**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT FUNDING APPLICATION FY 2024**

**Please use additional sheets and supporting documents where necessary.**

**Applications are due by January 7, 2023 at noon.**

Project Name: Preservation of Historic Williamstown Meetinghouse

Sponsor Organization: Williamstown Meetinghouse Preservation Fund, Inc.

CPA Category: *Community Housing Historic Preservation Open Space Recreation*

(circle all that apply)

Total Project Cost: $ 6,400,000. CPA Funds Requested: $150,000. % : 2.3%

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION** – Describe the proposed project in as much detail as possible. In particular, address the following questions:

a. What are the goals of the proposed project?

**What is the Williamstown Meetinghouse Preservation Fund?** The Williamstown Meetinghouse Preservation Fund, Inc. (WMPF) was created to renovate and preserve in the future the structure that is the Meetinghouse, currently owned by First Congregational Church of Williamstown. The Historic Meetinghouse is defined as the entirety of the building at 906 Main Street, Williamstown. WMPF is organized as an independent, nonprofit corporation established for the purpose of raising funds by public subscription, grants, and pledges of outright gifts and funds to accomplish renovation, restoration, and preservation of the historic Meetinghouse. WMPF is also responsible to contract with purveyors, contractors etc. to accomplish this goal. One of WMPF’s most important goals is to improve the Meetinghouse building to better meet the needs of the Williamstown community. No funds raised will be used for religious, denominational or congregational enterprises. WMPF’s board includes individuals in the community who are not congregational members. The WMPF board is completely separate from congregational governance. WMPF will coordinate with the congregation regarding capital needs and building projects. A copy of the agreement between the congregation and WMPF is attached.

WMPF recognizes and respects the Caplan vs Acton decision regarding use of public funds. In order to emphasize separation between religious and community use of the Meetinghouse the request for CPA funding includes only areas of need that address community access and provide community benefit.

The Meetinghouse has a distinguished architectural history and is visually and functionally central to Williamstown. Funds are needed to renovate, restore, and update the building, funds that are beyond the resources available from the congregation.

**Historical Background:** The Massachusetts Bay Colony required a Settled Minister when the town incorporated in 1765. This act required a Meetinghouse that was built with tax dollars and served as a church, the seat of town governance, and center of community activities. The current meetinghouse was built in 1869 after the first two meetinghouses on Field Park were lost to fire. It was built on land donated by Williams College with provisions that the College’s Convocations, Commencements, and weekly mandatory church services could be held in the building. The original Romanesque structure was renovated in 1913 (at the desire of both town and the church) to better conform to the colonial architecture around it. The design was modeled after a building in Old Lyme, CT. It is listed with the Massachusetts Cultural Resource System, MACRIS, and was listed as eligible for the National Historic Register in the past, before siding was installed on the Meetinghouse.

b. Why is this project needed?

Based upon a 2019 assessment by Centerline Architects, the Meetinghouse Preservation Fund identified significant needs critical to preserve the historic building, many of which are deficiencies that will cause further deterioration of key structural elements if not remedied. In 2019, the estimated cost to correct those deficiencies was $2,500,000.

In the past year WMPF worked with Centerline Architects and Tierney Construction (who we have hired to be our construction manager) to create Schematic Design. The design process has been focused on the three most urgent areas of need,

**1.** **Roof Replacement:**  Parts of the slate roof date to 1864. Despite multiple repairs, the roof continues to leak, causing damage to the structure beneath the slate and infiltrating into the rooms below.

**2.** **Steeple Restoration:** The steeple needs significant restoration. It is a site of major water infiltration and damage to the finished areas below. The louvers, which enable the steeple bell to resonate throughout the neighborhood, allow rain and snow to gather and leak into the foyer and damage the supporting floor structure at each steeple level. The wood and plaster ornamentation has degraded and needs replacement. Metal roofing at each steeple level needs replacement. The windvane needs restoration and the top of the steeple, which is clad with siding, needs to be assessed for possible leakage beneath the siding.

**3.** **Building Compliance/Accessibility**: The public areas of the building do not meet current requirements for accessibility. To enable access to the first floor, basement, and unfinished second floor space, an elevator is required. Also needed are a new ramp, accessible bathrooms, improved exit lighting and exit doors. The elevator and a stairway will be housed in a circulation tower added to the back of the building. Providing required accessibility will result in greater opportunity for community use and rental office space. Since building the circulation tower requires excavation next to the building, current problems with grading and drainage will be addressed as well as better window wells to increase basement lighting. Some electrical, ventilation, and heating systems are also likely to need improvement.

A cost estimate for the above needs was completed in September 2022. The current cost estimate is $6,400,000 for all three urgent areas of need.

The combined cost estimates for Roof and Steeple were $2 to $2.5 million. The remainder of the total cost estimate was for building compliance and accessibility.

c. What population groups will this project serve? Please estimate how many residents will benefit.

**Community Engagement and building use**:

The Meetinghouse warmly welcomes the surrounding community. As pandemic restrictions have eased the building is gradually returning to a vibrant community space. The space is actively shared with senior activities, Al-Anon, LGBTQ+ support groups, Red Cross Blood drives, Take and Eat, Buxton School graduation, and more. Free public programs respond to ethical and spiritual issues of the day. The congregation covenants with Habitat for Humanity and a Scouting group. The outreach ministry is robust and includes immigrant support, programs to combat local food insecurity, and youth job training. The space is used by ABC Clothing Drives, using the proceeds to support local nonprofits. Tag sale items are collected in the spring and are resold in the fall, providing low-cost household goods and reducing landfill waste. In brief, the Meetinghouse embodies the spirit of community.

Attached to this application is a copy of the Economic Impact statement (Halo Study) that was attached to our application last year. It speaks to the significant economic impact the building’s use provides to benefit the community.

The First Church congregation plans to reduce the church’s footprint in the building, limiting church activities primarily to the sanctuary and offices attached to the sanctuary. A church task force has been charged with identifying partners and explore ways to utilize the building’s abundance of space for the benefit of the community. This would improve the building’s economic viability long term as both a historical icon but also a community asset.

d. How will this project improve the quality of life for residents?

The renovations will provide a building that meets all of the American for Disabilities Act requirements for accessibility. Renovation will also provide available space to meet more of the community’s needs. The elevator will allow access to a current attic space that can be designed for additional community or rental use. The plan is to provide accessible space in the heart of the town that can address current town needs.

2. **PROJECT READINESS/FEASIBILITY –** Describe the project’s feasibility and readiness to proceed. Address the following questions in your response:

Has a feasibility study been conducted? If so, please attach it to this application. If not, please offer other evidence that the project is feasible.

**Project Readiness:**

WMPF had a feasibility study conducted by Sacred Places, a nonprofit that focuses on preserving and renovating buildings like the Meetinghouse. A major emphasis of their work is to use these historic buildings to meet needs of the surrounding community. The feasibility study is attached.

b. Is the project ready to proceed? If not, what additional steps are necessary before the project can proceed?

The significant increased costs from the current estimates are a challenge. WMPF is currently meeting with Tierney to maximize the efficiency of design and safely reduce costs for the roof and steeple portions of the project. A plan to reduce further water infiltration into the steeple is underway and is expected to be completed in the next 1-2 months. The intent is to begin the roof replacement in summer 2023. Tierney construction has begun research into the materials needed for roof replacement.

3. **PROJECT TASKS/IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE –** Provide a detailed list of required tasks, such as studies, engineering work, architectural design, permitting, financing, and construction. In addition, provide a detailed implementation schedule, including dates for project initiation, key milestones, and project completion.

Initial schematic design has been completed as well as necessary engineering studies. The design was completed by Centerline Architects and the WMPF Board. Attached is a summary of the design and estimated costs.

Permitting will be done by Centerline Architects. Tierney Construction is the construction manager and is responsible for obtaining bids, subcontractors and overseeing the work.

4. **PROJECT TEAM** - List the proposed members of the project team and the role of each person or organization. Describe how those team members’ experiences will contribute to the success of the project. Attach resumes for key team members.

Centerline Architects: See attached resume

Tierney Construction: https://www.davidjtierneyjrinc.com/index.php

WMPF Board members: Williamstown Meetinghouse Preservation Fund, Inc

Officers:

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5. **SOURCES AND USES OF FUNDS** -- Provide a detailed list of the sources and uses of funds for the project:

a. Describe your strategy for funding your project. Describe all anticipated funding sources, including state, federal or private grants; capital campaigns; loans, CPA, or other.

The increase in estimated cost for the project has delayed the initiation of a community campaign at this time.

Church members have donated/pledged a total of $621,730. The amount received to date is $382,929.

Amount available in Checking/Savings as of 12/1/22: $353,576

Expected CPC grant for FY 23: $50,000 (receipt pending)

State Earmark Grants:

Fiscal Year 2022: $75,000, Department of Travel and Tourism (received)

Fiscal Year 2023: $50,000, Mass Marketing Partnership (first payment pending)

The CPA grant for fiscal year 2023 will be used to reduce/prevent water infiltration into the steeple, as well as detailed schematic design for the roof replacement and steeple renovation.

If awarded, any CPC funds for FY 24 would be used to replace the roof in the areas of greatest water infiltration. Cost estimates are pending based on materials used.