



KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE



MINUTES

OCTOBER 22, 2025

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

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

Members Present Ryan Kiracofe, David Turin, Eric Parkes, Heather Heimarck Jon Bronenkant, Michael McNeley, Carlos Ayala, Joe Capuano (late)

Members Absent Mary Jo Bohart

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

Others Present Matthew Caughey, Elizabeth Peabody House; Sam Dennis, Platt Anderson Freeman Architects; Leilani Mendez, Vida Real; Nicole Bairos, Buddy's Diner; Taya Holmes, East Somerville Main Streets; Nancy Blanchard, Somerville Veteran's Services Department; Tom Gorman, Veterans Commission; Josh Crane, Daedalus Conservation; Shawn Willett, Spencer Preservation Group; Barbara Mangum, Somerville Museum; Meg Koglin, Somerville Public Space & Urban Forestry Division (PSUF); Michelle Liebetrow, Mystic River Watershed Association; Ryan Cumminskey, Somerville Housing Authority (SHA); Andrew Rocha, Somerville Housing Authority

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: Presentations by FY26 Funding Round Applicants

Kiracofe provided an overview of the outline of the meeting for the benefit of the applicants and viewers from the public. Cameron provided instructions for members of the public to provide comments on any of the applications through an online form.

Matthew Caughey from the Elizabeth Peabody House gave a summary of the project they are applying for in FY26 to structurally upgrade the second floor of their building which will enable them to use the space as intended for community use. The floor area of the second floor is around 2,000 square feet.

Member Turin inquired whether the pictures showed some damage or corrosion in the exposed portion of the beam. Sam Dennis of Platt Anderson Freeman who has been working on the building said that it might have been some type of preservative and that they didn't identify any damage, but that the floor was framed prior to current codes. Member Heimarck asked whether it could be possible to phase the

project in case there isn't sufficient CPA funding this year. Caughey explained that the cost of mobilizing and the disruption to their programs would make it difficult (but not impossible) to phase the project over multiple years. Caughey confirmed that there is a 15% contingency and the budget was developed by their construction company who opened up the floor and the wall to see what was going on. They had a second verbal estimate from another contractor that aligned with the estimate shown in the application. Caughey noted that they are working on other grant opportunities.

Member Ayala asked how many families are served by the organization and how they might be impacted by this construction. Caughey reported that their childcare program serves about 75 families, full day, year round, and the program doubles in the summer. Their food pantry serves about 1,400 families a year (about 4,200 people). So they currently serve about 4,500 people a year. Their goal is to increase their offerings by expanding the usable space in the building, and expand the types of population they serve – to create a community hub.

Leilani Mendez of Vida Real Church gave a presentation of her organization's application for funds to restore their building at 404 Broadway. She pointed out that the application originally requested funds to restore the roof but after conversation with CPA Manager Cameron they are amending their application to prioritize the restoration of eligible windows as described in their condition assessment.

Ayala asked why some of the windows are excluded from the grant application. Mendez explained that the windows with religious imagery are not eligible for public funding but their architect offered to help them identify alternative sources of funding. Ayala asked why the windows need to be restored. Mendez explained that they allow water to seep in, damaging the building. Heimarck observed that the condition assessment also recommended the installation of storm windows to protect them. Parkes observed that the windows made by Tiffany are significant.

Kiracofe asked how quickly they can mobilize this project and whether the cost might increase once a builder is on board. Mendez said that they would work closely with the architect to recommend contractors who can work within the budget.

Nicole Bairos, the owner of Buddy's Diner presented her request for CPA funds. She gave some background about the history of her building. She explained that she brought everything up to code when she bought the diner 20 years ago. Her goal is to get the pipes fixed so that she can reopen. National Grid was doing work in front of the business which collapsed all of the sewer pipes which were old clay pipes from the 1900s, causing the basement to flood up to the ceiling. National Grid, Boston Gas and Devereaux construction all deny responsibility. Her insurance denied the claim and she retained a lawyer, but after she has run out of time and funds to seek legal recourse. She is also seeking funding from other sources to help repair the damage to allow the business to reopen. Buddy's Diner was named to the Preservation Massachusetts 2025 Most Endangered Historic Resources Program.

Cameron asked a question on behalf of Member Bohart who was absent from the meeting, who wanted to know if the owner had interfaced with the building department, fire and health departments to make sure that it would be possible to meet the code requirements to make the building operational again. Bairos replied that she is seeking grants and crowd-funding to ensure she has the resources to do all that is needed to reopen. Heimarck asked whether the timeline of the CPA decision and City processes would inhibit moving the project forward. Bairos replied that she has already been waiting 2.5 years and will find a way to keep going while she waits for funding. If she doesn't get funding to repair the damage she will

be forced to sell the building. Holmes from the East Somerville Main Streets Program described some additional grants that they are helping Bairos to apply to.

Nancy Blanchard of the Somerville Veterans Services Department introduced Tom Gorman of the Veterans Commission to present their proposal for renovation of the Veteran's Cemetery, implementing the historic preservation plan which was prepared with a CPA grant from last year. Gorman indicated a goal that restoration could be completed in time for Memorial day of 2026.

Kiracofe asked whether DPW might be able to fund restoration of the fence which accounts for the largest cost within the scope. Blanchard stated that they had learned from DPW that they could not fund the fence restoration, however it is a lower priority than restoring the markers and monuments, so the fence was not included in the grant request. Josh Crane of Daedalus Conservation who prepared the assessment affirmed that the wrought iron fence is part of the historic cemetery.

Shawn Willett of Spencer Preservation Group introduced himself as the architect overseeing restoration of the historic Perkins Street Baptist Church, also known as Grace Baptist Church, having taken over from retired architect John Hecker who previously worked on this project. He is representing the Somerville Hispanic Association for Community Development (SHA4CD) who own the building which serves the community through food assistance, educational and social services, and community gathering spaces. Prior CPA grants totaling approximately \$2M have funded partial restoration of the building's envelope including slate roofing, wood windows, brick masonry, and structural improvements. A complex multi-grant project to install an elevator and accessibility improvements is nearing completion. The current grant request will complete exterior renovations including window restoration, storm windows, some masonry work, and fencing to support the new accessible entrance.

Kiracofe asked whether the grant would fund architectural work only, or the restoration itself. Willett clarified that the grant continues work that has already been underway, and will cover documentation, competitive bidding, and construction. Willett explained that their cost estimates are drawn from similar projects in similar areas, using real-world construction data.

Heimarck asked the project might be affected if they have to wait until a later funding round due to funding availability. Willett reported that the most timely concern is inefficient windows which are driving up energy costs. Other scope elements might not be as affected by delay.

Barbara Mangum of the Somerville Museum gave an overview of all of the work that has been funded by CPA at the Somerville Museum, and then described the artifact preservation projects for which the Museum is requesting funding this year, indicating two levels of priority in case of limited funding availability. These include frames and paintings, chairs, and other pieces of furniture.

Meg Koglin, a public space planner with the PSUF team presented a request for funding to construct the Blessing of the Bay Linear Park improvements. She gave an overview of what the improvements would entail and how they would meet community needs, then showed the sources of funding to implement the plan. The current request fills the gap needed to put the project out to bid, while they are continuing to look for additional funding sources to cover potential cost escalation.

Turin asked what size trees will be planted. Koglin explained how the design took into consideration the layout of the site to encourage healthy growth without buckling the sidewalk. The size of trees at planting

is a cost consideration and has to be balanced with the budget and project goals. They have a consultant and PSUF staff advising on tree selection and treatment.

Kiracofe asked for more information about an add-alternate (add-alt) related to pedestrian-scale lighting, wondering why this wasn't in the base scope, and if it would be included in the construction. Koglin explained that this was included as an add-alt for cost reason. Koglin explained that they have explored options for lighting to cover dark spots in the path and had considered pedestrian-scaled lighting or larger lights like ones that already exist, taking into consideration cost and neighborhood input. They are still negotiating some final details of the project design, prioritizing elements to stay within the target budget. Kiracofe requested that PSUF provide an update project budget before the December meeting as the designs are closer to being finalized.

Ryan Cumminskey of the Somerville Housing Authority described improvements that they would like to make to the open space at Mystic Development. Phase 1 would be to provide portable raised garden beds throughout the whole development and to improve the outdoor seating area. Phase 2 would be to revamp the basketball court and to install turf in the yard outside the Mystic Activity Center building. Cameron shared photos of the existing conditions at the site and an example of community garden beds at a public housing site.

Kiracofe asked for clarification about the scope that would be carried out with the current grant request. Cumminskey responded that this grant would support Phase 1 and engineering costs for the basketball court and turf. Kiracofe asked how the garden beds would be cared for. Andrew Rocha of SHA said that there are currently 10 households maintaining community gardens. They have worked with nonprofit organizations to support the community garden program at this site in the past and would like to reinvigorate this program going forward. They also have a relationship with the Mystic Tenant Association and see opportunity for a youth program to utilize garden beds.

Member Bronenkant pointed out that synthetic turf is not eligible for CPA funding and that the City is moving away from synthetic turf, and requested that SHA reach out to PSUF to engage in conversations about the plan for turf versus natural grass. Cameron reiterated that the CPA state legislation prohibits the use of funds for design or installation of synthetic turf surfaces. She encouraged SHA to work with PSUF and to identify alternative sources of funding if they choose to proceed with artificial turf. Bronenkant further asked and Cumminskey confirmed that the basketball court would be fully replaced rather than patched.

Turin asked how many garden beds SHA would be installing. Cumminskey stated that the number will be determined by resident survey. Heimarck asked how many families are at this site. Cumminskey estimated 400 families.

Bronenkant, as Senior Public Space Planner for PSUF and project manager for the Kennedy Schoolyard renovation project gave an overview of the project and funding request. PSUF is collaborating with the school community on what will be the city's first inclusive playground, and there will be upcoming public meetings to provide input on design. The project will be phased over two summers. Bronenkant explained that the current request is for \$1M, and the City anticipates making a bond request of \$2M to support a total budget of \$3M for construction. Bronenkant acknowledged over 90 letters of support, indicating that the project is a high priority of the community.

Heimarck asked why the entire construction budget wasn't submitted as a bonding request rather than a large portion coming from the current revenues. Cameron explained that bonding comes with operating costs, so that reducing the amount that is bonded reduces the overall cost of the project.

Turin asked how the budget was determined given that the project is still in design. Bronenkant said that they worked with the engineering department and used previous projects and calculators to estimate costs, and are now working with designers to design the project to a budget of \$2.5M, expecting some increases in cost. Turin further asked how much hard pavement would be converted to open space. Bronenkant stated that the site is currently 90% impervious and that they are working on creating porous surfaces, swales and green infrastructure to enable them to meet new stormwater requirements.

Kiracofe asked how the City has funded schoolyard projects in the past. Bronenkant reported that ARPA funds, community fundraising, and City bonds have contributed to recent schoolyard renovation projects. This project does not qualify for federal Community Development Block Grants. Member McNeley asked whether PSUF will have the option to prioritize the expenditure of current revenue to save on the cost of bonding. Bronenkant noted that the full funding commitment is needed now so that they can put the project out to bid, but that they will not draw on the bond until the funds are needed. McNeley suggested that they could return next year to request additional revenue so that they can avoid having to borrow the money.

Kiracofe invited members of the public to give comments about the Kennedy School project.

- Kat Johnston is a parent of children at the school and is excited to see the project moving forward.
- Roxane Scrima has been at the Kennedy school for 30 years and has been engaged in efforts to improve the outdoor play space at the school.
- Nicole Cannon is the parent of a child at the Kennedy School who is a mobility aid-user and she is excited to see an accessible playground because this is lacking across the community.

Bronenkant presented the City's request for a contribution to the Open Space Acquisition Fund. He addressed questions submitted in advance to describe previous open space acquisitions funded by CPA. Currently the OS Acquisition fund has \$800,000. Committed funds allow the City to pursue an opportunity quickly. They are looking for larger parcels, properties that help them expand or connect existing open spaces. Turin asked why they requested \$200K. Bronenkant posited that the size of the request was made in consideration of other open space/recreation funding requests from PSUF and other applicants.

Agenda Item 2: Approval of Meeting Minutes

In the interest of time, Kiracofe suggested that the minutes be held off until the next meeting.

Adjournment

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

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. Draft Minutes 9/24/2025
3. FY26 CPA Financial Worksheet
4. FY26 Full Applications and Presentations
 - 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 Museum Collection Care
 - i. Elizabeth Peabody House Structural Stabilization
 - j. Vida Real Broadway Roof Preservation
5. Public Comments and Letters of Support (as of 10/22/25)
 - a. Blessing of the Bay
 - b. Buddy's Diner
 - c. Elizabeth Peabody House
 - d. Kennedy Schoolyard
 - e. Mystic Open Space
 - f. SHA4CD
 - g. Somerville Museum
6. Summer/fall outreach calendar
7. CPA 2025 Agenda Calendar