zone II? *~*
- 2.) Would it enhance protection of a wellhead area? *~ No.*
- 3.) Is it within Grafton's water protection overlay system? *No.*
- 4.) Is wetland protection a consideration? *No.*
- 5.) Is vernal pool protection a consideration? *No.*
- 6.) Is stream and bank protection an issue? *No.*
- 7.) Is this an Area of Critical Environmental Concern? *No.*
- 8.) Is this project within the Natural Heritage Endangered Zone? *Not sure.*
- 9.) Would this proposal contribute to a Greenway? *Not sure*
- 10.) Would this proposal contribute to forested land? *No.*

- 11.) Would this proposal enhance protection of any FEMA designated floodway? *No.*
- 12.) Will this purchase protect other parcels? *N/A.*
- 13.) Does this parcel abut protected land? *No.*
- 14.) Does this parcel support a significant wildlife habitat? *No.*
- 15.) Is this parcel at risk for development? *No.*
- 16.) Is this parcel listed for sale? *No.*
- 17.) Did this parcel have a past proposal for development? *No.*
- 18.) Are grants available? If so has application been made? *Yes, but no as would require a preservation restriction.*
- 19.) Is there a historic significance to this parcel? *Yes.*
- 20.) Are there any old foundations located in this parcel? *No.*
- 21.) Are stone walls located within this parcel? *No.*
- 22.) Does this parcel house any old roads, trails, cart paths, or scenic vistas? *Yes.*
- 23.) Are there any active or passive recreation possibilities associated with this parcel? *Yes.*
- 24.) Is this parcel suitable for a community garden or farm? *No.*
- 25.) Is this parcel suitable for nature observation and educational programs? *Yes.*

## Historic Preservation Selection Criteria

Answer each line as it applies (Yes/ No):

- 1.) Is the ~~building~~ <sup>land</sup> on the National Register of Historic Places? *The land is.*
- 2.) Is the property eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places? *See above*
- 3.) Is the property on the State Historic Register? *Yes*
- 4.) Is the property eligible for listing on the State Historic Register? *See above*
- 5.) Has the property been included in the local Survey of Historic Properties? *Not sure.*



6.) Is the property in danger of being demolished? *No.*

7.) Are there potential archeological artifacts at the site? *No.*

8.) Has the property been noted in published histories of the town or county? *Yes.*

9.) Is there a realistic chance of restoring the property? *Yes.*

10.) Are there other potential uses for the property, which could benefit the town? *No.*

11.) Could the building be converted for affordable housing use while still retaining its' historic quality? *N/A*

12.) Is the property part of an historic area or district in the town? *Yes.*

13.) Is the owner also interested in preserving the historic integrity of the property? *Yes.*

14.) Is there an opportunity for other matching funding to preserve the property?

Explain: *Perhaps through an MPPF grant but these are not a source for significant funding and require implementation of a preservation restriction and for the level of funding provide*

15.) Are there any particularly important historic aspects about the property? *May not be worth it. Too numerous to list.*

16.) Was a known architect of the era involved in the design of the structure?  
*N/A.*

17.) Did the property ever play a documented role in the history of the town?  
*Yes.*

## Affordable Housing Selection Criteria

Answer each line as it applies (Yes/ No):

1.) Will this involve the renovation of an existing building? If so, *No.*

Is the building structurally sound?

Is it free of lead paint? (This would be necessary if children are to live there).

Is it free of asbestos, pollutants, and other hazards?

Is there Town sewerage?

Is the septic system in compliance with Title 5?

Does the building comply with building and sanitary codes?

Is it handicap accessible?

Is this a conversion of market rate to affordable housing?

Is this a tax title property?

2.) Does this project involve the building of a new structure? If so, *No.*

Will the structure be built on tax title property?

Will it be built on Town-owned land?

Will it be built on donated land?

Are there other grants available to help fund this project?

Explain:

Are there other programs, such as Habitat for Humanity, involved?

Will the project be built on a previously developed site?

3.) Does the project provide housing that is similar in design and scale with the surrounding community? *No.*

4.) Does this serve the 60% income level population?

5.) Does this serve the 80% income level population?

6.) Will this be geared to one age group?

7.) Is this infill development?

8.) Will there be more than two bedrooms?

9.) Will it be located near conveniences (grocery, mass transit, etc.)?

10.) Does this project fit with the Master Plan?

11.) Will there be multiple units?

12.) Is long-term affordability assured?

13.) Will priority be given to local residents, Town employees, or employees of local businesses?

## Recreation Criteria for Rating CPC Proposals

Answer each line as it applies (Yes/ No):

1.) Will the project be used by more than one age group? *Yes.*

2.) Can the project be used for more than one activity (multiuse)? *Yes.*

3.) Does the project require maintenance costs of less than \$1000 per year? *~~Yes.~~*

4.) Does the project require maintenance costs of less than \$500 per year?

5.) Would more than 12 participants normally use the project at once? *Yes.*

6.) Would more than 20 participants normally use the project at once? *Yes.*

*will not alter  
existing maintenance  
costs.*

- 7.) Is this project the first of its kind in the town? Yes.
- 8.) Is this project the first of its kind in the county? Not sure.
- 9.) Can the project be used by the participants unsupervised by an adult? Yes.
- 10.) Are grants available to help pay for the construction? See prior comments, we plan to obtain Town/In Kind services to offset cost.
- If so, has application been made for the grant? No.
- 11.) Can at least 10% of the cost be done by "In Kind Services"? Yes.
- 12.) Can at least 25% of the cost be done by "In Kind Services"? No.
- 13.) Does the project include considerations for additional parking? No.
- 14.) Can the project be used more than 1 of the 4 seasons per year? Yes.
- 15.) Does the project match the look of the surrounding areas? Yes.
- 16.) Does the project include all normal safety considerations? Yes.
- 17.) Does the project meet all building and safety codes? Yes.
- 18.) Is the project accessible by pedestrians? Yes cars? No
- 19.) Does the project take advantage of connections to other resources? Yes.