

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SOMERVILLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

Andrea Shapiro, Managing Trustee

Trustees
Brielle Calderan
Mary Cassesso
Michael Feloney
Kathryn Gallant
David Gibbs
Donna Haynes
Councilor Wilfred N. Mbah
Cassie Walston

Minutes
Thursday, January 11, 2024 Meeting – 5:15 pm

Trustees attending: Mary Cassesso, Mike Feloney, Katie Gallant, David Gibbs, Donna Haynes, Wilfred Mbah, Andrea Shapiro

Staff attending: Paul Goldstein, Lisa Davidson & Morena Zelaya (OSPCD Housing Division), Roberta Cameron & Miranda Rubin (OSPCD XXX)

The meeting started at 5:15 pm, with Andrea Shapiro serving in the role of chairperson.

1. Introduction of new Trustee: Councilor at Large Wilfred N. Mbah

Paul Goldstein announced the attendance of a new appointee to the Trust, Council Wilfred Mbah. PG: Joining the meeting tonight is newly appointed Trustee Wil Mbah. Will was recently re-elected City Councilor at large and is filling the President of the City Council designee seat previously held by Charlotte Kelly. Will then introduced himself to the Board. He stated how impressed he was with how the Trust has been moving projects and programs along. Noted this is his third term as a city councilor, but first time sitting on the Trust. Trustees then introduced themselves, followed by staff.

2. December 14, 2023 Meeting minutes review and approval

Katie Gallant made a **motion** to accept, Mary Cassesso seconded the motion and the motion **passed** unanimously by roll-call vote.

3. Financial report(s) review: CPA account and non-CPA account (December 2023) and revenue projections

Paul Goldstein informed trustees that both the CPA and non-CPA financial report had minimal activity in the month of December 2023. He stated that there is currently just under \$1.1 million available in uncommitted non-CPA Trust funds. He also informed trustees that the balance for available Early Action Acquisition Funds is the same as in December, just under \$3.3 million and that there are approximately \$96,000 of CPA Trust funds available for new commitments.

Paul notified trustees that for the period of January 1, 2024 through the end of August 2024, the Trust is estimated to receive about \$5.6 million in revenue through all of its sources. None of those funds have been committed as of yet and will be available for new commitments upon receipt.

Wil asked a question regarding percentage allocations of Trust funds and Paul explained that percentage allocations were not in place as of the new strategic plan. Mary made a **motion** to accept the reports, Donna seconded the motion, the motion **passed** unanimously by roll-call vote.

4. New Business

City of Somerville Five Year Consolidated Plan: introduction by project team and related information.

Paul introduced Roberta Cameron and Miranda Rubin, who are part of the administration/finance team in the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development and attended to present information and solicit Trustee feedback on the upcoming 5-Year Consolidated Plan for the City of Somerville. He noted that there would be an opportunity for any Trustee questions or comments following the presentation.

Roberta provided some background context on the 5-Year Plan. She noted the plan is required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a condition of the City to receive Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME, and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG). The City receives about \$3.2 million through those programs combined on an annual basis. The purpose of the plan is to identify needs and priorities to guide how those funds will be spent. The City is also required to submit an annual action plan with specific ways in which the funds are spent.

Roberta went over each of the funding buckets for the plan (CDBG, HOME, ESG). She noted that CDBG funds are meant to serve low-to-moderate income community members. She explained that in the past CDBG funds have been spent on economic development, housing, transportation/infrastructure, parks, and other programs.

Miranda explained that HUD mandated caps on the funding sources being discussed. Roberta noted that the City is subject to those thresholds despite certain categories perhaps having a greater need than others. Roberta noted that the team is just beginning the participation portion of the plan, which will include public input at community meetings, consultations with City staff, boards & commissions, and a survey.

Questions/comments from Trustees:

Wil asked what it would take to change the requirements that HUD has for what percentage of funds can be allocated to other categories? Miranda noted that this is just one source of funding for the City, she was unclear on the process of how to change the allocations and noted any process would likely be cumbersome. Roberta commented that even if all the funding was directed to one category, more would still be needed.

David stated that there is a perception that there are programs which depend on these funds year to year and that means there is not a lot of flexibility for new programs to be funded. Roberta noted that the 5-year plan is a good way to reevaluate City's priorities. She said this the first time this team is working on a plan, which gives a "fresh perspective."

Katie asked if they could elaborate on the survey process and how information on the process is disseminated. Roberta and Miranda explained that the survey opened that day and would be active until the end of February. They said they would provide information about the survey at meetings and would be asking stakeholders to send the survey to their constituents. The feedback would then help inform how the plan is written.

The pie chart displaying allocation by category from 2018-2022 was called up after a question from Mary regarding how these funds were expended.

Paul acknowledged that these funds are vital sources for the development of affordable housing. He gave one example of a project, 7 Summer Street, whose acquisition was partially funded by CDBG dollars.

Donna asked if money spent in categories was based on any needs assessments. Roberta responded that the 5-year plan is the needs assessment process. Each year the City also creates a one-year action plan that is more specific but is consistent with the needs assessed in the 5-year plan.

David asked if the City was allowed to decide at which AMI tier, for example 30%, to allocate the affordable housing portion of funds? Roberta responded that there are no requirements to her knowledge that funds be distributed for various income tiers to be served, as long as it is below 80% AMI.

Andrea noted she hopes there will be a more robust public participation than past plans. She noted the importance of these funding sources which are often used in conjunction with Trust funding. She thanked the two presenters as these funds are a very important part of the work the Trust conducts.

Mary commented if perhaps each category could help complement one another to build more of a continuum on some of the work being done in housing.

Wil asked how quickly the funding gets transferred and spent once it's available? Paul and Lisa noted that there is usually a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, through which contracts are awarded and funding is provided through reimbursement following a contract being executed.

Katie noted that she got emails from the City about various events but hasn't received anything regarding the 5-Year Plan. She suggested that it be shared across multiple platforms in multiple languages. Paul asked if Miranda and Roberta could please share fliers, links and any other information that would assist trustees in disseminating the plan to their channels.

5. *Standing Business*

Trust staff liaison duties for January, February, and March 2024

Paul reminded trustees that his last day prior to leaving for paternity leave for a few weeks would be the next day. He announced that his Housing Division colleague and office mate, Morena Zelaya, will be assuming a bulk of his duties as staff liaison to the Trust while he is out. He stated that she would be the primary point of contact for trustees and would facilitate the February and possibly March Trust meetings. He informed trustees that Morena serves as staff liaison to the Condominium Review Board and has a working knowledge of Open Meeting Law and the process for staffing a City Board/Commission.

Other selected updates

Paul updated that he had not received any additional updates regarding the Home Rule Petition since he was informed that the legislature did not bring the petition to a vote at its last session which ended in November. He said that staff would continue to monitor the status of the Home Rule Petition in his absence over the next few weeks.

He had one additional update to share, this on 24 Webster Ave., which, he explained for the newer Trustees, is an all-affordable development project being built by Just-A-Start. The Trust committed \$4.6 million in non-CPA funds to the project last year. The project team was informed that day that the project will be funded by the State's Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. He anticipated that closing calls would begin in the next few weeks.

6. *Communications*

Paul thanked the trustees for the well wishes and said he'd see everyone in a few weeks.

7. *Adjournment*

The meeting adjourned at 6:04 pm