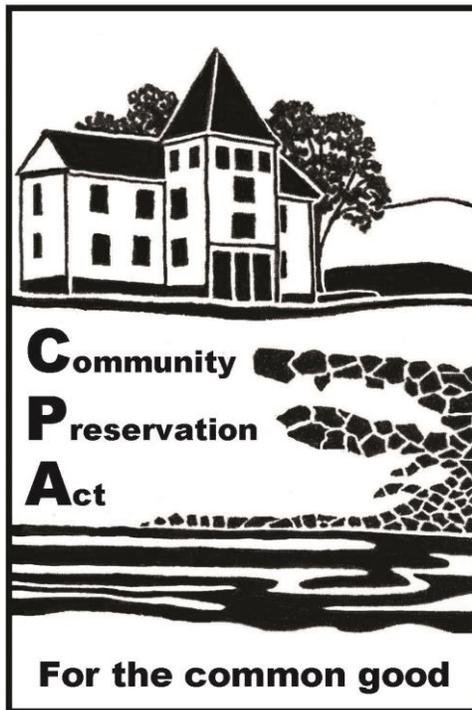


Town of Royalston

Community Preservation Plan and Guidelines

Prepared by the Community Preservation Committee
June 2017



Royalston residents are invited to send comments or questions
to the Community Preservation Committee,
cpa@royalston-ma.gov or 13 The Common, PO Box 125, Royalston, MA 01368.

I. Introduction

The Community Preservation Act (CPA), MGL Chapter 44B, is statewide enabling legislation allowing cities and towns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to adopt a property tax surcharge. Revenues from this surcharge, plus state matching funds, can be used for open space preservation, creation of community housing, preservation of historic buildings and landscapes, and creation of recreation opportunities. Royalston adopted the CPA at the annual town meeting of May 2008 and at the national election of November 2008. The surcharge went into effect with the start of Fiscal Year 2010 on July 1, 2009.

Consistent with the requirements of the CPA and with a bylaw adopted in 2008, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) was formed to study the needs, possibilities, and resources of the town regarding community preservation. The eight-member CPC, appointed by the Selectboard, includes representatives of the town's Selectboard, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Historic District Commission, Open Space Committee, and Board of Public Welfare, plus the Building Inspector and an at-large member.

In its organizational phase, the Royalston CPC agreed that it wants to act as a facilitator for community preservation in Royalston. Specifically:

- It will be a catalyst for projects, not an initiator.
- It will be a funder, not a developer.
- It will focus on community goals previously set forth in other public documents that have received wide scrutiny and public input.
- It will attempt to meet multiple community preservation goals in each project.
- It will communicate its mission and goals to the general public.

II. Goals, Needs and Proposed Projects

The basic goals of the Royalston CPC are embodied in the goals and objectives of the town's Community Development Plan, Open Space & Recreation Plan, Royalston Reconnaissance Report (prepared under the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program), the Greater Gardner Growth Management Plan, and the Millers River Watershed Action Plan. *Note: In considering its recommendations to town meeting, the CPC will give preference to projects that address more than one community preservation category and meet multiple general and specific criteria.*

(A) Open Space

Overview

Royalston enjoys a variety of open space resources. These include conservation areas maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, the state Department of Conservation and Recreation, The Trustees of Reservations, the New England Forestry Foundation, the town, and private landowners. Royalston also enjoys many other privately-owned parcels of land that add significantly to the rural character of the town, but are not permanently protected from development.

The goals listed below are articulated in the 2010-2016 Open Space & Recreation Plan.

Royalston's Open Space Goals

- Preserve and maintain open fields and working landscapes
- Selectively acquire additional properties for preservation and recreation
- Enhance existing recreational facilities and create linkages between them
- Protect the town's water and air.
- Protect and preserve the town's small-town character, scenic views, wildlife habitat, and endangered species

Specific Criteria for Open Space Projects

- Permanently protect important wildlife habitat, including areas of local significance for biodiversity; ones with a variety of habitats, geologic features or vegetation; habitats rare in Royalston; or habitat for threatened or endangered species of plants or animals
- Preserve Royalston's rural character
- Provide opportunities for passive recreation and environmental education
- Enhance wildlife corridors, promote connectivity of habitat, or prevent fragmentation of habitats
- Provide connections with existing trails or potential trail linkages
- Preserve scenic views, including historic landscapes
- Protect drinking water quantity and quality
- Provide flood control/storage
- Preserve important surface water bodies, including wetlands, vernal pools or riparian zones
- Preserve priority parcels in the Open Space Plan

(B) Recreation

Overview

Royalston has only a limited record of organizing active recreational activities but offers numerous opportunities for passive recreation on the many conservation lands in town. Some activities are offered by the Athol-Royalston Regional School District, the Village School, the Phinehas S. Newton Library, the Open Space Committee, community groups, and private organizations like the Athol Bird & Nature Club, The Trustees of Reservations, and the Appalachian Mountain Club.

Funding through the CPA is limited to the "acquisition, preservation, and creation of land for recreational use." Outdoor recreational activities are generally classified as *active* or *passive*, and the type of land needed for each is different. Under the CPA, recreational purposes are defined as "active or passive recreational use including, but not limited to, the use of land for community gardens, trails and noncommercial youth and adult sports, and the use of land as a park, playground or athletic field." Land cannot be used for "a stadium, gymnasium, or similar structure."

Royalston's Recreation Goals

- Create additional recreational facilities, areas, and programs to serve the needs of Royalston residents
- Expand recreational offerings on town-owned and other lands
- Expand trail systems on conservation land
- Support a diversity of recreational programs, both active and passive

Specific Criteria for Recreation Projects

- Support multiple recreation uses
- Serve a significant number of residents
- Expand the range of recreational opportunities available to Royalston residents of all ages.
- Jointly benefit Open Space Committee initiatives by promoting recreation on town-owned and conservation properties
- Maximize the utility of land already owned by Royalston (e.g., school property)
- Promote the linking of trails in town

(C) Historic Preservation

Overview

Reverence for the past is amply demonstrated in Royalston. Residents treasure the look and feel of a small New England town, the open space, the stone walls, the scenic roads, and the beautiful older homes. A historic district in the center of town preserves and maintains the landscape and historic structures there. The Village Improvement & Historical Society of Royalston also works to enhance preservation efforts and to maintain its museum.

Royalston's Historic Preservation Goals

- Preserve and protect the community's traditional, historic character
- Preserve and protect the town's historic landmarks, the historic district in Royalston Center, the historic village in South Royalston, the historic cemeteries, and the historic stone walls
- Restore and enhance the buildings and property in Royalston Center and in South Royalston Village for increased public awareness and usage
- Preserve and protect the town's historic documents, records, and artifacts

Specific Criteria for Historic Projects

- 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

(D) Affordable/Community Housing

Overview

Royalston developed numerous goals for housing during the development of the town's Community Development Plan (CDP). Several recommendations were made in this report to assist the town in addressing the housing needs identified in the Housing Assessment and Analysis. These needs include preserving the town's rural character, assisting lower income groups and the town's growing elderly population in securing affordable housing, increasing the supply of subsidized housing, improving the physical condition of the housing stock, and promoting homeownership. The CDP contains a detailed housing strategy that the town could implement to meet its housing needs. State housing policy sets a goal of 10% affordable housing for all municipalities.

Royalston's Housing Goals

- Support the further evaluation and possible implementation of the housing recommendations in the Community Development Plan
- Educate the public about the town's housing needs and the social and economic benefits associated with different forms of housing
- Investigate other housing strategies such as inclusionary zoning, incentive-based zoning, accessory apartment bylaws, and transfer of development rights
- Encourage greater range of housing opportunities in Royalston to meet the needs of a changing population that is diverse in age, household size, and income
- Conduct an inventory of public and private land and buildings suitable for subsidized housing
- Create multifamily dwellings in areas with existing infrastructure, in part through adaptive reuse
- Explore and implement self-help programs like Habitat for Humanity
- Support initiatives to work collaboratively with neighboring towns through a Housing Partnership or Community Development Corporation to secure funding for, construct and administer affordable housing

Specific Criteria for Community Housing Projects

- Contribute to the goal of 10 % affordability
- Promote housing patterns that support diversity in income, ethnicity, religion, and age
- Provide housing harmonious in design and scale with the surrounding community
- Intermingle affordable and market-rate housing
- Ensure long-term affordability
- Promote the use of existing buildings or construction on previously-developed or town-owned sites
- Convert market-rate residences to affordable units
- Give priority to local residents and town and school district employees

III. General Criteria

The Royalston Community Preservation Committee will give preference to proposals that meet one or more of the following general criteria, in addition to the specific criteria outlined in Section II:

- Are consistent with documents that have received wide scrutiny and input and have been adopted by the town: the town's Community Development Plan, Open Space & Recreation Plan, the Royalston Reconnaissance Report (prepared under the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program), the Greater Gardner Growth Management Plan, and the Millers River Watershed Action Plan
- Are economically or otherwise reasonably feasible to implement
- Preserve the essential rural character of the town
- Save resources that would otherwise be threatened and/or serve a currently under-served population
- 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
- Leverage additional public and/or private funds
- Preserve or utilize currently owned town assets
- Receive endorsement by other town boards or departments

IV. Project Eligibility and Funding

Any proposed project must be eligible for community preservation funding according to the requirements set forth in the legislation. Funds collected under the Community Preservation Act can be spent only on the four targeted purposes – open space, historic preservation, community housing, and land for recreational use. At least 10% of the funds received in any fiscal year must be spent or “banked” for each of the first three of those areas (open space, historic preservation and community housing). The remaining 70% of each year’s funds can be spent in any of the four areas. However, these funds *cannot* be spent on maintenance or used to supplement funds being used for existing community preservation purposes. Up to 5% of the annual revenues can be spent on the administrative and operating expenses of the Community Preservation Committee.

The chart on the next page outlines the allowable uses of the Community Preservation Fund. Also note that some projects require the official approval of certain town boards. Housing proposals, for example, may require the approval of the Planning Board and the Building Inspector, and projects within Royalston Center may require the approval of the Historic District Commission.

The town anticipates significant state matching funds in the first several years of the program. Community preservation funds can be used as the match for other grant programs, and anticipated local revenues can be bonded to fund a large project.

All CPA funding requests require the recommendation of the project by the Community Preservation Committee to town meeting, and a majority vote of town meeting.

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUND ALLOWABLE SPENDING
PURPOSES**

| | OPEN SPACE | HISTORIC RESOURCES | RECREATION LAND | COMMUNITY HOUSING |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DEFINITION | Land to protect existing and future well fields, aquifers and recharge areas, watershed land, agricultural land, grasslands, fields, forest land, fresh and salt water marshes and other wetlands, ocean, river, stream, lake and pond frontage, beaches, dunes and other coastal lands, lands to protect scenic vistas, land for wildlife or nature preserve and land for recreational use | Building, structure, vessel or real property listed or eligible for listing on the state register of historic places or determined by the local historic preservation commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture or culture of the city or town | Land for active or passive recreational use including, but not limited to, the use of land for community gardens, trails, and noncommercial youth and adult sports, and the use of land as a park, playground or athletic field Does <i>not</i> include horse or dog racing or the use of land for a stadium, gymnasium or similar structure | Housing for low- and moderate-income individuals and families, including low- or moderate-income seniors (Moderate income is less than 100% , and low income is less than 80%, of US HUD Area-Wide Median Income.) |
| ACQUIRE | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| CREATE | Yes | No | Yes | Yes |
| PRESERVE Means protect from injury, harm or destruction, not maintenance | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| SUPPORT | No | No | No | Yes, includes funding for community's affordable housing trust |
| REHABILITATE/ RESTORE Means remodel, reconstruct or repair (extraordinary, not maintenance) to make property functional for intended use, including improvements to comply with federal, state or local building or access codes or with federal standards for rehabilitation of historic properties | Yes, if acquired or created with Community Preservation funds | Yes | Yes | Yes, if acquired or created with Community Preservation funds |

Chart courtesy of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue

V. Proposal and Funding Process

The Community Preservation Committee welcomes proposals for projects, both large and small, to enhance Royalston with CPA funds. Those with project ideas can inform themselves about the legal requirements as well as the inspiring possibilities of the CPA by visiting www.communitypreservation.org. Applicants are also invited to attend CPC meetings for informal discussion about project ideas; the committee meets on the second Monday of most months at 7 p.m. at town hall.

Applicants must be alert to the calendar, giving themselves enough time to prepare and submit the necessary paperwork and the committee enough time to evaluate the application.

Application, Review, Approval and Implementation Process

- 1. Determination of Eligibility.** Complete this document so that the Community Preservation Committee can determine the project's eligibility and offer guidance. Eight copies must be submitted by the first of any month for consideration at that month's meeting; the committee may request that applicants be present. Applications are accepted year-round.
- 2. Application for Funding.** If the CPC agrees that your proposal is eligible, complete the application as soon as possible. For a proposal to be considered at the next annual town meeting, the committee must receive it by January 1.
- 3. Review Process.** The CPC will review, evaluate and prioritize all applications using the criteria listed in Sections II and III of this plan. Applicants may be asked for additional documentation or proposal revisions. The CPC must vote to recommend a proposal before it can be placed on the warrant.
- 4. Town Meeting Approval.** The CPC will present its recommendations to voters at the annual town meeting on the first Friday in May.* By majority vote, the meeting can approve, reduce or reject recommended amounts for a project, but cannot increase them.
- 5. Project Implementation.** Funds for approved projects will be available following town meeting, subject to the satisfaction of any conditions or procedures established by the CPC.
- 6. Project Payments.** All invoices for payments must be submitted to the town accountant and reference the town meeting date and article that approved the project.

*The committee is willing to consider submission of a recommendation to a special town meeting called for some other purpose, but will be reluctant to ask the town to call such a meeting except under urgent circumstances.