



KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE



MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 24, 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 Ryan Kiracofe, Joe Capuano, David Turin, Eric Parkes, Heather Heimarck Jon Bronenkant, Mary Jo Bohart (late), Michael McNeley (late)

Members Absent Carlos Ayala

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

Others Present Rachel Gilfoil, Courtney Whelan, and Gillian Lang of Community Preservation Partners

Roll Call

Chair Kiracofe 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: Introduction of Historic Preservation Guidelines Consultant

Cameron introduced the consulting firm Community Preservation Partners (CPP) who have been retained to assist the CPC in preparing new guidelines and procedures for historic preservation grants. Rachel Guilfoil, Courtney Whelan, and Gillian Lang shared a presentation to introduce the team members in their firm and frame their understanding of the project, and then invited committee members to comment.

Member Heimarck observed that she has concerns for Somerville's vernacular residential architecture and for preserving viewsheds, such as views of Boston capital building and Charlestown monument. Turin noted that the CPC has struggled with some vexing applications and is interested in how to set good precedents moving forward. Bronenkant pointed out that there have been particularly tricky issues in dealing with contracts and agreements with privately-owned properties, and also raised a concern that the scale of some historic projects that trigger the need for ADA compliance consumes a large share of funds. He would like to identify how to broaden the benefits of the CPA program. Bohart would like to see a broader range of proposals.

Guilfoil suggested that red tape and the requirement for a PR in perpetuity may be a roadblock to people applying for the CPA program. She hopes that making the process more clear and consistent will encourage more people to apply.

Kiracofe asked how the CPC can help to facilitate broad stakeholder engagement. Whelan reported that Cameron has given them an extensive stakeholder list and will be giving a tour of relevant sites throughout the city. Kiracofe asked what types of stakeholders are represented, and Cameron listed: grantees, past unsuccessful applicants, city staff involved with historic preservation and overseeing improvements to City buildings. The project is guided by a steering committee that includes City staff representing historic preservation, law, housing rehabilitation, City buildings, and CPC member Eric Parkes. Kiracofe suggested that he would like to see a developer's perspective be included in the process to help develop guidelines that strike a balance of protecting resources without scaring people off.

Turin asked whether CPP has done similar projects in other communities. Whelan highlighted their experience with the City of Boston and with historic preservation projects. Heimarck noted that Plymouth had a program to preserve historic storefronts.

Kiracofe asked about the timeline and deliverables. Guilfoil said that they are aiming to have a diagnostic report by the end of the calendar year and have completed the project by April. Cameron noted that the committee will be making decisions about the current funding round before the project has completed, and does have some new sites included in the projects that have applied for funding, so the CPC will have to use the best information available at the time to determine how to condition those projects. She suggested that they might consider an interim strategy this year to be replaced with a permanent strategy in the future.

Agenda Item 2: Preliminary Review of FY26 Funding Round Full Applications

Cameron made an overall observation that she found some of the applications contained extraneous attachments that are not relevant to the CPC's evaluation, so she will remove some excess content and replace the applications on the CPC's web page.

Somerville Armory Needs Assessment and Door Restoration – Cameron reported that the Economic Development Division decided to withdraw their application for now because they would like to develop more coordination with the Infrastructure and Asset Management Department that has responsibility for carrying out the improvements so they can refine the scope of the project. They hope to return with a new application at a later date.

Elizabeth Peabody House Structural Stabilization – Cameron explained that the application includes a 2017 condition assessment report which was the basis of the organization's subsequent funding requests for building improvements. This report found that the structural reinforcement is needed to be able to use their second floor. Kiracofe asked that this and any other repeat applicants give updates on the status of their building improvement projects previously funded by CPA.

Buddy's Diner – Cameron and Kiracofe discussed the background of the funding request and the status of the business. Heimarck requested that the applicant explain why they have not obtained insurance or funding from other sources to pay for the damage that caused the business to close.

Veteran's Cemetery – Kiracofe recalled that the CPC funded a study last year, and confirmed that the current application is to implement the restoration outlined in the study in the cemetery and other locations around the city.

Grace Baptist Church – Kiracofe noted that the building at 59 Cross Street has received numerous CPA grants. Cameron explained that they have undertaken substantial improvements on the building, to restore the exterior envelope, repair structural deficiencies, and make the building handicapped accessible using CPA and ARPA funds, and she described the uses that occupy the building. Heimarck especially wanted to hear an update on the projects funded by previous grants, since there had been a long delay in getting the work underway.

Vida Real, 404 Broadway – Cameron provided a summary of the work that was previously funded on this building. They first restored the masonry of the tower with two grants, then last year received CPA funds to prepare a condition assessment. This application is to implement the highest priority task identified by the architect who prepared that study. Bohart asked what is the current usage of the church. Cameron explained that it is currently owned by an active religious community which provides some community programs and services.

Somerville Museum preservation of artifacts – Cameron confirmed that the FY26 request is for all new artifacts distinct from the ones that have been preserved through previous grants. Cameron noted that their full application included materials related to the building restoration which she has removed to avoid confusion, since this grant does not address any improvements to the building itself. Turin asked whether everything that was in storage has been returned to the museum.

Mystic Open Space Improvements – Kiracofe asked for clarification about the nature of the improvements described in the application. Cameron observed that they are proposing to replace a fenced enclosure of unstructured community garden beds with raised beds scattered throughout the Mystic Development site. Cameron also brought attention to an underutilized play space and large field which Somerville Housing Authority is focused on improving or repurposing. Turin asked that the applicant clarify the scope and timeline in their presentation, as the budget contains line items for construction, and he was unable to open the link to a plan provided in the application materials.

Open Space Acquisition Fund – Cameron explained that this is similar to OS Acquisition Fund requests made in the past. Turin asked whether the City should have requested more funding. Kiracofe added that he would like to know how much has been compiled in this fund so far and how close the City is to being able to use the fund to acquire open space.

Kennedy Schoolyard Renovation – Cameron reviewed that the CPC previously funded design of playground improvements, so that this grant request is for the construction phase. Bronenkant confirmed that the schoolyard is open to the public after school hours.

Cameron provided an overview of the amount of funding that was budgeted in FY26 and the factors that might contribute to an increase in available funding in November. Heimarck asked what the procedure would be if the City decides to request a bond for additional funds. Cameron explained that bonding would be a separate funding request to the CPC, and she will ask that PSUF provide an anticipated timeline for a future bonding request in their presentation.

Blessing of the Bay Linear Park Improvements – Kiracofe and Cameron summarized prior funding used to make improvements to this site prior to this funding tranche which is for construction of improvements that were planned in a previous phase. Cameron explained that the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyWRA) has been spearheading improvements to the park which includes both land owned by DCR and

the City of Somerville, and that since the proposed improvements to be funded by this grant are located on the Somerville-owned portion, the City is the applicant and will oversee the project.

Bohart asked whether large projects that require more funding than is available in a single funding round can be completed in stages. Cameron explained that some private organizations such as Somerville Museum and SHA4CD have accumulated funds over several years for large projects. Bronenkant added that phasing can help to chip away at a project as funding is available, and also to overcome space constraints for coordinating project staging. Bohart noted that cost escalation can make pricing a moving target.

Agenda Item 3: Approval of Meeting Minutes

Member Parkes moved to approve the meeting minutes from 6/25/25 and 7/23/25, seconded by member Heimarck. The motion passed 8-0.

Agenda Item 4: Update on General Public Member Recruitment

Cameron reported that the CPC Selection Panel received 14 applications to fill an upcoming vacancy on the Committee, and is interviewing finalists.

Agenda Item 10: Public Outreach Updates

Cameron gave a report on recent outreach events and invited committee members to sign up to attend upcoming tabling opportunities.

Adjournment

Heimarck moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Bronenkant. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. Revised Draft Minutes 6/25/2025
3. Draft Minutes 7/23/2025
4. FY26 CPA Financial Worksheet
5. FY26 Full Applications
 - a. Blessing of the Bay Linear Park Improvements
 - b. Buddy's Diner 113 Washington Street
 - c. Construction Phase of Veterans Memorials
 - d. Grace Baptist Church SHA4CD Exterior Renovation
 - e. Kennedy Schoolyard Renovations
 - f. Mystic Development Recreation Improvements
 - g. Open Space Acquisition Fund
 - h. Somerville Armory Property Needs Assessment
 - i. Somerville Museum Collection Care
 - j. Elizabeth Peabody House Structural Stabilization
 - k. Vida Real Broadway Roof Preservation
6. Summer/fall outreach calendar
7. CPA 2025 Agenda Calendar