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Community Preservation Act Legislation Signed by Governor Patrick Changes to program to benefit municipalities across Massachusetts

BOSTON – The Community Preservation Coalition today praised legislators, advocates and other supporters for their efforts to stabilize the declining statewide trust fund match of locally-raised Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding, and thanked the Patrick-Murray Administration for signing the changes into law on Sunday.

"We would like to thank everyone who supported this effort over the last six years," said Coalition Executive Director Stuart Saginor. "These changes to the CPA program, and the additional funding for the statewide CPA Trust Fund, will help preserve the quality of life in our 148 CPA communities, encourage additional cities and towns to join the program, while at the same time create much needed jobs across the Commonwealth."

"Cities and towns continually struggle with how to pay for capital improvements to parks, playgrounds and athletic fields," said State Sen. Cynthia Creem (D-Newton), Senate Sponsor of the CPA legislation. "This legislation will finally provide a funding source for these upgrades, enhancing the quality of life for residents in CPA communities across the state."

Rep. Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington), House sponsor of the CPA legislation, noted that strong support for CPA came from both sides of the aisle. "The additional \$25 million in funding from the state surplus will substantially increase the statewide trust fund used to match locally raised CPA funds," said Kulik. "This bi-partisan effort, secured with the help of House Minority leader Brad Jones, will go a long way toward reversing the last four years of declining local match funding."

"This bi-partisan initiative aimed at community preservation and job creation is a true win-win situation," said House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr. "While it has been a long, concentrated effort to make these positive changes a reality, we have produced meaningful results for current and future CPA communities in Massachusetts."

CPA allows adopting municipalities to place a surcharge of up to three percent on real property in order to create a local dedicated fund for the four CPA purposes: open space preservation, historic preservation, outdoor recreation, and affordable housing. Adoption of CPA triggers annual distributions from the statewide CPA Trust Fund, which derives its revenues from fees collected at the state registries of deeds. Funds from the CPA Trust Fund are distributed each year to participating communities; however distribution amounts have declined precipitously in recent years due to the decline of the real estate market. Meanwhile, communities have continued to adopt the program, and as a result, the average CPA community's match has fallen from 100 percent to this year's projected 22 percent.

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The plan approved by the Governor calls for \$25 million from the FY 2013 state budget surplus to be added to the CPA Trust Fund. Combined with the current trust fund revenue from the deeds recording fees, the distribution to CPA communities in the fall of 2013 will be dramatically higher, meaning that municipalities will be able to complete more community preservation projects.

In addition to a much needed boost for the trust fund, the legislation allows communities to use CPA funds to rehabilitate recreational assets that were not created or purchased with CPA funds. This provision is especially important to more densely developed communities that don't have as much open space but have outdoor recreation assets in need of capital improvements. The proposal also calls for allowing communities that pass CPA with a minimum one percent real property surcharge to use other sources of municipal revenue to boost the amount of money qualifying for the annual statewide CPA Trust Fund match.

Since being passed in 2000, 148 communities, 42 percent of the municipalities in the state, have adopted CPA. Using a combination of local and trust fund dollars, those communities have preserved 14,900 acres of open space, made over 2,500 appropriations to protect historic resources, developed 5,080 units of affordable housing, and funded 730 outdoor recreation projects.

The Community Preservation Coalition was active in advocating for the legislation on Beacon Hill. The Coalition is comprised of municipalities that have adopted CPA as well as eight statewide non-profit organizations, including Mass Audubon, The Trust for Public Land and The Conservation Campaign, Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance, Mass Audubon, The National Trust for Historic Preservation, The Trustees of Reservations and Preservation Massachusetts.

Laura Johnson, President of Mass Audubon said "The Massachusetts legislature has shown that land protection and community preservation are a priority, reaching across the aisle and working together during tough economic times to give communities the tools they need to protect local treasures and enhance quality of life."

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