

September 12, 2009

Town of Rockport
Community Preservation Committee



COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PROGRAM AND ANNUAL REPORT

Period Covering: September 2008 – September 2009

This report is also available at Community Preservation Committee Section of the
Town's Web site: <http://www.town.rockport.ma.us/>

I Introduction

The Community Preservation Act (the “CPA,” MGL 44B) allows any city or town in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to adopt a property tax surcharge with revenues from this surcharge (and state matching funds) devoted to open space, historic preservation, community housing, and recreational use.

Rockport approved the CPA at the Annual Town Meeting in March, 2002 and at the Town Election in April 2002. The surcharge went into effect with the start of the Fiscal Year 2003, and was renewed by the voters at the Annual Town Meeting in April, 2008.

Consistent with the terms of the CPA and with a bylaw adopted at Rockport’s 2002 Annual Town Meeting, a Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has been formed to study and recommend how Rockport’s CPA revenues should be spent. The committee, appointed by the town moderator, includes Melvin Michaels, representing the Conservation Commission, Stephen DeMarco, representing the Historical Commission, Patricia Edgerton (replacing Bill Dwyer mid-year), representing the Planning Board, Peter Weber, representing the Department of Public Works Board of Commissioners, Ruth George representing the Housing Authority, and four at-large members as appointed by the town moderator: Frances Fleming, vice chairperson, Nancy Powlowsky, committee treasurer, Patricia Paradis, and Mary Francis, chairperson.

Money to support the CPA in Rockport comes from two sources: a surcharge of 3% on local property taxes, and state matching funds collected from a \$20.00 fee on real estate transactions. The level of matching funds will depend in part on the number of communities which adopt the Act. The amount of the surcharge is reduced by exempting the first \$100,000 in value of any property, and exempting low income or low- or moderate-income seniors. Funds collected under the CPA can only be invested in certain community preservation projects: open space/recreation, historic preservation, and community housing as recommended by the CPC and a successful vote at Town Meeting. In addition, 10% of the funds received in any fiscal year must be allocated for each of the first three areas (open space, historic preservation, and affordable housing). The remaining 70% of each year’s funds can be spent in any of the three areas as determined by Rockport. Community Preservation Funds cannot be used for general maintenance or used to supplant funds being used for existing community preservation purposes. In addition, up to 5% of the annual Community Preservation revenues can be spent on administrative and operating expenses of the CPC.

The CPC is charged with studying the needs, possibilities and resources of the town regarding community preservation. Community preservation in Rockport is a public process and the CPC strongly encourages broad participation from all residents. The CPC will make recommendations to Town Meeting for any use of the Community Preservation Funds. No funds can be expended for CPC recommended projects without Town Meeting approval.

II Goals, Priorities and Proposed Projects

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In order to implement Rockport's community preservation needs and determine which projects should be funded, the CPC has consulted with and will continue to consult with people and committees that are knowledgeable about each of the community preservation areas. For example, we have consulted with members of the Planning Board, the Historic Commission, the Conservation Commission, the Board of Selectmen, the Historic Commission, and the Finance Committee. Based on the information gathered from these sources, we have developed an assessment tool to evaluate Rockport's goals, needs and priority attributes in each of the community preservation areas and potential projects in each of these areas. In addition, we offer a public workshop each year in the fall, to better help individuals and groups with their applications and the process involved.

A. OPEN SPACE

Goals, Priorities and Evaluation Criteria

1. Enhance watershed protection by protecting surface and ground water recharge areas for existing and future water supply
2. Preserve and improve public access and trail linkages to conservation, recreation and other land uses
3. Preserve large tracts of undeveloped land, and connecting corridors between large tracts of existing protected open space
4. Protect quality of ecological resources
5. Enhance and protect the quality and variety of recreational opportunities for all age groups and abilities
6. Enhance and protect scenic views and vistas
7. Protect and preserve existing agricultural uses and opportunities
8. Promote protection of lands that provide opportunity to overlap with other CPA priorities such as affordable housing and historic preservation.

Proposed Projects

Rockport Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is requesting that the Community Preservation Committee and the Town of Rockport appropriate \$200,000 to be placed in the Conservation Trust to be used for future land and watershed protection, purposes consistent with the Community Preservation Act.

The CPC voted unanimously to support this proposal.

B. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Goals, Priorities and Evaluation Criteria

1. Acquire and/or renovate historic community buildings (abandoned schools, libraries, police stations, houses, etc.) for affordable housing, community centers or town office space
2. Restore or upgrade historic community buildings such as town halls, libraries, schools or park land
3. Provide match funds for federal, state and private grants for various preservation project funds
4. Projects must be significant to the history, archeology, and architecture or culture of Rockport.

Proposed Projects

Rockport Art Association

The Rockport Art Association is requesting that the Community Preservation Committee and the Town of Rockport appropriate \$47,915 to help them preserve the Old Tavern building and Maddocks building. This preservation work will bring the electrical wiring systems in those buildings up to code. The total cost of this project is estimated at \$72,915, with the RAA funding the difference. The RAA is working with the Rockport Historic Commission, and will undertake the project with their explicit advice and standards. This is part of a larger effort to preserve all of the buildings that make up the RAA complex by the Association. These buildings are in the Rockport Historic District, and are vital to the downtown historic landscape of Rockport

The CPC voted unanimously to support this proposal.

The Community House

The Town of Rockport, through the work of the DPW, Town Administrator, and Building Study Committee, is requesting that the Community Preservation Committee and the Town of Rockport appropriate \$2,332,407 in order to restore and preserve the entire building for various user groups in town, following the recommendations of McGinley-Kaslow, an architectural firm with extensive experience in work on historic buildings. The building has been under study for the past two years, and multiple structural issues have been revealed, as well as the overall poor condition of one of the few Rockport buildings on the National Historic Registry, as well as being in the Rockport Historic District. The funding suggested is to transfer \$250,000 from the town's sale of real estate account, to transfer \$582,407 from the CPC undesignated account, and to authorize the town treasurer to borrow the remaining \$1,500,000 by issuing a bond, payable over twenty years at prevailing rate, the payments drawn from only those CPC funds raised by the Rockport CPC surcharge.

The CPC voted unanimously to support this proposal.

First Congregational Church

The First Congregational Church is requesting that the Community Preservation Committee and the Town of Rockport appropriate \$161,750 for help with the historic restoration and preservation of the exterior of the Old Sloop building of the church, including the roof and windows, the front facade and steeple having previously been restored. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$358,500, with the church making up the difference in funds. The Old Sloop is part of the Rockport Historic District and vital to Rockport's historic downtown landscape. The church is working with the Rockport Historic Commission, and will undertake the project following their explicit advice and standards.

The CPC voted unanimously to support this proposal.

Rockport Public Library

The Library, working with the Rockport Department of Public Works, is requesting that the Community Preservation Committee and the Town of Rockport appropriate \$57,695 for the historic preservation and restoration of the library's exterior wood columns, trim, and some inside restoration of areas water damaged by the previous old roof, which has since been replaced.

The CPC voted unanimously to support this proposal.

C. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Goals, Priorities and Evaluation Criteria

1. Strive to meet the 10% State goal for affordable housing, eliminating the threats of 40B developments

2. Create diversity of housing stock
3. Maintain neighborhood character by preserving traditional housing stock
4. Ensure that new affordable housing is harmonious with the existing community
5. Locate affordable housing within close proximity to public facilities (e.g. public transportation, stores, school, etc.)
6. Reuse existing structures, or build new construction on previously developed land with adequate sewer connections whenever possible

Proposed Projects

Tenant-Based Rental/Mortgage Assistance Program

Cape-Ann based Action, Inc. has requested \$100,000 from the Community Preservation Committee and the Town of Rockport to continue the Tenant-Based Rental/Mortgage Assistance (TBRA) Program. The goal of this program is to assist Rockport residents who are experiencing difficulties retaining their housing and getting back on their feet by providing them with rental or mortgage subsidies and supportive services for a period up to one year. The program assists Rockport individuals and families who have faced temporary setbacks through hardships such as sickness and job loss.

The CPC voted unanimously to support this proposal.

Rockport Housing Partnership, Inc.

The Rockport Housing Partnership, a non profit organization established by the Rockport Board of Selectmen in 2008 for the purpose of promoting affordable housing on behalf of the Town of Rockport, has requested \$300,000 from the Community Preservation Committee and the Town of Rockport to begin that process. A budget is needed to support hiring a consultant to work with the Partnership board to develop a program design that will initiate and implement projects, and help seek complimentary outside funding. Grant Agreements and deed restrictions approved by the Community Preservation Committee and Town Council would necessarily accompany all expenditures of funds.

The CPC voted unanimously for this proposal.