

THE BOXFORD SMALL REPAIR GRANT TRUST
THE PROPOSED BOXFORD SMALL REPAIR GRANT PROGRAM
THE BOXFORD HOUSING PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of establishing The Boxford Small Repair Grant Trust (the Trust) is to enable the creation and funding of the Boxford Small Repair Grant Program (Grant Program). This will enable income qualified residents over 60 and income qualified residents with a permanent disability to continue to age in place and in their community through essential modifications to their homes. This has received unanimous support from the Boxford Council on Aging, support from the Boxford Financial Committee and the Boxford Select Board recognizes this need. The vote in the May 2022 Town meeting, and the subsequent approval by the State, will allow the Town to form the Trust. The Trustees will then establish the grant program. What is presented here will be the recommendations to the Trustees by the Boxford Housing Partnership as a result of its study of towns with similar programs. The actual program details may change but they will always follow the guidelines of the Trust.

BACKGROUND

This program is based upon similar ones in several Massachusetts towns: Acton, Bedford, Concord, Lexington, Sudbury, Wayland and Weston to name a few. They have all recognized the need to support residents who wish to continue to live in their homes and engage in their communities and each has approached it differently. The program focuses on repairs to their existing houses that would be required for livability or code compliance. This will maintain the Town’s housing inventory and support the seniors who have given so much to the community over their years in the community.

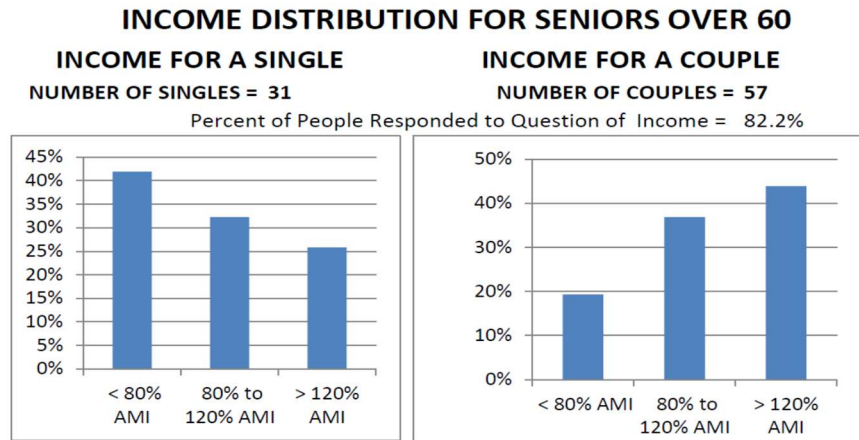
The proposed bylaw will define the general parameters for the program for Boxford residents at or below 100% of the AMI in the Lawrence area. Focus will be on resident seniors 60 and older as well as residents who have a permanent disability. A maximum of \$7,500 is consistent with what has been offered by other towns and fills an important need, as discussed below. The proposed bylaw will establish a board of Trustees and empower them to establish the details of the grant program and allow the Trustees to adapt the program as needs of the community evolve over time.

Table 15

Income for Households 65 and older				
	Boxford		Massachusetts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Households 65+	474		547,812	
Less than \$10,000	10	2.1%	50,643	9.2%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	31	6.5%	111,272	20.3%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	63	13.3%	80,032	14.6%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	44	9.3%	61,141	11.2%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	11	2.3%	48,399	8.8%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	21	4.4%	38,353	7.0%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	33	7.0%	41,888	7.6%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	98	20.7%	44,341	8.1%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	69	14.6%	40,857	7.5%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	21	4.4%	14,155	2.6%
\$200,000 or more	73	15.4%	16,731	3.1%

There are residents in Boxford who are eligible and in need for such a program. The above chart is from a report that was generated in 2014 and, based upon the 2010 census, approximately 200 households over 65 earned less than 100% of the AMI in 2010.

An informal survey of Council on Aging members was performed by the Boxford Housing Partnership in 2018 that, while the sample size was only 107, it showed that the need continued. (Note that the age limit was 60 for the COA vs. 65 for the census.) This survey showed the great need for single-family households that had substantially lower income levels.



This program will fill a funding need that is currently unserved in Boxford. There are State agencies that will provide large loans for significant renovation projects for a private residence, such as CEDAC and the North Shore Consortium. However, the process is complex and the property is usually encumbered with an affordable deed rider. Boxford has a property tax deferral program and real estate exemption program for qualifying residents, but this does not address the cash required for needed improvements. Rebuild Together (based in Haverhill) will address basic housing improvements for one day a year with volunteers, but many times the needed improvements are more complex requiring licensed contractors and the improvements cannot wait for the next year.

THE GRANT PROGRAM

Once the bylaw is approved by Town vote, The Grant Program will be established by the Trustees. It is planned that applications will be accepted on an as needed basis. All information (application, program description, etc.) will be available on the Town website. The financial qualification will include the previous year 1040 tax filing and 2% of the net asset in the house (tax assessment minus mortgage and liens). Since Town meetings are public and recorded, the personal information of the applicant will be kept confidential and the meetings that discuss the personal details will be conducted in executive session. The home owner will be responsible for obtaining a quote, a description of the work and all the required documentation on the contractor. The recipient will sign an agreement that they will not leave or sell the house for 1 year (except for extenuating circumstances). If approved, the Trustees will award half of the amount to the contractor at the start of the project and the remainder at successful completion of the contract. As was mentioned, the proposed program is based upon similar ones in other towns. Each as a slightly different structure, age and method of funding. A comparison of a few of those programs is listed in the table below.

COMPARISON OF RESIDENT GRANT PROGRAMS

TOWN	BOXFORD	BEDFORD	CONCORD	NEEDHAM	SUDBURY	WESTON
FEATURE						
First Grant Amount	\$5,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$5,000	~\$5,000
Max Grant Amount	\$7,500	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$7,000	\$10,000	~\$5,000
Income Eligibility, % AMI	100%	80%	100%	80%	100%	150%
Award Prioritized						Yes
No. Awards per Year	A/R	1x	2x	2x	2x	1x
Minimum Age	60	None	None	60	None	None
Disability Restriction (SSDI)	Yes	NA	NA	Yes	NA	NA
Current Affordable Restriction	NA	NA	FRR	NA	FRR	Yes
Condos Applicable	NA					Yes
Time for Work completion	12 Mos	12 mos	12 Mos	12 Mos		12 Mos
Number of Estimates	1	2	3	1	3	3
INCOME VERIFICATION						
Last Year 1040	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1st House Value % Median	100%	120%	100%	100%	100%	NA
Median House Value	\$650,000	\$741,166	\$925,200	\$920,256	\$667,900	NA
Value of House (Tax-Mort-Lien)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Value Other Property (Tax-Mort-Lien)	NA	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other Assets (Checking, 401K, etc.)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Yes
Formula for Additional Assets	2% Assets	2% Assets	2% Assets	2% Assets	2% Assets	NA

FUNDING

It is not planned to fund the program with tax raised money and establishing the Trust will NOT affect your tax base. The program will be initially funded with money that was returned to the Town after the unfortunate sale of an affordable unit at Andrews Farm that was in bankruptcy. The precise time table detailed in the Local Initiative Program (LIP) deed rider was not able to be met resulting in the sale of the unit at a current market rate.

The difference between the actual selling price of the property and the allowed selling price of the property per the LIP rider plus the bank expenses was approximately \$145,635. This amount was returned to the Town and is currently sitting in free cash since an appropriate fund to place the money did not exist at that time. A Town vote will be requested to establish the Trust and to transfer this amount to the proposed Trust. When these funds are expended, the Trust will allow the Trustees to raise additional money from grants, donations, etc. Based upon data from other towns on usage of the program, the initial funding should last several years before addition funds will be needed.

Questions and comments may be submitted to HPBoxford@gmail.com

Thank you for your support,

Boxford Housing Partnership
 Joe Hill, Chair
 Jim Barnes