

Community Preservation Act: A Win for Warwick

On November 15th, a group of Warwick residents met informally to discuss how the Community Preservation Act (CPA) might benefit Warwick. Representatives from the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership provided background information and outlined how the program has helped communities in our region and across the state. The CPA would allow Warwick to create a local fund, matched by the State, to spend on historic preservation, affordable community housing, outdoor recreation projects, and open space conservation. With the CPA, Warwick would benefit from matching state money to do important projects, just like our neighbors in Northfield and Royalston are already doing. For example, Warwick could adopt a surcharge on property taxes for each property, but exclude the first \$100,000 of valuation and provide exclusions for elderly on fixed incomes and low income households. If Warwick adopted a 3% surcharge, this would generate about \$20,000 per year in Warwick. At current projections, the state would then send Warwick a matching check for \$20,000. The town can then decide how to spend the \$40,000 annually according to a broad formula that requires at least 10% go to historic resources, 10% go to community housing and 10% go to open space. If the town chooses not to spend any money in a certain category, the funds can be held over until a suitable project in that category gets approved. If the CPA is approved at town meeting the program would need to be in place for five years. After that initial five years, the town can vote to eliminate the program.

The CPA is designed to fund the types of projects that characterize our community. Many projects we paid for completely out of property tax receipts could have been paid for out of this fund where the state contributes half the money. Here are some ideas the folks at the meeting came up with for how the CPA could help Warwick:

- Weatherizing, repairs, and renovations to historic town buildings
- Establish Elder Housing
- Improving accessibility to existing elder housing
- Cemetery preservation projects
- Restore historic bridges at Bass Swamp and other locations
- Recreational Trail marking and ID
- Preservation of historic town records
- Deed restrictions to create permanent affordable housing
- Conservation easement purchases and additions to town forest
- Restoring historic springs on Wendell Road and Moss Brook
- Church preservation projects
- Others?

Any resident could propose projects for CPA funding, and Town residents choose which projects get funded. If you want to learn more, come to the next meeting on **Wednesday, December 14th at 7pm** at the Town Hall. If you have any questions, please call Keith Ross at 978-544-2181.