



KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE



MINUTES

JUNE 25, 2025

MEMBERS

Ryan Kiracofe, Chair
Eric Parkes, Vice Chair
Carlos Ayala
Mary Jo Bohart
Jon Bronenkant
Joe Capuano
Heather Heimarck
Michael McNeley
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 2 of the Acts of 2025 regarding the Open Meeting Law.

Members Present Eric Parkes, Michael McNeley, Joe Capuano, Heather Heimarck, Carlos Ayala, David Turin Jon Bronenkant

Members Absent Ryan Kiracofe, Mary Jo Bohart

Staff Present Roberta Cameron, OSPCD Director of Finance, Alan Inacio

Others Present

Roll Call

Standing in as Chair, Vice-Chair Parkes 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

Member Heimarck moved to approve the meeting minutes from 5/28/25, seconded by member Bronenkant. The motion passed 7-0.

Agenda Item 2: Budget Update

Cameron informed committee members that the Finance Department determined that the surcharge increase must be excluded from the budget estimate for the first two quarters of FY26 because they won't start collecting the surcharge until January 2026. Since the ballot question clearly stated that the surcharge increase would be effective July 1 of 2026, Cameron's understanding is that the Assessor will collect the full year's surcharge starting in the third quarter of the year – i.e., doubling up in the second half of FY26. Cameron anticipates that the CPC may need to hold a special meeting in the fall to appropriate the additional revenue. The time frame of when the reconciliation appropriation would need to occur is not yet certain. Meanwhile the CPA Plan has been updated to show the budget that was approved by City Council, which estimates \$5.8M total revenue rather than the \$7M budget that the CPC recommended last month.

Heimarck observed that she did not see the CPA surcharge on her first FY26 tax bill. She anticipates that taxpayers will be surprised and unhappy if they receive bills for the second two quarters that have double surcharges. Committee members requested that information about the schedule for the surcharge

increase be shared with taxpayers. It would be important for people to understand that the surcharge will be 4.5% for the last two quarters of FY26 and then will be 3% going forward. If they had known that this will be the schedule for collecting the surcharge they would have supported the surcharge starting in January to avoid the doubling up for two quarters.

Agenda Item 3: CPA Administrative Budget

Cameron shared a request from the Housing Division to use CPA admin funds to help pay for a staff person who administers CPA funds used by the SAHT, as explained in a memo that was shared in the meeting packet.

Turin asked whether the CPC had a choice of whether to approve this request, or if the decision was already made by the City. Cameron stated that the CPC could approve or deny the request. Ayala asked and Cameron confirmed that the request would be ongoing, not a one-time expense. Turin asked if this would come from within the 55% that goes to affordable housing. Cameron explained that this would come from the (4%) administrative budget. Heimarck noted that the CPA manager's budget has gone from 90% CPA-funded to 100% CPA-funded. She is concerned about the precedent of the City pushing more administrative expenses onto the CPA fund, and wonders if there would be staffing requests for each of the program areas. McNelly recalled that, in setting its annual budget he had been enthusiastic about supporting CPC-led initiatives with administrative funds. He would like to see the CPC manager lend capacity to other CPC-related departments, or to add CPA capacity before contributing to other departments' staffing. He was not supportive of this request.

Parkes saw value in the argument that the AHT is taking on a portion of the CPC's work, so it makes sense to allocate some money toward that process. But he could also see the issue with using CPA to fund staff in a different part of the City. Turin asked what is the nature of the Affordable Housing Coordinator's role. Cameron explained that this person is her counterpart for the AHT. The role is currently filled by the interim Housing Director, as the position is vacant. Turin is likewise uncomfortable with the prospect of the CPC taking on the obligation to fund the housing coordinator position because this is work that is important for the City to be funding. He questioned whether the CPC would be asked to fund administrative positions for open space/recreation and historic preservation. Cameron pointed out that this position carries out the same role that the CPA coordinator does for HP and OS/R.

Turin asked what happens to unused administrative funds. Cameron explained that they are rolled over into the Undesignated Fund Balance at the end of the year so that they can be used for projects. Parkes asked for clarification about whether the CPC votes on the use of the administrative budget. Ayala added the question of what would happen if the CPC does not approve this use of administrative funds. Director Inacio stated that there isn't clear guidance about the level of detail that the CPC Committee goes into about the administrative budget. Out of deference, the preference is not to introduce a policy that the CPC isn't comfortable with. He said that the position is funded under the City's current budget, and that staffing costs and project complexity is significantly increasing, while funding sources across various avenues are anticipated to decrease. He said that the request would not be for this year, but that the City is interested to explore from a policy perspective how the CPC responds to the idea. He imagines that in the long run the City may have no option but to look for CPA support to fill this role.

Parkes asked whether funding for AHT staffing could come from the 55% of program funds allocated to affordable housing rather than the administrative budget. Inacio stated that this would have to be the choice of the Trust Board. Cameron added the Housing Development Program manager might qualify

since this is creating affordable units. Heimarck believed that CPA program area funds cannot be used for staff. Cameron clarified that the problem with using CPA project funds for staff are that CPA cannot supplant existing funding from other sources (the memorandum from the Housing Division addressed this by making a case that CPA would be preserving capacity that they are in danger of losing due to budget constraints), and that the CPC can only make a commitment one year at a time, unless they recommend a single grant that provides multiple years of funding.

Cameron shared the FY26 Administrative Budget. Heimarck asked what kind of professional and technical services are anticipated for this fiscal year. Cameron stated that professional and technical services could pay for due diligence or on-call consulting fees. For example last year we used an on-call consultant to prepare a Preservation Restriction for the Somerville Community Land Trust at 12 Pleasant Ave. Turin asked whether the 30% of admin salary for the AHT has already been budgeted in the City's budget and Inacio confirmed that it has.

Cameron concluded that the contribution to the salary for the AHT admin staff would be taken off the FY26 Admin budget. Parkes observed that the committee is uncomfortable with the idea of using CPA admin funds for an administrative responsibility of the City. McNelly stated that he would support reducing the administrative budget if funds are spent from the budget without their consent.

Agenda Item 4: Historic Preservation Guidelines

Cameron expressed that she would like to ask for the CPC's input on a potential administrative budget expense, to hire a consultant to advise the CPC on guidelines and conditions for historic preservation grants to protect the investment but not make it impossible for the grantees to carry out their projects and comply with the CPC's conditions, and to design historic preservation programs like a small grant program that works better for the purposes that the CPC is trying to fund. The CPC would also like to have input on how to ensure public access or continued public use of assets where they invest in ADA, code compliance and structural improvements, and to be able to monitor existing preservation restrictions.

Heimarck commented on the draft scope of services that was provided in the meeting packet. She and other committee members agreed that this would be very helpful. Parkes observed that the committee has wrestled over some decisions in the recent years. Turin asked whether other communities have done studies like this. Cameron stated that she has asked the Community Preservation Coalition and she isn't aware of any. Besides, Cameron noted that the CPC has developed and implemented their existing guidelines over the last 10 years, so it would be preferable to research and document a change in direction rather than just adopting what other communities have done. Turin suggested that the City's Law Department should provide input in drafting these guidelines and conditions.

Agenda Item 5: Review Committee Membership and plan for 2025 candidate search

Cameron reviewed the current CPC membership roster and identified that Heimarck and Turin will be completing their second and final terms this December. Cameron explained that the limit of two terms is established in the local CPA ordinance, and that a partial term for those members who fill a vacated seat counts as the first term. Cameron also reminded committee members that anyone can volunteer to serve as chair and vice chair for the next calendar year. She said that anyone who wants to serve in an officer role next year, or who is finishing their first term and does not wish to continue a second term can let her know.

Cameron said that she would be working with staff colleagues to help them recruit for other boards and commissions to ensure that they have members who can be appointed to serve on the CPC. She shared a plan and schedule for recruitment of a new general public committee member. Member Ayala volunteered to serve on the committee member recruitment panel. McNeley supported having a general public member serve as the committee rep on the recruitment panel. Heimarck observed that the CPC has been flexible about which of the members fulfilled this role in the past because of their different availability to take on additional responsibilities.

Heimarck proposed that the CPC should request an amendment to the CPA ordinance to allow up to two full terms in addition to an initial partial term. Cameron mentioned that she would also like to eliminate the requirement for the candidates' profiles to be posted on the City website to invite public input. Cameron said that she would draft a proposal for an ordinance change and look into the process.

Additional Business

Cameron looked ahead at upcoming months listed in the agenda calendar. She highlighted that the Housing Division would be coming to present the AHT annual report. Cameron also suggested that the CPC vote to recommend the transfer of FY26 funds to the AHT in July rather than waiting until later in the year.

Adjournment

Heimarck moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Turin. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0. Member Capuano had left before the adjournment vote.

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. Draft Minutes 5/28/2025
3. updated FY26 CPP
4. CPA Admin Budget FY26
5. CPA Admin Request from Housing Division
6. Historic Preservation Guidelines draft RFP
7. CPC Membership roster
8. Plan for 2025 CPC General Public Member Recruitment
9. CPC Position Description
10. CPC General Public Member Announcement
11. CPA 2025 Agenda Calendar