

Preservation a priority

Contributed by Paula M. Donnelly
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The Community Preservation Act, or CPA, is a state law that allows communities to levy a small tax increase that is matched by state funds and can be used for community preservation. Hanson has proposed a 1.5 percent tax increase that could be used for affordable housing, recreational facilities, historical preservation and open space preservation. If approved, the act could mean \$140,000 a year in town funds.

That money is then matched up to 100 percent by the state.

There are certain guidelines the town must follow in using community preservation funds. A minimum of 10 percent must be used on each of the following: open space protection, historic preservation and the provision of affordable housing. The remaining 70 percent of the community preservation fund may be used for any of the above referenced initiatives in addition to recreational purposes.

"Right now we just want to make sure that we educate the community on what the act will do for the town of Hanson," said Bob Sears, chairman of Hanson's CPA committee Preserve Hanson. "All we want is to make people understand what it truly is all about."

The CPA was approved by Hanson voters at the October special Town Meeting. However, before it becomes official it must be approved again at the ballot box in May. Voters at the May annual Town Meeting will also be asked to approve a bylaw creating a town community preservation committee.

The tax increase is based on the assessed value of residents' homes, although the first \$100,000 is exempted. So for a \$375,000, home, the tax increase would be \$37 per year. There are additional discounts available for senior citizens and residents with limited income.

Adopting the CPA doesn't equal the approval of any spending. Each purchase or other project recommended by the CPA committee would have to be passed by the voters at Town Meeting.

According to Sears, the committee has no specific projects in mind, but if the measure is approved, residents could pitch projects to be put on the ballot.

“There are so many quality of life issues the town needs that there are just no resources for now,” Sears said. “This is going to allow us to at least look at issues that could make a real impact to residents.”

The meeting will be held at the police station on Main Street in the community room beginning at 7 p.m.

“We want to make sure as many people as possible come to the meeting,” Sears said.

So far, 127 communities in Massachusetts have adopted the Community Preservation Act. Ten others, including Hanson, have votes scheduled for 2008.