



City of Somerville Community Preservation Committee

Minutes

March 25, 2026

- Members Present:** Ryan Kiracofe, David Turin, Eric Parkes, Mary Jo Bohart, Carlos Ayala, Jon Bronenkant, Joe Capuano, Rona Fischman
- Members Absent:** Michael McNeley
- Staff Present:** CPA Manager Roberta Cameron; OSPCD Director of Finance Alan Inacio
- Others Present:** Courtney Whelan and Rachel Guilfoil of Community Preservation Partners
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The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) virtually held its 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: Presentation by Historic Preservation Guidelines Consultant

Rachel Guilfoil and Courtney Whelan of Community Preservation Partners (CPP) introduced themselves and presented draft recommendations for the CPA Historic Preservation Guidelines project. They reviewed the scope of the project, which included identifying a mechanism to protect historic assets preserved with CPA funds, establishing monitoring procedures, clarifying public benefit and access policies, and developing a potential small grants approach in partnership with Somerville's HIP program. The overall theme is to balance strong protections and compliance with state laws, with useability so that the program works well for both the City and applicants.

CPP recommended that the CPC update its standard conditions for CPA grants to replace the requirement for a perpetual Preservation Restriction (PR) with a 15-year clawback agreement. The benefit of the clawback approach is that it is more commensurate with the size of grants and is administratively easier to monitor and ensure consistent compliance. An important distinction is that the entity with authority over PRs is the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), while Clawback agreements would be under the purview of the CPA department. PR's should be limited to acquisition

projects, as required under the CPA enabling legislation. To aid with monitoring of PRs and clawback agreements, CPP recommends a Shared Project Log across the CPA department, HPC, Planning Department, and other stakeholder departments to keep track of the protected features and compliance history of projects that have any form of CPA protection agreement, as well as a standardized monitoring and response process for assets that have PRAs or Clawback agreements.

With respect to access requirements, the public benefit for CPA historic preservation projects is the preservation of the asset itself when the resources is visible from the public way or serves a community function. For public and nonprofit buildings a broad range of work is appropriate for CPA funding, including exterior preservation work, accessibility upgrades, code compliance, and structural repairs. For privately-owned properties that are not open to the public, the public benefit is primarily achieved through exterior preservation, and interior work is generally not recommended. Interpretive signage can reinforce the public value of CPA investments in these projects. In limited cases where conditions addressing public access are appropriate, it should be clearly defined, limited in scope, and tied to the clawback period.

CPP suggested that a potential small grant program that could be implemented in partnership with the Somerville Home Improvement Program, HIP. They outlined guidelines and procedures for such a program that would tie into the existing HIP, with minimal administrative burden to the Housing Division, leaning on the CPA department to provide technical support.

Chair Kiracofe asked for clarification about how the HIP program would work. Guilfoil explained that HIP would apply for CPA funds on an annual basis or as needed. They could add questions to their intake form to identify projects that might be eligible for CPA, and then they could confirm eligibility with the CPA Manager. The HIP program could help to secure contractors from a pre-qualified list, and the CPA Manager would review the contractor qualifications and scope to ensure compliance with the Secretary of Interior Standards for Historic Preservation. This program can assist smaller projects, but there may still be some singular residential projects like the Adams Magoon House that would be more appropriate to come to CPA directly instead of through HIP. [23:04]

Member Turin asked CPP whether the proposed small grant program would be outside of the mission of the Housing Division. Guilfoil responded that there are overlaps between the type of work that they currently undertake and work that might be eligible for CPA Historic Preservation. The program can be advertised to qualifying homeowners with historic properties.

Member Bohart asked whether property owners could be subject to a clawback if the ownership changes and if owners do other work that isn't compliant with historic preservation. CPP explained the right-sized protection strategy described in their recommendations. The grant agreement would require that a grant recipient notify the City when they plan to sell the property so that the City can explain the terms of the grant to a new owner. If the grant is not reassigned to a new buyer then the seller would be responsible if there are violations of the terms of the grant.

There was discussion about whether the 15-year clawback was sufficient to satisfy the Anti-Aid amendment. The consultants suggested obtaining further input from the law department, but this was the model that Boston implemented after working with their law department. What is important is to put in place a contract that is enforceable and controllable, that ensures public benefit for the lifespan of the asset the City pays for. If the same things need to be repaired again after 15 years, that would be considered maintenance at that point, not eligible for CPA.

Agenda Item 2: Amendment of Adams Magoun House Recommendation

Cameron provided the committee with background, describing why the CPC previously recommended funding to restore a uniquely significant historic building, and how the CPC had deliberated to decide upon conditions for the grant to ensure compliance with Somerville's program guidelines and ensure protection of public resources. Because the property owner did not consent to the conditions of the grant at the time, the grant was never submitted for approval to City Council and has been stuck in limbo ever since. The new program guidelines prepared with our consultant offer a new set of conditions for the CPC to consider to replace the conditions in the CPC's original recommendation for a \$150,000 grant. The new conditions would be 1) that the Grantee will consent to general conditions provided in the Grant Agreement to ensure long-term preservation of the historic assets funded by the grant (i.e., clawback and assignment provisions), 2) The city will have the right of first refusal to acquire the property at the time of sale, and 3) a permanent sign with interpretive information will be installed on the property. Cameron had also obtained from the architect who prepared the original application an updated scope for repairs to be prioritized with the \$150,000 grant.

Member Bohart asked why the property owner objected to the original terms of the grant. Cameron reported that the biggest sticking point for the property owner was that the grant would have to be returned upon sale of the property within 50 years, making the funds a loan rather than an outright grant. Bohart expressed that the building is such an important public resource that the committee should weigh whether or not an outright grant is warranted to ensure its preservation, to which Member Parkes agreed.

Parkes moved to recommend a grant of \$150,000 to Patricia Matthews for preservation of the Adams Magoun House with the updated conditions and scope, seconded by Ayala. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

Agenda Item 3: Kennedy Schoolyard Funding Rebalance

Kiracofe recalled that the CPC had planned to revisit the amount of current year's funds committed to the Kennedy Schoolyard project after determining that additional funds would not be required by any other projects in FY26. Cameron shared the FY26 budget to show that \$400,000 remains in the Undesignated Fund Balance above the CPC's elected minimum balance of \$750,000. Cameron shared a debt service projection showing that a reduction of the bond by \$400,000 would reduce the debt service payments by \$35,000 per year, saving \$125,000 in interest over the life of the bond. Committee members asked about the assumptions in the bond estimate. Director Inacio explained that the length of the bond term is pegged to the life of the asset, while the interest rate would be determined by the market at the time that the City goes out to bond. Member Bronenkant observed that increasing the amount of funding from the current budget by \$400,000 would enable the first phase of the project to be completed with available funds, postponing until next year the necessity to draw on the bond. Next year the CPC will then have an opportunity to consider paying for the balance of the project out of next year's revenue, avoiding the need to bond at all.

Turin moved to transfer \$228,000 from the Undesignated Fund Balance to the Open Space Reserve, seconded by Parkes. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

Turin moved to award \$400,000 from the Open Space Reserve for construction of improvements to the Kennedy Schoolyard, seconded by Parkes. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

Turin moved to reduce the bond authorization for the Kennedy Schoolyard by \$400,000, seconded by Parkes. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

Agenda Item 4: Contract Extension for MyWRA FY23 Grant

Cameron explained that the Mystic River Watershed Association originally applied for improvements to Blessing of the Bay Linear Park Improvement starting in FY23. They have continued to apply for funding from various sources and to move the project forward, which is nearing readiness for construction. While the City is the grantee for the construction phase, MyWRA was the recipient of the original grant for design. The 3 year contract term is nearing an end, but the design services are needed to provide oversight throughout the construction phase. Thus the organization is seeking a contract extension to complete the project.

Bronenkant moved to extend the MyWRA FY23 contract by three years, seconded by Turin. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

Agenda Item 5: Project Updates

Cameron provided an overview of project updates provided by grantees for all projects that are currently ongoing or recently completed. Progress reports submitted by grantees are provided in the meeting packet. Also included with the progress reports is a new Quarterly Report from the Affordable Housing Trust which Cameron requested in response to the CPC's request for more frequent information about how the Trust is using CPA funds.

Cameron shared data on funds that were leveraged from other sources to help complete CPA-funded projects. She found that open space projects leveraged approximately \$2.30 for every \$1 CPA funds, while historic preservation projects leveraged approximately \$1.75 for every \$1 of CPA funds. Updates are not yet available for housing, but historically data has shown a much higher rate of leveraged funding for housing construction projects, and a rate of leveraging that is similar to the other program areas for housing stabilization programs.

There was discussion about the Glen Park Community Garden. Cameron recalled that the CPC had included funding for an artistic element, with sufficient funds to commission an artist to contribute the element.

Agenda Item 5: Project Updates

Cameron suggested a change in the format of the Annual Public Hearing from what has been done in the past, proposing a more conversational format. She shared some draft questions to guide the public hearing discussion, and committee members gave feedback. They agreed upon questions to include in advertising for the public hearing:

- What are the long-range plans for capital improvements to buildings or parks? What determines the projects, phasing, timeline?
- Is the funding distribution appropriate?
- How helpful are the funding criteria for defining quality projects?

- How do we expand awareness of the CPA program and the breadth of applications?
- Any other comments about the program?

Cameron reminded committee members of the Outreach Schedule in the meeting packet and invited committee members to volunteer to join her or bring the outreach materials to their other meetings.

Adjournment

Bronenkant moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ayala. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. Draft Minutes 2-25-26
3. CPP Adams Magoun House Memorandum
4. SSV Architects Adams Magoun House Scope Update
5. Draft Amended Recommendation Letter for Adams Magoun House
6. Debt Service Calculations 3-19-26
7. Draft Amended Recommendation Letter for Kennedy Schoolyard
8. Memorandum re Blessing of the Bay Linear Park MyWRA FY23 contract extension
9. All Project Status Summary
10. Project Status Reports
 - a. 12 Pleasant Ave Restoration
 - b. 24 Webster Ave Historic Window Restoration
 - c. 217 Somerville Ave / Ken Kelly Park
 - d. Affordable Housing Trust Quarterly Report
 - e. ArtFarm
 - f. Blessing of the Bay Linear Park Improvement
 - g. City Hall Clock Tower Restoration
 - h. Dilboy Auxiliary Fields
 - i. Elizabeth Peabody House Structural Study
 - j. EPH FY23 Closout Report
 - k. Glen Park Community Garden
 - l. Junction Park
 - m. Kennedy Schoolyard Renovation
 - n. Land Acquisition Study Fund
 - o. Nunziato Park Water Fountains
 - p. Open Space Acquisition Fund
 - q. Quincy Street Park
 - r. 59 Cross Street Closeout Report
 - s. Somerville Museum Artifact Preservation FY24 & FY25
 - t. Veterans Cemetery Condition Assessment
11. Outline for Annual Public Hearing
12. CPC 2026 Calendar
13. 2026 CPA Outreach Schedule

Minutes prepared by Roberta Cameron