To:       David Toomey, Instructor of ENGL 379
From:    Nickolas Aylward
Subject: A Report on the Feasibility of Writing and Submitting a Proposal to Seek Funding for the Conservation of Burial Hill in Plymouth, Massachusetts on behalf of the Friends of Burial Hill.
Date:    November 9, 2013

Purpose:

The Purpose of this memo is to determine, and to report on, whether or not a grant proposal to conserve and maintain Burial Hill, located in Plymouth, Massachusetts, would be accepted, funded, and fulfilled.

Summary:

The proposed project would serve to maintain and restore historic Burial Hill. Funding would be provided to the Friends of Burial Hill. There are a number of possible organizations specializing in grants for the conservation, maintenance, and creation of green-spaces. Funding for projects of this nature appears to fall in the range of $1,000 to $10,000 with the majority of grants providing at least $5,000 of funding. An amount anywhere in this range should be sufficient to markedly improve the state of Burial Hill.

Background/discussion:

Burial Hill is located on the Pilgrim Path in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Consisting of roughly 5 acres of land between South Russell Street and School Street, Burial Hill is an important green-space in the center of an otherwise developed area. Perched upon a prominent hill behind the first church – overlooking Plymouth Bay – it contains the resting places of many prominent
Plymouthians as well as monuments identifying the site of the first fort and first meetinghouse in Plymouth.

A walk through Burial Hill reveals cracked walkways, fallen tree-limbs and leaves, tipped gravestones, and deteriorating park-benches. Volunteers from the Friends of Burial Hill are the primary providers of maintenance and, that being the case, could use support from outside entities. Few foundations award grants to individuals; therefore, this grant would be prepared on behalf of the Friends of Burial Hill. This 501(c)(3) non-profit organization was “founded for the purpose of protecting, preserving and enhancing the cemetery and its environs. [It’s] goals include the preservation of the physical grounds and educating the public to the importance of the conservation of the gravestones, memorials and commemorative sites.” The 501(c)(3) classification improves the odds of being awarded a grant and ensures that donations are tax-deductible.

This project could realistically appeal to four organizations, two private, non-profit and two governmental: Fields Pond Foundation, The A.D. Makepeace Neighborhood Fund, The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management’s (DEM) Greenways Program, and The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Fields Pond Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit which awards grants from $500-$25,000 to organizations in New England and New York. The most common grants range from $2,000 to $10,000. Back in 2000 the Fields Pond Foundation awarded a grant of $4,000 to update and maintain the Pilgrim Trail, a 2.7 mile long nature trail running alongside the Town Brook. The Pilgrim Trail, like Burial Hill, is considered part of the Pilgrim Path – this suggests that the Fields Pond Foundation sees the merit in restoration and preservation this historic collection of landmarks. The Fields Pond Foundation has also expressed interest in other conservation and
restoration projects in the town of Plymouth – a $10,000 dollar grant was awarded to the Wildlands Trust to construct a new trailhead and system of trails at the 10 acre Davis-Douglas Farm.

The A.D. Makepeace Neighborhood Fund states that “grants are available on a competitive basis to non-profit organizations and governmental agencies which provide services to residents of Wareham, Plymouth, Carver, and Rochester. Grants typically range from $5,000 to $10,000 and must be in one of the following disciplines: agriculture, education, health care, community housing, historic preservation, or environmental protection.” The Neighborhood Fund is a more geographically focused 501(c)(3) non-profit than the Fields Pond Foundation and they have awarded a significant number of grants to non-profits and governmental organizations in Plymouth. In 2005 The A.D. Makepeace Neighborhood Fund awarded $10,000 to the Plymouth Department of Marine and Environmental Affairs for work on the Jenney Grist Mill Fishway, another landmark on the Pilgrim Path. They also awarded grants to various other restoration and conservation projects in Plymouth in 2008, 2009, 2012, and 2013. It seems feasible that The A.D. Makepeace Neighborhood Fund would take interest in a project of this nature.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management’s (DEM) Greenways Program promotes “the creation of greenways and trails at the local, regional, and state levels” by providing grants of up to $5,000 as well as information and technical assistance. These awards can be provided to both non-profits and governmental agencies. In 2002 the DEM Greenways Program awarded a $5,000 to the town of Plymouth for the conservation and restoration of the Pilgrim Trial. Assisting another landmark, that is also a green-space, along the Pilgrim Path would fit into a logical progression towards turning the Pilgrim Pathway into a true greenway.
The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation is another possible, albeit less likely, candidate to provide funding to the Friends of Burial Hill. The DCR has provided $750,000 to the town of Plymouth for the Town Brook Dam Removal project. It is highly unlikely that the DCR would entertain a proposal such as this one.

Further research could be done to tailor a grant proposal to any one of these organizations. Their goals are slightly variable, as is the amount they are willing and able to award. Burial Hill could benefit from new pathways and benches, gravestone restoration, expanded landscaping work, expanded volunteer recruiting, and educational programs. The areas chosen to receive funding should be based upon the organization being addressed; for example, The A.D. Makepeace Neighborhood Fund has shown interest in funding educational programs – in 2011 they donated $5,000 for a coastal environment education program – so a grant proposal tailored toward this particular foundation could emphasize the Gravestone Cleaning Workshops already held by the Friends of Burial Hill and propose expansion of the program to include history lessons for the town’s youth. Due to the pre-existing framework provided by the Friends of Burial hill it is entirely feasible that, with additional funding, all of these programs could executed capably and efficiently. Focus could also be placed on spreading awareness to attract more volunteers to the cause and thereby ensure the ongoing success of these efforts.

Conclusion:

Based on my research it is clear that a significant number of organizations have a track record of awarding funds to non-profits such as the Friends of Burial Hill. Any of the aforementioned organizations can realistically be expected to consider this project worthy of funding. The Friends of Burial Hill have also proven themselves a reliable and effective organization. They hold frequent clean-ups and provide basic restoration services and educational workshops. On
August 7th, 2013 – barely three years after its founding – the Friends of Burial Hill succeeded in securing Burial Hill a place on the National Register of Historic Places, something the Town of Plymouth had failed to do in the past. This accomplishment is a clear demonstration of the credibility and effectiveness of the Friends of Burial Hill that will certainly be noted by grant awarding organizations. A draft proposal for this project can be completed on time and, as shown by the analysis above, has a high probability of success with any one of the organizations listed.

Sources: