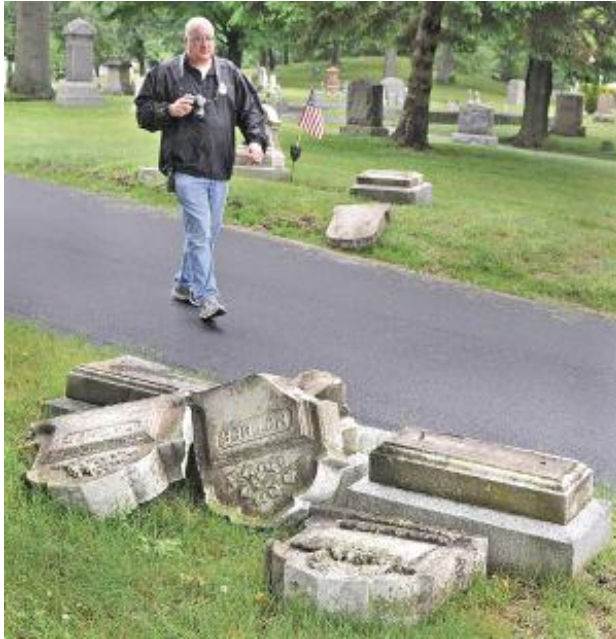


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CPA to be put on ballot in November

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By GORDON VINCENT



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WOBURN - Pending a vote of the City Council at its meeting on Tuesday (7 p.m.; City Hall), there will be a city-wide referendum question for the Community Preservation Act (CPA) on the ballot of the November state election.

At a recent meeting of the council's Liaison Committee, council members were in favor of letting the voters decide if they wish to set aside a 1 percent property tax surcharge to fund enhancements to areas like Horn Pond, the city's historic cemeteries, and recreation space.

"This issue is made for a ballot question," Ward 6 Alderman Michael Raymond said. "This should be put out so the people understand the ramifications, because there's been a lot of misinformation out there. The (Woburn Community Preservation Committee) is going to have to spend a lot of time educating (the electorate)." "I still support this. It's a good thing for the city," Ward 2 Alderman Richard Gately said. "It puts an investment back into the city."

Passed into law in 2000, the CPA has an opt-in clause for communities, which may choose their own surcharge. In 2001, Woburn placed it on a ballot as a referendum question with the maximum 3 percent surcharge, but it was soundly defeated by a nearly 2-1 margin. At present, 155 - nearly half of the communities in the state - have adopted the CPA.

Proponents from the Woburn Community Preservation Committee are asking for a 1 percent surcharge this time. The CPA works thusly: A portion of the money that is collected from the Registry of Deeds is disbursed to the CPA fund, which is then distributed to the communities in which the CPA has been adopted. The state Legislature last year augmented the funding with \$25 million.

The meals tax surcharge can also be added to the CPA revenue stream.

If the CPA is adopted, residents and owners of commercial property pay a surcharge based on their property assessment, with an exemption of the first \$100,000 of assessed value. Thus, a home valued at \$250,000 would pay 1 percent of the tax rate - currently \$10.44 in Woburn - on \$150,000, or around \$15.66, according to Maureen Vallis, with the Woburn Community Preservation Committee, who addressed the council in April.

A home valued at \$400,000 would be assessed \$31.32 toward the CPA, and the median-priced home of \$372,000 would be assessed about \$26, Vallis said.