



City of Somerville Community Preservation Committee

Minutes

April 22, 2026

- Members Present:** Ryan Kiracofe, David Turin, Eric Parkes, Mary Jo Bohart, Jon Bronenkant, Joe Capuano, Rona Fischman
- Members Absent:** Carlos Ayala, Michael McNeley
- Staff Present:** CPA Manager Roberta Cameron, Luis Quizhpe
- Others Present:** Approximately 8 members of the public
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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: Annual Public Hearing Presentation and Discussion

Chair Kiracofe introduced himself and outlined the format of the public hearing.

CPA Manager Roberta Cameron gave a presentation about the Community Preservation Act Program which described the program, provided data about the amount of revenue and how the funds have been used, showed examples of recent projects, explained the application process, and reviewed evaluation criteria and goals that have been articulated in the CPA Plan. Cameron summarized public input that was received through public outreach that contributed to the previous plan. Cameron then offered discussion questions and invited attendees to participate in a conversation.

Question 1: What urgent needs and long-term plans have been identified for capital improvements to parks and buildings (especially public and nonprofit), and affordable housing construction or housing stability programs?

Member Turin observed that the public input from prior years shows a consistent preference for the CPA program to provide a higher share of funding open space and recreation than has been done, and he suggested to think about how it might be possible to address additional open space needs.

Barbara Mangum, speaking as a member of the public, asked about the status of planning for Art Farm. Member Bronenkant, speaking for the Public Space and Urban Forestry Division, explained that they have recently held a public meeting as they prepare plans for construction of the park at Art Farm. They are also applying for grants from other sources so that they can start working on the project once the pump station construction is completed. He mentioned the SomerVoice web page where constituents can find more information about the project. Bronenkant also spoke about other parks projects. The OSRP includes a ranking to guide park improvements over the next 10 years. The Kennedy Schoolyard and ArtFarm topped the list of important projects in the OSRP, but some other highlights include Trum Field, responding to a push to find additional spaces for dog parks throughout the city, and possibly making minor improvements or adding amenities to parks throughout the city. Mangum introduced herself as an art conservator who has a workshop at Joy Street Studios, and also president of the board for the Somerville Museum.

Another member of the public, Peter Marquez expressed support for ArtFarm and asked whether the online survey is still opened. Cameron responded that the survey is still open. Peter identified himself and his wife Connie Blaszczyk as long-time Somerville residents and advocates for ArtFarm. Bronenkant observed that the project is not ready to go out to bid, but to expect a few more years to come to fruition.

Mangum further asked whether cemeteries are considered to be open space. Cameron replied that cemeteries and memorials overlap between open space and historic preservation. Whether CPA funds used to improve these spaces, cemeteries are categorized according to the specific type of work involved. Bronenkant added that cemeteries are counted as open space in the OSRP, but there are layers of complexity that govern how they are managed or improved.

Paul Christie identified himself as a board member for the Davis Square Neighborhood Council. He remarked that there have been discussions about converting the City-owned 45 College Ave to a community center. Cameron encouraged proponents of projects on City-owned property to advocate for an application in a future funding round. She explained that community-driven projects on City-owned property require a lot of lead time to have conversations among various City departments to agree to move forward. Community members can submit a screening form with project ideas, and Cameron will identify City staff who would have responsibility to collaborate on such a project. There is no guarantee that the City will agree to move forward with the project, but they may be able to identify realistic barriers or strategies to addressing the need.

Cameron observed that 45 College Ave is one of several historic City-owned buildings that are mothballed because of their condition or that are in use but have significant needs for improvement to make the buildings more functional and safe for the people who are using them, and it would be helpful to know how the City prioritizes the capital needs of these buildings.

Cameron introduced the next question: Is the funding distribution currently appropriate?

Barbara Mangum asked whether the CPC is currently able to fund all of the requests. Cameron replied that in the past year the requests approximately equaled the available funding so that the CPC has been able to grant most of the requests, although a few projects did not move forward to a full

application because they were not yet ready to proceed. Mangum further asked whether the funding distribution is determined before or after seeing how much is going to be requested. Chair Kiracofe responded that the CPC will be voting on the budget at the next meeting, and that the budget will include a portion of flexible funds that allow for the CPC to adjust to the specific applications they receive.

Kiracofe asked the next question: How helpful are the evaluation criteria for defining quality projects? Member Parkes commented that the criteria have seemed appropriate in his experience on the Committee.

Member Bohart appreciated that the CPC had been able to grant funds to a business in a historic building this past funding round (Buddy's Diner), and she wondered whether it might be possible to fund more preservation projects in historic commercial buildings. Cameron offered to provide some support to research the potential for funding project on specific buildings that members identify. Kiracofe observed that Buddy's Diner was supported by a Main Streets organization who helped them to apply. Bohart suggested that Main Streets organizations might be able to help target buildings that could benefit from historic preservation grants.

Paul Christie from the Davis Square Merchants Group asked for clarification about what are the criteria for determining if buildings are historic, and whether a building's eligibility is determined by whether it is currently vacant or occupied. Cameron explained that for CPA purposes a building automatically qualifies if it is in a LHD or is on the State Register of Historic Buildings, or if it is deemed by the Historic Preservation Commission to be significant to Somerville's History. CPA can then fund improvements to preserve or restore the historic features of the building – so that we would have to know what the historic features looked like. Christie followed up to ask whether a sign might be eligible for preservation. Cameron replied that, as long as the HPC first deems it to be significant to Somerville's history, a sign could be preserved as an artifact.

Kiracofe asked for ideas about how to expand the group of people who know about CPA and apply for funding. Mangum offered that she would like to see walking tours to show off projects that have been completed. Strategic Planning and Equity Manager for the City's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development suggested that we need to build networks and channels to reach communities that are harder to reach. For example the Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs builds relationships by holding events for groups from various backgrounds where we could share information about the CPA program. Cameron noted that it can be a challenge to explain the program and to convey how it touches various people in the community so that it seems relevant to them and might inspire ideas about projects that could benefit them. For example, many residents in the Asian community are familiar with the 59 Cross Street building the CPA has funded because of the food pantry and childcare program located there. Bronenkant added that a marketing campaign might be helpful, including a suite of graphics that can be translated into different languages and can be shared by CPC members any time. He noted that the schools have a broad communication network which could be leveraged to meet more residents. Bronenkant further suggested that CPA could be combined with Privately Owned Open Space (POPS) developments to improve the quality of facilities they provide.

Parkes observed that a grant program targeted at private property owners would have to take into consideration that many existing occupants – especially of commercial properties – are renters. Paul Christie commented that he has had a good experience engaging landlords to participate in storefront

improvement programs. He suggested that neighborhood business associations could help to reach business owners. Cameron reflected that the Economic Development Division might be the appropriate applicant to set up a CPA-funded historic storefront restoration program.

Barbara Mangum suggested making a presentation about CPA to the Chamber of Commerce and having a brochure for realtors and developers about historic preservation.

Cameron asked a final question: if we are successful in getting the word out and we have applications for several park projects, City buildings, nonprofit organizations, a residential small grant program, and business storefronts, how should the committee prioritize privately-owned properties versus City and nonprofit projects? Kiracofe responded that this would be a great conversation to have after we succeed in bringing in as many applications as we can.

Parkes asked about capital planning for City-owned buildings. Cameron reported that she is having discussions with staff in other departments and with the capital projects and budgeting team to explore how to improve some City-owned historic buildings in a similar way as the CPC has updated some nonprofit buildings over the past decade.

Parkes moved to close the public hearing, seconded by Bronenkant. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0. (Member Turin left shortly before the close of the hearing.)

Agenda Item 2: Transfer of \$4,000 from Undesignated Fund Balance to Historic Preservation Reserve

Cameron provided the committee with background, explaining the need for a correction due to a budget calculation error two years ago that resulted in a shortfall of \$4,000 in the Historic Preservation Reserve this funding round.

Bronenkant moved to recommend a transfer of \$4,000 from the Undesignated Fund Balance to the Historic Preservation Reserve, seconded by Bohart. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Adjournment

Fischman moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Parkes. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. CPA FY27 Community Preservation Plan Presentation
3. CPC 2026 Calendar

Minutes prepared by Roberta Cameron