

## **Project Summary:**

The Leverett Historical Commission (LHC) and the Leverett Historical Society (LHS), jointly, (with a vote on January 14, 2022) seek funding to restore, renovate, and preserve Leverett's two historical museums. In response to the questions that the CPC asked, the two entities met to further outline why this money is needed now to preserve both buildings and to further elaborate on our submission.

### **CPC Questions**

Question 1: Should each museum be its own application and voted on separately?

a.) After a lengthy discussion about whether to break the submission into two applications, one for each historic site, there are three reasons why we feel the proposal should stand as one. Although the museums are separate buildings, they will function as if they are one historic site in two locations, similar to what you find in Historic Deerfield. There, each building has its own character and period but they reinforce and augment one another to tell Deerfield's historic story. The goal would be to restore the two in such a way that one is a living history museum while the other houses many of Leverett's important collections.

b.) While historically the two parts of Leverett were treated separately (at one point it was even a long distance call to phone North Leverett from Leverett Center), we do not want to reinforce that separation by causing the Town to vote on money for each museum as if one might be more important than the other when money is desperately needed for both. In July 2013, Edie Field, President received a sixty-one page report outlining what needed to be done to protect Leverett's collections and artifacts. (see some select pages from the overall report). To date, most of these recommendations have not been completed and the two buildings which house the collections have fallen into further disrepair. Attention needs to be paid to both in order to be ready for our 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

c.) Keeping the proposal as one can potentially reduce cost in administering them together and buying in quantity.

Question 2: How will the museums be run and maintained after the money is given?

Once these two are restored, we can set up a docent and maintenance system to man the two locations much as Historic Deerfield does. Betsy Douglas, a beloved head of Leverett's Historical Commission, gave her time to Historic Deerfield as a docent. We can do the same kind of recruitment in the greater Amherst area for individuals who are history buffs and want to support us in Leverett. For instance, Dawn Ward, an officer of the Historical Society, no longer lives in Leverett, but gives her time to the Historical Society, much as Betsy gave her time to Historic Deerfield. Well-kept and historically accurate buildings attract those who are interested in history. In the last three years, we

have run educational programs about Leverett's industrial history, which have drawn at least one-third of its participants from other towns.

Leverett's rich historic landscape and its architecture are a draw. They have helped to determine the character of the town in its highways and byways. The town was founded in 1774 as a series of "villages" around the small waterways, which provided the energy for industrial development. The historic structures, which house the collections, are integral to that history and must be preserved. The collections tell Leverett's story and highlight the lives of those who lived in the four registered National Historic Districts. Winding roads lined with historic houses and stonewalls run between the four districts and bear testimony to the town's mill and agricultural history as seen in the mill foundations, dams, and cellar holes sprinkled across privately-owned landscapes, but without the museum structures, we lose the ability to share the words and pictures of those who founded our area in a museum setting.

While the Historical Commission's responsibility is to further the identification, preservation, and maintenance of Leverett's historic assets, the committee has no budget to attain these goals. The preservation of Leverett's historic assets is not keeping up with the need: we, in Leverett, are in danger of losing our history.

In 2017/18, the committee designed, wrote, and executed a town-wide survey to gauge the opinions of residents on the importance of Leverett's historic landscape and architecture. The survey was designed to both educate and find out what the townspeople knew about their historic assets and how interested the town's citizenry would be in saving them. The Commission used the Survey Monkey tool to reach 41% of the households in Leverett. The results showed 80% of the households taking the survey wanted to preserve the assets if the town could do so in a manner that would not raise taxes.

Since then, the Commission has worked to further town-wide awareness of our industrial landscape and of the preservation activities, both public and private, that would be necessary to secure the historic assets for Leverett's future.

Now, with the 250<sup>th</sup> celebration of the founding of our town in the immediate future, it is time to build upon that work and broaden the possibilities for preservation. It is time to reverse having our historic assets fall to ruin for lack of funding and oversight.

The town has a rich resource in the CPA, and the CPC fund has been growing. Heretofore, the Historical Commission and other town entities have asked for small grants to execute a survey, educate the public about Leverett's historic assets, digitize archives, and repair crumbling cemeteries. Now is the time, with the 250<sup>th</sup> upon us, to restore and adaptively re-use our two museums for the benefit of all those who live in Leverett.

LHC requests **\$237,500** to restore, preserve, and rehabilitate our two existing museum locations in time for the anniversary. We plan to build an alliance of stakeholders for the preservation of Leverett's historic assets, whose role will be to fundraise, fund, and oversee their preservation.

We propose hiring a project manager to oversee the project phase, whether or not that person actually undertakes the physical construction, and an architecture firm to execute the Design.

Sid Poritz is one such person. He has completed several historic projects following the Federal Historic Preservation Guidelines. He completed the renovation of two historic buildings in Turners Falls, which has twelve units, one building in Amherst with four units, and five buildings in Goshen with fifteen units.

Additionally, we have met with MASS Design Group, an architectural firm with which we plan to work. They are a non-profit organization that gives small grants and works with foundations to secure funding for worthy projects. They have done projects all over the United States, in Africa, and other parts of the world on small budgets and large. In 2022, MASS was selected the AIA Architecture Firm of the Year, and in 2020, they were named the Architecture Innovator of the Year by the Wall Street Journal, for their origins in healthcare and commitment to architecture as a medium for healing. In 2019, Architect Magazine ranked MASS fourth in its list of Top 50 Firms in Design and in 2017, MASS was awarded the National Design Award in Architecture, given each year by the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. They work in the area of historic preservation among other areas and have assigned an architect to work with us. Young architects, who graduated from Harvard and wanted to help communities through using their architecture skills, started the firm. One of their first projects was a big revitalization in Rwanda using local people and local assets. (<https://www.massdesigngroup.org>)

Under the guidance of MASS Design Group and Sid Poritz the project will proceed in three phases:

1) Organizational phase:

Other towns in Massachusetts have used various organizational models to protect and preserve their assets: Easthampton uses something akin to an enterprise fund, (<https://www.cityspaceeasthampton.org>), while Otis has created a trust (<https://otispreservationtrust.com>) and Weston is using a mixed model (<https://www.metrowestdailynews.com/news/20191210/weston-oks-124m-to-repair-historic-tavern>). During this phase we will work with other town committees and commissions, such as the Planning Board and the Sustainable Economy Committee. Administrative costs to manage the grant are **\$5000**

2) Stabilize, restore, and reinvigorate two of Leverett's historic assets: The Field Family Museum property is owned by the Town of Leverett and administered by the Leverett Historical Society, while Moore's Corner is owned and administered by the Historical Society. This money will allow us to design and execute the architectural

documents from which to solicit final bids to allow the stabilization and rehabilitation of the two historic buildings while planning occurs for the rejuvenation of the town's engagement with these spaces and their contents. Some questions we will explore are: how do 21st century residents engage with local history, with primary source materials about the community's past, as well as the past of the many historic residences and other structures around town? What can we change about the museum "model" to bring Leverett' residents to their own community's resources — and bring them back for more?

**The cost of this preservation and restoration will be  
\$ 232,500.**

3) Augment the preservation of our assets in time for the 250<sup>th</sup> with a continuation of the community engagement programming the Commission initiated after completion of the HAS survey. Its goal is to engage the whole community in our 250<sup>th</sup> and to help with the fundraising for the 250<sup>th</sup>—awareness and interest go hand-in-hand.

### **Benefits/Opportunities to Leverett:**

1. The alliance of stakeholders will be able to raise grants and match funds for the preservation and maintenance of historic assets
2. If allowed to continue to deteriorate, the museums will cease to hold potential as vibrant community spaces and cost even more to restore in the future.
3. The museums will safely house the historical artifacts and the original documents that, heretofore, have been subject to rodent infestation and mold.
4. The Historical Commission and Historical Society will be in the position to be able to jointly deliver on the wishes of its citizenry as garnered from the Historical Assets Survey.
5. If the idea of an alliance of stakeholders were to eventually become a formalized organization, it could be a structure for long-term future maintenance of historic properties.
6. Oversight and maintenance of the historic assets will no longer be on the plate of public works, or, in case where it is, it will be guided by an entity that has an understanding of the specific needs of historic structures.
7. Infrastructure is set in place and information will be developed that will be available for Leverett 250th programming.

### **Precedent or comparison to other similar projects:**

Working with Stacia Caplanson of Preservation Massachusetts, we have identified several models for creating some form of partnership. All of them have received CPA funds and all are within the state of Massachusetts.

- For preservation efforts some communities, such as Otis, have formed a nonprofit preservation organization, which can advocate for historic resources and raise funds. The Otis Preservation Trust (<https://otispreservationtrust.com>) was created to act as the fundraising agent on behalf of the town's municipal historical commission. The

OPT is working to save several municipally-owned historic properties in their community. Diane Provenz, co-chair of the Otis Historical Commission was involved in creating OPT and is someone that we have contacted for insights. Another model is that of a public/ private partnership in which the municipality retains ownership of an historic property but engages in a long-term lease with a nonprofit organization to manage and use the property. Two examples of this model are: Easthampton Old Town Hall: City Space Center for the Arts (<https://www.cityspaceeasthampton.org>) and Weston-Josiah Smith Tavern in Weston.

- Attached please find an FAQ that addresses the issue of why and how public funds should be used to rehabilitate a building even though it might eventually have a for-profit business as a tenant—another angle which many communities have considered once they have restored their historic assets with public funds.

The National Endowment for the Humanities is interested in our endeavors to save our historic assets and to create a model from which other small communities such as ours can learn. The Executive Director of its state-based program, Mass Humanities, Brian Boyles, has offered to support us in our fundraising efforts. He has recently moved to Leverett and is anxious to learn more about our historic assets.

### **Barriers to moving forward**

1. Difficulty in coordinating the various, and sometimes conflicting needs of the various historical structures and assets, and the multiple organizations and ad hoc committees which compete for the same resources. To mitigate, an alliance of stakeholders, as described above, would consult on the project. They would consist of: designated members of the Historical Society and Historical Commission, a project manager, an architectural firm, foundation and development committee members who have either given funds or raised funds for the project.
2. Maintaining community momentum, coordination and engagement in planning the 250<sup>th</sup>. To help mitigate this barrier, the 250<sup>th</sup>- committee has been asked for their support and participation in the project. (Support letter to follow after January 23rd meeting)
3. Zoning, environmental, ADA, health and historic requirements could be in conflict. Different regulations will need to be researched, balanced, and complied with in completing the work. Conflicts for instance, between historic integrity and adaptive re-use may arise that will need to be resolved. To mitigate, contractors must be knowledgeable of the regulations and a decision-making structure in place. For instance, in consulting with Historic Deerfield, we found that second floor collections and artifacts, etc. do not have to be ADA compliant in an historic structure such as that of Moore's Corner, which dates back to 1810; and that not every structure has to have a bathroom if there are bathrooms available in some of the structures that are part of Historic Leverett. These findings will be checked and approved by local inspectors.

4. Unforeseen complications in the preservation and restoration process may exceed the original cost estimate. Supplementary funding would be needed through additional grants or community fundraising. We are allowing for a phase three which would take place in a second funding year.

**Feasibility:**

If not now, when should we preserve? Buildings are becoming more decrepit by the year. The state of the collections is deteriorating from water and humidity and lack of appropriate structures to house them. (See highlighted portions of report done in 2013, most of which is yet to be done.) Some of the archival materials have been digitized with funding from another CPC grant and are available for research and viewing online, but often patrons of museums also like to view original documents and artifacts. Without the sustained effort afforded by an engaged group of stakeholders that can pair grants and fundraising with town support, many of our historic assets that house our archival collections are falling to ruin and the rich New England history at the center of the founding of our country is almost impossible to sustain.

**Timeline:**

This is a project with multiple phases:

Phase One—January-September 2022:

- Research and create the alliance of stakeholders
- Design the interior spaces and plan collection management
- Set up an administrative framework to support/maintain the museums once the buildings are restored.
- Use community engagement to further fundraising efforts
- Incorporate historical assets and landscapes into Leverett’s planning for its future (Leverett Sustainable Economy Committee, Leverett Planning Board, Ad Hoc Committee tasked with making recommendations for preserving the Sawmill/Dam property)

Phase Two—September 2022-March 2023:

- Preserve and renovate the exteriors of the buildings
- Begin the restoration of the interior spaces
- Stabilize and organize the collections
- Raise funds to further seed the preservation fund
- Incorporate historical assets and landscapes into Leverett’s planning for its future (Leverett Sustainable Economy Committee, Leverett Planning Board, Ad Hoc Committee tasked with making recommendations for preserving the Sawmill/Dam property)

### Phase Three—May 2023-October 2024

- Acquire finish funding for the interior spaces, curating, and staging the collections and the artifacts
- Opening ceremonies at the 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration
- Use the museums as part of the programming

### **Bids and Budgeting:**

We ask for \$237,500, both as a seed for fundraising efforts and as working capital. The plan is to step up our current community engagement work and at the same time initiate restoration efforts to stabilize both buildings. During this phase we will both plan and raise funds to turn them into community resources that Leverett residents will use and engage with and that will enrich and increase the resilience of the community. We realize that this amount of money is more than the Historical Commission and the Historical Society have ever requested, but the confluence of our 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration of Leverett with the rapid deterioration of the buildings warrants this level of ask.

### **This is a preliminary budget breakdown:**

\$5,000 Legal/admin/research support for the creation of the Alliance of Stakeholders and the administrative framework to execute the grant

\$22,500 architectural designs for interior spaces and contract drawings for refined bid solicitation

\$100,000 Moore's Corner Exterior rehab, including completely new underpinning of the foundation

\$50,000 Moore's Corner interior rehab, display cases, Internet accessibility, heating, upgraded electric

\$40,000 Field Museum exterior rehab

\$20,000 Field Museum interior rehab including electricity and window repair, display cases

Total: \$237,500

The bids we are including range from \$255,000 — \$260,000, without some of the up-front costs. The difference between \$237,500 and \$260,000 if the additional bids are not lower will be raised by a combination of private money, other grants, and in-kind volunteerism to offset some of the expense. The initial work has already begun with the discussions with MASS Design Group.

Some of the granting institutions that we will apply to are:

MASS Design Group

National Endowment for the Humanities

Preservation Massachusetts

Mass Humanities

Other private foundations that are known by MASS Design Group and who might be interested in funding us

FRCOG grants for economic development

Massachusetts Preservation Project Funds

MHC