

Select Board Policy

Community Preservation Act Grants to Private Organizations

Adopted by Vote of the Board: July 28, 2025

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the standards by which requests for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds from non-profit Lincoln organizations will be evaluated, and to confirm the process by which such applications will be administered.

Background

Under state law, CPA funds may be granted to private, non-profit organizations but only if the project for which the funds will be granted creates a demonstrable public benefit, as defined in this policy. Nevertheless, for the purposes of Historic Preservation funds, the Town has generally made it a practice to limit CPA grants to the preservation of public buildings. At present, private organizations must 1) secure the support of a Town board or committee to sponsor the application, and 2) satisfy the public benefit requirement. The determination as to whether the public benefit test has been satisfied is made by the Select Board pursuant to the policy approved by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) in 2014:

- The Committee reviewed and discussed proposed new guidelines for application submissions. The motion adopted by unanimous vote of the Committee read:
 - “With an effective date of October 3, 2014, the following new requirements for committee submissions shall apply: 1) all proposals to the CPC must be submitted by a board, department or agency of the Town, and 2) any proposal that would result in CPA funds going to a private organization or towards privately owned assets will not be approved until the Board of Selectmen (now Select Board) has issued a written determination that the proposal creates an acceptable public benefit.”

The absence of clear criteria for the award of CPA funds to private organizations, including those who might consider applying for funds to preserve historically significant, privately owned buildings has led to confusion on both the part of the applicants and the relevant boards.

Application Process Pertaining to Applications from Private Non-Profit Organizations

- 1) Application forms and instructions may be found on the Town’s website at <https://www.lincolntown.org/382/CPC-History-and-How-to-Submit>.
- 2) The application period opens on or about July 1st and closes on or about September 1st.
- 3) Private organizations contemplating an application should start by having a discussion with the Town board or committee whose mission and authorities are most closely aligned with the purpose of the contemplated project. The Town Administrator is available to assist in making this determination if the determination is not obvious.
- 4) The relevant Town board or committee will invite the potential applicant to a posted meeting to discuss the merits of the project and will then determine whether it is willing to sponsor the application.

- 5) If the relevant board/committee agrees to sponsor the application, it will submit said application to the CPC.
- 6) In turn, the CPC will forward the application to the Select Board (c/o the Town Administrator) with a request that the Selects evaluate whether the proposal satisfies the required public benefit test.
- 7) The Board will contact the applicant and request whatever additional information may be required to make its determination. In the process, the Board may invite the sponsoring board/committee and/or the applicant to attend a formal Board meeting.
- 8) The Town Administrator will consult with Town Counsel as necessary.
- 9) The Select Board will make its determination by vote in a properly posted meeting and forward its decision to the CPC.

Criteria for Eligibility

In evaluating applications from private organizations, the Select Board shall apply the following criteria when determining whether the proposed project for which CPA funds have been requested will result in a demonstrable public benefit:

- 1) In any given fiscal year, applications from Town agencies will always have first priority. Public buildings are named below.
- 2) Non-public projects shall be awarded no more than 10% of available CPA funds in any given year.
- 3) The private non-profit organization must provide a financial match of no less than 10% of the total project cost. The exact amount of the financial match is within the discretion of the Select Board depending on the circumstances of the request.
- 4) Funds may not be used for residences owned by private individuals, even those with a preservation restriction agreement.
- 5) The mission of the organization must be in service to and inclusive of all members of the general public and must be aligned with the values of the Town as outlined in its vision statement. (As an example, the Elm Brook Hill project provided CPA funds to the Friends of the Minuteman National Park whose mission is to support the National Park; the results of the project benefited the general public by increasing awareness of a significant battle on April 19, 1775).
- 6) There must be a public benefit associated with receipt of CPA funds, which
 - a. must be in the form of the following:
 - A Preservation/Use Restriction Agreement - The owner of the land or building must agree to preserve or restrict the use of said land or building in accordance with the terms of a formal agreement negotiated by the relevant town board/committee with the assistance of Town Counsel if the owner has not previously entered into a preservation or use restriction agreement with the Town;
 - Agreement to join an Historic District of the Town if the building is not already part of an Historic District; and
 - An Access Agreement – The owner of the land or building must agree to guarantee public access in accordance with the terms of a formal agreement negotiated by the relevant town board/committee with the assistance of Town Counsel if the owner has not previously entered into an access agreement with the Town. In the case of applications in support of investments in buildings, the owner must be agreeable to having said

building open for public use with the same expectations that govern the use of Town buildings; and

- b. and, may also include one or more of the following at the discretion of the Select Board:
 - Educational Programs – A program or activity designed to educate, inform, or celebrate the Town’s history.
 - Other Proposed Benefits – Other significant benefits that would accrue to and be available to all residents of the Town from programs or projects that meet all other requirements of the Community Preservation Act, this policy, and other relevant state laws and regulations.
- c. The application to the CPC shall include a narrative describing how the applicant intends to satisfy the public benefit requirement. Proposals for one-time or limited events or programs will not satisfy the public benefit requirement as the benefit must be of ongoing value to the Town and its residents.
- d. Once an organization is determined to have an ongoing public benefit, it will continue to be eligible to apply for CPA funds until there is a change in ownership or use of the building.

Public Buildings: There are two types of public buildings in Lincoln – those owned and fully operated by the Town and those that are owned by the town but operated by a private, non-profit entity. Both categories are eligible to apply for CPC funds according to the above criteria.

- Public Buildings Operated by the Town:
 - Town Offices
 - Lincoln Public Schools (all current and future buildings on the campus plus Codman pool)
 - Bemis Hall
 - Lincoln Library
 - Department of Public Works buildings
 - Public Safety building
 - Water Department buildings
 - Pierce House
- Public Buildings Operated by a non-Profit:
 - Codman Farm
 - deCordova Sculpture Park & Museum