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**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT AMENDMENTS FILED**  
*Aimed at stabilizing trust fund, broadening CPA's appeal*

**BOSTON** – Legislation filed recently seeks to amend the Community Preservation Act (CPA), helping cities and towns build more affordable housing, acquire more open space, preserve historic buildings and improve recreation facilities. The state legislature is expected to take up the bill during the current legislative session.

The CPA already allows individual cities and towns to approve a surcharge of up to three percent on real property taxes, with certain exemptions available by local option. The local surcharge revenues are then matched with money from a statewide trust fund supported by real estate transaction recording fees. Monies raised through the program can be used to fund open space acquisition, historic preservation, affordable housing and recreation, with communities tailoring CPA projects based on local priorities. To date, 140 of the state's 351 municipalities have adopted the CPA.

The legislation, filed by state Senator Cynthia Stone Creem (D-Newton) and state Representative Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington), seeks to stabilize the statewide trust fund by guaranteeing that CPA communities receive a minimum 75 percent annual match. In 2008, for the first time in the CPA's eight-year history, CPA communities received an average match of 74 percent, rather than the dollar-for-dollar match seen in previous years. The state Department of Revenue projects that the match will fall dramatically this year, likely as low as 35 percent for many communities, due in part to the popularity of the program as well as the decline in real estate activity.

A guaranteed minimum match gives municipal governments a dedicated source of funds that can be used for specific municipal needs. Especially in a tough economy, CPA helps municipalities balance funding among open space, housing and historic preservation as needed, and reduces the financial competition with other community needs such as fire, police, schools, maintenance, and public works, including infrastructure.

"This legislation provides CPA communities with the tools they need to continue important projects for their residents, and encourages additional communities to adopt the CPA," said Senator Creem.

"On the local level, the CPA represents the only way many communities can pay for capital projects such as historic rehabilitation, affordable community supported housing and land acquisition for open space and recreation," said Representative Kulik. "Passing this bill and protecting CPA will help communities help themselves without any impact on the state budget."

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[www.communitypreservation.org](http://www.communitypreservation.org)

The trust fund match received in October 2008 was still meaningful for communities, according to the Community Preservation Coalition, an organization that provides technical assistance and support to CPA communities and to those considering adoption. “Our concern is that the match doesn’t drop further in the future,” said Clarissa Rowe, Chair of the Coalition’s steering committee. “That’s why this bill is so important.”

“We always knew that we would only be able to match at the 100 percent level for a limited time,” said Tom Callahan, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance, and a Coalition steering committee member. “As long as CPA communities can have a reasonable expectation of a minimum match level, the program will continue to cement the state-local partnership that is doing so much for affordable housing, open space, and historic preservation.”

In addition to providing a match for locally raised money, the CPA gives communities leverage to obtain other funds. For example, communities have used their CPA funds as the matching source necessary to qualify for other state, federal and private funds on a project by project basis.

Marc Draisen, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, said, “CPA has been a resounding success. I can’t remember a time when more communities adopted a state program. That’s why we can’t let the trust fund match dramatically decline, just as more and more communities are using the program to build homes, protect land for parks and open space, and save historic buildings.”

Since being signed into law in late 2000, CPA has been adopted by 140 communities, representing 40 percent of the Commonwealth’s cities and towns. Using CPA funds, municipalities have preserved 10,274 acres of open space, including important wetland resources such as lakes, rivers, and saltwater ponds. In the area of affordable housing, CPA funds have allowed for the creation or rehabilitation of more than 2,300 affordable housing units and the development of hundreds of innovative affordable housing programs. Finally, more than 1,300 appropriations for historic preservation projects and over 500 recreation projects have been approved under the program. For more information about the CPA, visit [www.communitypreservation.org](http://www.communitypreservation.org).

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