



City of Somerville Community Preservation Committee

Minutes

January 28, 2026

Members Present: Ryan Kiracofe, David Turin, Eric Parkes, Michael McNeley, Mary Jo Bohart, Carlos Ayala, Jon Bronenkant, Joe Capuano, Rona Fischman

Members Absent:

Staff Present: CPA Manager Roberta Cameron; OSPCD Director of Finance Alan Inacio

Others Present:

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.

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 2025. CPA Manager Cameron called the roll.

Agenda Item 1: Introduction

Newly appointed member Rona Fischman introduced herself and described her background.

Agenda Item 2: Presentation of Diagnostic Report by Historic Preservation Guidelines Consultant

Cameron introduced the consultants, Community Preservation Partners (CPP), who are assisting the CPC to revise guidelines for historic preservation grants. Rachel Guilfoil, Courtney Whelan, and Gillian Lang of CPP provided some background for the project and described their methodology and key diagnostic findings. They shared preliminary recommendations including:

- Mechanisms to protect the city's investment, leaning towards recommending a tiered clawback provision offering time-limited protection.

- Clear and enforceable compliance pathways that reflect the scale of grants and administrative capacity to carry out. Preservation restrictions should still be in the toolbox, but not as a general condition.
- Define clear public benefit in awarding grants, whether this is the public visibility of improvements, or if recommending funding for interior improvements, to identify agreements or conditions that secure intended public benefits

Member Bohart asked whether a different system would apply for condo owners than single property owners. The consultants responded that the existence of multiple property owners would make the application of grant conditions more complex. They added that the decision about whether there is a public benefit should be addressed at the eligibility determination stage, rather than in the conditions recommended for a project. In prioritizing projects the committee might consider whether project have access to capital from other sources as an indication of need.

The consultants shared a proposed compliance and time-limited clawback condition for historic preservation grants with a stepdown provision in case the CPA-funded improvement is altered. They also suggested a requirement to commence work in a timely period, notice of proposed sale, and assignment of grant agreement with City consent with the same stepdown provision to return the funds if the property is sold and assignment isn't possible. The consultants offered a public access provision for grants that fund interior improvements to private buildings, but did not recommend using this as they opined that the historic resource is the public benefit and public access has already been demonstrated in the application/determination of eligibility. Organizations seeking interior improvements are often serving vulnerable communities so that opening to the public may be unsafe, as well as being a significant administrative burden to implement. Finally, the consultant suggested a condition specific to Buddy's Diner that in the event that a third party is found responsible for payment of the work proposed in the agreement the CPA funds shall be returned to the City.

CPP listed some additional conditions that the CPC might include in their "toolbox" to apply to grants in specific cases. These include Preservation Restrictions (short term or in perpetuity), interior access easement (to give interior access to the City for monitoring), and covenants (similar to PRs).

Member Bronenkant agreed with the importance of the CPC defining public benefit in their grant awards moving forward. He observed the Public Space and Urban Forestry Division currently uses public access agreements in their Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) and suggested that these could be a model for legal documents if they would be applicable to CPA projects. Bronenkant asked if the same clawback time would apply to all projects. The consultants confirmed that this is the intention, and suggested 15 or 20 years as a typical length. They suggested that the assignment provision meets the requirement of the Anti-Aid Amendment by ensuring that the grantee can't "flip" the property to profit from the city's investment. The clawback provides more flexibility to protect different types of improvements funded by CPA without the complication of PRs.

Member Turin appreciated that the clawback provision would be linked to the life cycle of the improvement. He suggested that the Buddy's Diner condition be articulated as "may be returned to

the City” to give some incentive for the Diner to continue to pursue legal options to hold someone else responsible for the damage.

Member Fischman suggested that if “timely period” is included in the conditions it would be better to include a firm timeline. Whelan explained that a staff member from the Somerville’s Law Department had indicated a preference for the provision to be more open-ended, but that it has been their experience that grantees may sometimes take advantage of the ability to ask for grant extensions so it might help to include this in the grant agreement. Fishman further suggested that a procedure should be clarified to guide condo associations in agreeing to grant conditions. Cameron explained that she had recently addressed this by adding a requirement to the Eligibility Determination Form for condo association boards to consent to the grant terms in advance if the building is under a condo association. In the case of PRs, every condo owner and their lenders would have to agree to execute the PR for it to be filed. Cameron suggested that she would need to ask for guidance from the Law Department whether condo association boards could consent to a grant agreement with the clawback provision, or if that would also require the consent of all individual owners. Whelan advised that for condo association projects the CPC should only consider funding for exterior improvements visible from a public way. Funding for interior improvements would not be feasible as it would create too much liability.

Member Bohart expressed concern that market rate condominium owners might be inclined to defer maintenance if they expect that they can obtain CPA funds instead of paying for it themselves. Guilfoil suggested that access to funding is an important criteria in evaluating grants – to consider whether there are other possible sources of funding.

Turin reflected that the CPC include a “need filter” in evaluating applications. Kiracofe noted that there are currently questions pertaining to need in the application, but he wondered whether it would be possible or appropriate to ask applicants for financial statements to substantiate their level of need. Cameron reflected that the applicants always respond to the application question to state that their project could not be carried out without CPA funding, but that the CPC members use their own judgement in discerning whether the applicant might have other potential sources of funding. Whelan observed that the City of Boston’s CPA application requests extensive financial data and pro formas. Turn suggested that the CPC might rank applicants based on whether they are nonprofit organizations or private property owners. Cameron pointed out that the CPC has been using evaluation criteria, and that this discussion might prompt a review of how the criteria are articulated.

Parkes asked how a small grant program might work. Guilfoil explained that this has not been fleshed out yet, but they suggest that the program would need to be simpler, entailing small amounts of money, and structured to be an extension of the work that the HIP program is already doing, and to be sustainable for City staff to administer. A PR requirement would not be compatible with the scale of grants for this program. The projects would still have to meet the thresholds for eligibility.

Member Ayala asked for clarification about what the clawback period would entail. Guilfoil explained that the period, say 15 years if that is what the committee chooses, would begin when the project is completed, and for each year after that someone would go out to inspect to confirm that the

improvements are being maintained. Ayala suggested that the length of time should be fixed so that the program is consistent and equitable. The consultants observed that this is a standard practice in many other CPA communities, and that the payback requirement is proportional to the size of the grant.

Member McNeley questioned who would have responsibility for annual inspections. Guilfoil suggested that annual monitoring could be systematized for efficiency and that an on-call consultant could be used if not staff. Whelan emphasized that the monitoring procedures could be a simple matter of visually checking to see that the improvement that was paid for is still there. McNeley asked Cameron to consider the potential need for on-call consulting services as part of the admin budget for the next fiscal year.

Agenda Item 3: Deliberation on FY26 applications

Cameron shared the Grant Tracking workbook. Members observed that the amount of funding available would be sufficient to fund the full amount requested for all of the outstanding applications.

- Committee members discussed the Veterans Cemetery Restoration project. Cameron explained that the recommendation letter includes a motion to transfer \$237,250 from the Undesignated Fund Balance to the Historic Preservation Reserve, and then awarding \$306,250 from the Preservation Reserve to this project. Cameron reminded committee members that there had been a question about whether to fund just the monuments (\$186,250), which were identified by the Veterans Department as the highest priority task, or the entire project which includes restoration of the Cemetery fence (\$120,000) which the Veterans Department had tried unsuccessfully to find other funds to pay for. Committee members agreed to fund the entire request since sufficient funds are available.

Member Bronenkant moved to recommend to transfer \$237,250 from the Undesignated Fund Balance to the Historic Preservation Reserve, seconded by member Ayala. The motion passed 9-0.

Member Parkes moved to recommend an award of \$306,250 for restoration of Veterans Cemetery from the Historic Preservation Reserve with the conditions described in the draft recommendation letter, seconded by member Bronenkant. The motion passed 8-0. Member Capuano's audio was inaudible during the roll call.

- Committee members discussed the Blessing of the Bay Linear Park Improvements application. Cameron reported a late edit to the project budget which lowers the amount requested to \$124,331. Member Turin asked whether this project would be impacted by a sewer project which was recently presented to the Conservation Commission. Member Bronenkant explained that the projects are in proximity to one another but to his knowledge they do not overlap, and the phasing has been coordinated between the City staff managing both projects. Cameron pointed out that the draft recommendation letter includes a funding condition copied from prior grants to the Kennedy Schoolyard that the grant must be repaid to the CPA if the site is subject to a change

in use that reduces or eliminates the recreational space within 50 years of the grant unless the CPC consents to allow the City to retain the funds.

Member Ayala moved to recommend an award of \$124,331 for improvements to Blessing of the Bay Linear Park from the Budgeted Reserve with the condition described in the draft recommendation letter, seconded by member Parkes. The motion passed 8-0. Member Capuano's audio was inaudible during the roll call.

- Committee members discussed the request for \$150,000 for historic preservation to 404 Broadway by Vida Real.

Member Bohart moved to recommend an award of \$150,000 to Vida Real for renovations to 404 Broadway from the Historic Preservation Reserve, seconded by member Fischman. The motion passed 8-0. Member Capuano's audio was inaudible during the roll call.

- Committee members discussed the request for \$50,000 for improvements to Mystic Open Space by the Somerville Housing Authority. Members Turin and Bronenkant commented that the funding recommendation should include a condition to exclude the use of funds to design or install artificial turf. Kiracofe questioned whether the application included sufficient clarity about how the funds would be used. Bronenkant observed that the project is an opportunity to undertake improvements on non-City property that contributes to the City's open space goals. He noted that the application includes a feasibility study and some quick implementation with only a vague indication of what those tasks may be. Cameron suggested adding a condition that a more detailed scope of what site improvements will be paid for with CPA funds must be provided before funds will be disbursed.

Member Turin moved to recommend an award of \$50,000 to the Somerville Housing Authority for improvements to the open space at the Mystic development, seconded by member Parkes. The motion passed 9-0.

Following Agenda Items

Chair Kiracofe proposed to hold the remaining agenda items to the next meeting because of the lateness of the hour.

Cameron encouraged committee members to attend an upcoming community meeting for Art Farm and to join her in tabling at the Lunar New Year Festival.

Adjournment

McNeley moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ayala. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0.

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. Draft Minutes 12-29-25
3. Historic Preservation Guidelines Diagnostic Report
4. Draft Grant Agreement Conditions
5. FY26 CPA Financial Worksheet
6. FY26 Full Applications
 - a. Blessing of the Bay Linear Park Improvements
 - b. Construction Phase of Veterans Memorials
 - c. Mystic Development Recreation Improvements
 - d. Open Space Acquisition Fund
 - e. Somerville Museum Collection Care
 - f. Vida Real Broadway Roof Preservation
7. Draft Recommendation Letters & Conditions
 - a. Blessing of the Bay Linear Park Improvements
 - b. Construction Phase of Veterans Memorials
 - c. Mystic Development Recreation Improvements
 - d. Open Space Acquisition Fund
 - e. Vida Real Broadway Roof Preservation
 - f. Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Supplemental Distribution
 - g. Amended Funding Recommendation Kennedy Schoolyard
8. Application Deliberation Reference Material
 - a. Evaluation Criteria
 - b. Grant Agreement
 - c. MOA General Conditions
 - d. Previous FY26 Decision Recommendations
9. CPC 2026 Calendar
10. FY27 Funding Cycle Alternative Timeline

Minutes prepared by Roberta Cameron