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Ms. Mollie Hutchings  
Community Preservation Manager  
City of Newton Planning & Development Department  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

September 12, 2025

Dear Ms. Hutchings:

Please find attached a Pre-Proposal for a Historic Resources CPA grant of \$600,000 to support a \$2.5 million restoration and capital improvement project for the Staples Farmhouse, a City of Newton Landmark. Dating back to 1750, the building is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The proposed CPA grant would represent just 12.5% of our ten-year capital expenditure program. These investments are dedicated to re-envisioning, restoring and adapting this historic building, and comprise the completed **Phase I** (2018-24) and the current **Phase II** (2025-27).

The Suzuki School of Newton is a certified 501c3 non-profit organization. Our mission is to foster a spirit of excellence and empathy and promote intellectual, character and cultural development, following the globally renowned philosophy of Dr. Shinichi Suzuki. We provide music instruction to over 300 children and adults annually and operate a pre-school with 40 places. Programs are oversubscribed and reach families throughout Newton and from surrounding towns.

Shortly after the Staples Farmhouse faced threats of demolition, we purchased the property in 2017 for \$3.7m, partly financed through a \$2.3m mortgage. We needed new premises to meet the steeply expanding demand for our programs. We welcomed the unique history and architectural features of our new home, while knowing that it would need restoration and adaptation to serve as a school. It was a “leap of faith.” Initially we obtained a waiver from meeting full ADA compliance. However, we have now arrived at a critical juncture since the extension to that waiver will expire in 2028. The Phase II project is essential to the continuance of the school.

**Phase I:** Over the past 7 years, many steps were implemented to open and operate the school and pre-school. We worked hard to successfully raise over \$2.3 million in funding. Essential capital improvements now completed include:

- install fire alarm and sprinkler systems (both wet and dry)
- upgrade electric and plumbing to commercial code
- install ADA compliant restrooms for adults and for children

- install ramps and replace door hardware to also be ADA compliant
- re-landscape and add parking lot lights for safety
- repairs to the foundation.

**Phase II:** We are now seeking support from the Community Preservation Committee for the planned 2026-2027 capital improvements:

- (a) further restore the exterior fabric of the building; and
- (b) comply with accessibility requirements through construction of a rear annex building incorporating a vertical lift.

The proposed ADA-compliant annex, thoughtfully designed by architect John LaFreniere, has been approved by the Newton Historical Commission (February 2024) through a Certificate of Appropriateness. The designs also received thorough vetting by the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB). The City of Newton Planning Department carried out the Administrative Site Review Process (April 2025), which generated helpful feedback as well as specific guidelines for construction considerations.

Our building and the green spaces outside are in constant use for community events beyond our own school operations. These include: Linda Plaut Festival of the Arts, Multicultural Festival in May, student concerts, art shows by Newton Art Association and Newton Watercolor Society, Summer Porch Series, and hosting meetings for the Waban Improvement Society and the Newton PorchFest.

Fundraising to combine with a potential CPA grant is already well advanced, with over \$1 million in donations already pledged in this second campaign. We look forward to meeting with the Community Preservation Committee and answering any questions.

Yours truly,



Sachiko Isihara  
Executive Director