



KATJANA BALLANTYNE  
MAYOR

## CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE



### MINUTES

DECEMBER 11, 2024

#### MEMBERS

Jahan Habib, Chair  
Ryan Kiracofe, Vice Chair  
Laura Beretsky  
Jon Bronenkant  
Joe Capuano  
Heather Heimarck  
Eric Parkes  
David Turin

#### STAFF

Roberta Cameron

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) virtually held its annual public hearing and monthly meeting at 6:30 pm on the Zoom Webinar platform in compliance with Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022 regarding the Open Meeting Law during the COVID-19 crisis.

**Members Present** Jahan Habib, Ryan Kiracofe, Eric Parkes, Heather Heimarck, Joe Capuano, David Turin, Jon Bronenkant, Laura Beretsky

#### Members Absent

**Staff Present** Roberta Cameron

**Others Present** OSPCD Director of Finance, Alan Inacio

#### Roll Call

Chair Habib opened the meeting at 6:30. He reminded everyone that the meeting was being held virtually and being recorded in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023. CPA Manager Cameron called the roll.

#### Agenda Item 1: Approval of Meeting Minutes

Members discussed some minor edits to the draft meeting minutes from 11/20/2024.

Member Bronenkant moved to approve the meeting minutes as amended from November 20, 2024, seconded by member Beretsky. The motion passed 7-1-0, with Member Turin abstaining because he joined late and was absent during the discussion.

#### Agenda Item 2: Update on Fall Report

Cameron updated committee members that the potential change she had identified in the previous meeting has not been processed yet, so the annual report with the original data she presented at the last meeting is the final report for this year. If the AHT interest is returned to the CPC as she described at the prior meeting, this will be reflected in the unanticipated revenue that shows up in next year's annual report.

#### Agenda Item 2: Continued Deliberation on FY25 Applications

##### Affordable Housing Trust Allocation

Cameron shared the FY25 funding spreadsheet showing the amount of funding available and the funding requests under consideration. She also shared the draft Recommendation reflecting the CPC's decision on transferring funds to the Somerville AHT, including \$1,128,936 budgeted in FY25, plus \$346,492 to be transferred from the Undesignated Fund Balance to align with the program area distribution goals the CPC established in its FY25 Community Preservation Plan. The CPC's FY25 Fall Report shows how the

adjustment was calculated. The Recommendation letter does not include any conditions, as the precedent for AHT funding distributions is to include conditions in a MOA, rather than as project-specific conditions.

Member Heimarck moved to recommend the transfer of \$346,492 from the Undesignated Fund Balance to the Affordable Housing Reserve, seconded by Bronenkant. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

Member Beretsky moved to recommend the transfer of \$1,475,428 to the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust, seconded by Parkes. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

#### Nunziato Park

Cameron shared a draft funding recommendation for the installation of water fountains at Nunziato Park.

Cameron brought to attention another document in the meeting packet that lists standard funding conditions that have been included in prior funding rounds, and noted that some of these are redundant with the General Conditions that are in Grant Agreements and Memoranda of Agreements for all CPA grants. After some discussion, committee members agreed that all of the standard conditions, including the requirement that projects must be initiated in 3 years unless an extension is granted by the CPC (which applies mainly to City projects, since this is already true for contracts with non-City entities), be included in the General Conditions, and that Cameron will revise the attachments to grant agreements and MOAs to include a signature on general conditions as well as project-specific conditions.

Following this discussion, no project-specific conditions were included in the recommendation for Nunziato Park.

Member Kiracofe moved to recommend that PSUF be awarded \$200,000 to install water fountains at Nunziato Park, seconded by Parkes. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

#### Quincy Street Park Renovation

Member Kiracofe observed that the budget submitted to the committee is still inaccurate and requests that a corrected budget be submitted before he can make a funding recommendation. Member Bronenkant shared the budget and explained that the inclusion of a water fountain in an earlier version had been an error – that the amount was intended to be split between hardscapes and landscaping. Kiracofe asked what is the basis for the estimates shown. Bronenkant offered that the numbers were based on a cost per acre assumption for types of park improvements. Heimarck suggested that this is a conservative estimate, and that it will likely cost less than what is budgeted. Committee members asked for Bronenkant to resubmit the budget with the correct numbers, and to include information about the basis for estimating the cost.

#### Elizabeth Peabody House Siding Restoration

Committee members discussed the draft recommendation for the Elizabeth Peabody House to restore the siding on their building at 277 Broadway. Heimarck observed that the meeting packet included a letter from the City's Planning Staff summarizing the Advisory Review that the Historic Preservation Commission had given for each of the historic preservation project applications had received. Parkes confirmed that the HPC reviewed the application and met with the applicant, and were enthusiastic about the proposal to remove the siding and replace with a more historically-appropriate finish.

There was discussion about the budget requested, confirming that the amount requested in the full application was \$172,000, and that the budget did not include any contingency. Cameron asked whether the committee wanted to hold this application for a month to seek clarification from the applicant that they do not need to request contingency funds, whether the committee wanted to add contingency to the requested amount, or to recommend funding for the project as requested. Committee members agreed that they prefer to recommend the funding as described in the application budget, even if this is likely to result in the need for an off-cycle request for additional funds.

Member Kiracofe moved to recommend that the Elizabeth Peabody House be awarded \$172,000 to restore the siding on the exterior of their building at 277 Broadway, seconded by Turin. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

#### Somerville Museum FY25 Collections Conservation

Cameron presented a draft recommendation to the committee for a project to preserve artifacts in the Somerville Museum's collections, including archives housed in the museum's document room, the Stone Family suite of furniture, and the wrought iron rails leading to the Central Street entrance. The draft recommendation included a project-specific condition that artifacts that have been preserved using CPA funds may not be sold or disposed of without first obtaining City approval. Parkes observed that the items in this scope had been requested last year but were denied due to a shortage of funds, and he supported funding this request. Cameron noted that this application did not receive an advisory review from HPC this fall because HPC already reviewed the same scope last year.

Heimarck suggested that the CPC review the historic preservation budget compared with the funding requests exceeded the amount of available funds in that category. She noted that the CPC has consistently prioritized open space and recreation in its project area allocation described in the Community Preservation Plan, and that nevertheless historic preservation has consistently requested and received more funding. There was discussion about the scenarios shown in the workbook, and whether the committee should consider funding less than what was requested for historic preservation projects this round. Committee members observed the amount of funding that would remain in the Undesignated Fund Balance if all of the projects are funded as shown in the workbook scenario. Kiracofe expressed support for funding the historic preservation projects in the pipeline. Bronenkant agreed, and pointed out that with additional funding next year it may be easier to shift the balance of between program areas moving forward.

Habib asked whether there are off-cycle applications anticipated. Cameron reported that PSUF had submitted a memorandum which was included in the meeting packet, stating that they anticipate a request for \$100,000 to finish the Dilboy Auxiliary Fields project in the next few months. Bronenkant gave some context explaining the reason for the anticipated budget shortfall which is due to the ending of the ARPA funding.

Beretsky indicated that she is inclined to recommend funding for this application, but reflected that in her experience serving on the CPC the Museum has had many successful applications for CPA funds because they are experienced at raising funding for their institution. She suggested that this indicates a need for more effective outreach to recruit potential applicants. Also, the community input that drives the CPC's funding allocation plan each year often does not reflect an understanding of the community benefits of historic preservation projects, especially where they dovetail with affordable housing or nonprofit organizations. Turin agreed, and also pointed out that the stakeholders who receive the CPC's funding for

affordable housing and open space and recreation are relatively fixed, while the additional outreach to recruit applicants is likely to draw more projects in the historic preservation category.

Parkes pointed out that the CPC has sufficient available funds to cover all of the requested projects and still to leave sufficient to carry over in the Undesignated Fund Balance, and he felt that it would be arbitrary to deny funding to any one of the projects without having a reason why they should be declined.

Member Turin moved to recommend that the Somerville Museum be awarded \$114,259 to conserve the collections as described in their FY25 application with the condition described in the draft recommendation, seconded by Kiracofe. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

#### Veteran's Cemetery

Cameron shared a draft recommendation reflecting the committee's consensus from the prior meeting that they supported funding for the study but not the advance commitment of \$100,000 for the first phase of construction. Cameron reported that the Veteran's Services Department is working with the Grants Department to identify potential additional funding sources, and that the one grant they have identified so far is due in December, which would give adequate time for them to submit an off-cycle application for additional funding if they are ready to proceed at that time.

Member Bronenkant flagged that the proposed study anticipates work on parks and outdoor spaces, including the Cemetery, and that the Veteran's Services Department should coordinate with PSUF on planning for improvements at these sites. PSUF staff also noted that the proposed condition assessment study will provide only preliminary cost estimates, and that any work that follows will require biddable specifications. Member Turin asked whether additional funding would be needed to produce a study with bid specifications. Member Heimarck responded that the Veterans Services Department is in need of the professional expertise of a preservation expert as described in their revised application, and she supports giving funding for the study to help them understand the scope for improving these monuments.

Member Capuano expressed support for funding the Veterans Department's full request, noting the importance of acknowledging the service of Somerville's veterans. Other committee members reiterated their agreement with this priority but that the proposal to fund just the study before committing funds for construction was to ensure that the work is done correctly, for a better result. Kiracofe added that the CPC has a responsibility to know what they are getting with the CPA funds they recommend to spend. Capuano agreed with fellow committee members that funding for the study is a first step to be followed by future funding requests for implementation. Heimarck added that the CPA application process has already helped the Veterans Department to access the support they need to scope this project.

Member Parkes weighed in that he is stepping away from the meeting temporarily but that he is in favor of recommending funding for this project.

Member Beretsky moved to recommend that the Veterans Services Department be awarded \$18,500 to prepare a condition assessment of the Veteran's Cemetery and additional veterans monuments with the condition that the Veteran's Services Department will coordinate with PSUF for the preservation of the Veteran's Cemetery and monuments in City parks, and with DCR for monuments located on property under DCR's jurisdiction, seconded by Heimarck. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

#### 12 Pleasant Ave

Cameron described the draft recommendation for SCLT's restoration of the Elijah Walker House. As this is a blended project, the recommendation would commit a portion of the budgeted reserve funds under the category of Affordable Housing. This would increase the amount the CPA program spends on affordable housing relative to historic preservation, ensure that unspent CPA funds are returned to the Affordable Housing reserve, and ensure that CPA funds count toward the creation of these new affordable housing units. Heimarck asked if the project is already under an affordability restriction. Cameron reported that SCLT has the intention of placing the units under affordability restrictions, but that this has not been carried out yet.

Cameron noted the conditions in the draft recommendation. 1) It has been the CPC's practice to require all privately-owned properties to record perpetual preservation restrictions as a condition of CPA funding. 2) Affordability restrictions are required on units that CPA helps to create. Wording to this effect was refined with input from committee members.

Cameron referred to the funding worksheet to explain how the amount of funding to be drawn from the Historic Reserve and Budgeted Reserve. The amount to be credited toward Affordable Housing was highlighted in the full application, equal to the underground/interior restoration work and the contingency, which add up to \$136,508. Kiracofe confirmed that the proposed recommendation would commit funds over and above the 50% allocation to affordable housing, and that the funds would remain in the affordable housing reserve before the CPC votes to transfer them to the Affordable Housing Trust. Cameron explained that the Budgeted Reserve can be used in any of the three program areas, although this is the first time there has been a proposal for the CPC to directly fund an affordable housing project. Heimarck suggested that the additional boost to affordable housing helps to make up for prior years when some unanticipated revenues may not have been distributed to the AHT as is the committee's current practice.

Cameron pointed out that the City planning staff had determined that the entire scope in the application was deemed to be eligible under historic preservation, so the committee has the option to fund it entirely under the HP category. Turin asked why it would be beneficial to classify a portion of the grant under affordable housing. Cameron replied that it would benefit SCLT to use CPA funds toward the creation of these affordable housing units because they would become eligible to use CPA for rehabilitation of the units at some time in the future. The proportion of income-restricted units should be at least equal to the proportion of the renovation costs attributed to affordable housing.

Heimarck reviewed the budget in the project application. She felt that the amount of contingency shown in the budget is overly conservative. Committee members agreed that they preferred to include a 15% contingency as shown in the application instructions, which amounts to a \$30,000 reduction from the requested amount. The amount that would be credited toward affordable housing would be \$106,508.

Member Kiracofe moved to recommend that the Somerville Community Land Trust be awarded \$365,000 for the renovation of 12 Pleasant Ave, including \$91,028 from the Historic Preservation Reserve and \$273,972 from the Budgeted reserve, classifying \$106,508 from the Budgeted Reserve toward Affordable Housing, with the following conditions: that the Somerville Land Trust agrees to execute and record a perpetual preservation restriction on its property, the Elijah Walker House at 12 Pleasant Ave; and that Affordability restrictions be put in place on at least 30% of the units in coordination with the Affordable Housing Trust, seconded by Bronenkant. The motion passed unanimously, 7-1-0, with Parkes abstaining because he had missed the portion of the meeting when this item was under discussion.

### Open Space Acquisition Fund

Cameron recalled that committee members had split feelings about the amount being requested for the open space acquisition fund at the previous meeting. Habib confirmed that the funding is available should the CPC choose to recommend all of the open space projects as requested.

Committee members agreed that they prefer to commit funding for a fixed amount, with \$300,000 being larger than previous installments to the OS Acquisition fund, but still acceptable.

Kiracofe expressed that he would like to see a time limitation attached to the grant, rather than tying up the funds so that they will not be used for a long time. He would prefer to see CPA funds being actively spent. Heimarck countered that a timeline is counter to the purpose of the OS Acquisition Fund, which seeks to accumulate funds until an opportunity to acquire comes up, at which point the City can hopefully act quickly. Thus the OS Acquisition fund should be exempt from the standard timeline.

Cameron stated that the OS Acquisition fund currently has a total of \$500,000 which was awarded over three tranches. Bronenkant observed that an acre of land in Somerville will cost more than \$13 million to acquire. In further discussion, several committee members agreed that they are uncomfortable locking up funds with no set timeline or project in mind. Turin questioned the likelihood of a parcel becoming available that the City can buy – but felt that if it can happen it is worth the investment to expand open space even if that means locking up the funds for that purpose, because otherwise all of the open space funds are just going to improving existing open spaces. It's important to be trying to expand open space. Bronenkant posited that the main benefit is being able to act quickly. Turin suggested that it might be helpful to have a target amount to fill the OS Acquisition fund.

Turin asked whether it might be possible to release funds out of the OS Acquisition Fund if there was a desire to use the money for a different purpose. Cameron suggested that the grantee, PSUF in this case, could submit a memorandum requesting to cancel the project and the money could be returned to the pool of available OS funds. Although there is currently \$50,000 of OS Acquisition funds that are currently in the wrong account due to a scrivener's error years ago, where a City Council order will be required to combine them back with the CPA OS Acquisition Fund where they were intended to be.

Heimarck queried whether it makes sense to vote on funding this project out of both the OS Reserve and Budgeted Reserve when the amount of a potential grant for Quincy Street renovations out of the OS Reserve is still to be determined. Cameron replied that a reduction in the amount of funding awarded from the OS Reserve would leave funding in the OS Reserve that can be used on an off-cycle application or carried over to next year.

Member Turin moved to recommend that the Public Space & Urban Forestry Division be awarded \$300,000 for the Open Space Acquisition Fund, with the following conditions: that a perpetual conservation restriction will be recorded on all properties acquired with CPA funds per the requirement of the CPA enabling legislation, seconded by Beretsky. The motion passed unanimously, 7-1-0, with Parkes abstaining because he had missed the portion of the meeting when this item was under discussion.

### 50 Bow Street Brickwork

Committee members agreed that the time was too late to begin discussion on this project. Beretsky regretted that she and Habib will not be there to vote on this project. Cameron promised that the new

committee members would be given the meeting recordings and minutes so that they can be fully informed about the committee discussions up to this point.

### **Agenda Item 3: Election of Officers for 2025**

Habib nominated Ryan Kiracoffe as chair and Eric Parkes as vice chair, seconded by Heimarck. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

Cameron announced that three new members will be joining the committee in January, including Carlos Ayala, Mary Jo Bohart, and Michael McNeley.

Beretsky and Habib expressed gratitude for the time they spent working with the CPC.

### **Documents and Exhibits**

1. Agenda
2. Draft Minutes 11/20/2024
3. FY25 Financial Workbook
4. Supplemental Application Materials
  - a. HPC CPA HP FY25 Advisory Reviews
  - b. Quincy Street Open Space Renovations
  - c. SCLT – 12 Pleasant Ave
  - d. Veterans Cemetery Restoration Project
5. Draft Funding Recommendations
6. Memorandum re. Anticipated Off-Cycle Request for Dilboy Auxiliary Fields
7. Summary of CPA Conditions
8. Reference documents describing existing CPA Conditions
  - a. Draft CPA FY25 Grant Agreement General Conditions
  - b. FY21 CPA City MOA General Conditions
  - c. FY22 CPA AHTF MOA General Conditions
  - d. Magoun House Grant Agreement Conditions
  - e. Somerville CPA Draft PR CR policy