



City of Somerville

Community Preservation Committee

Minutes

July 22, 2026

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

Members Absent:

Staff Present: CPA Manager Roberta Cameron

Others Present: Luisa Oliveira, Director of OSPCD Public Space & Urban Forestry; Alison Maurer, Ecological Restoration Planner; Michael Rosenberg, Senior Arts Planner

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: Approval of Meeting Minutes

Member McNeley moved to approve the meeting minutes from 6/24/2026, seconded by member Bronenkant. The motion passed 7-0.

Agenda Item 2: Preliminary Review of FY27 Applications

Cameron shared the list of applications the CPC has received for the FY27 funding round. These include five historic preservation projects and four open space/recreation projects. Two projects that had submitted EDFs did not continue with a full application. Cameron pointed out that the sum of the amount requested significantly exceeds the funding available, so the committee will have to make decisions about which projects to recommend funding to, and/or how much to recommend bonding for the Artfarm project.

Agenda Item 3: Presentation of FY27 Funding Requests from PSUF

Member Bronenkant gave a brief overview of the three projects for which the Public Space and Urban Forestry Division (PSUF) is applying for funding this year. Cameron announced that members of the public would be given an opportunity to speak, and that a link for a comment form is provided to accept written comments.

Kennedy Schoolyard

Bronenkant gave a presentation on the request for an additional \$1,000,000 to complete the Kennedy Schoolyard project. Where there are two existing basketball courts, a bus dropoff and parking, the project will create the city's first inclusive playground, expanding the area dedicated to recreation as well as trees and shade. Bronenkant described the extensive community engagement process that contributed to the full design. He explained that the first phase came in over budget which leaves insufficient funding available for Phase 2. The first phase will be completed by September and then a bidding process will take place over the winter to initiate construction of Phase 2 at the end of the 26/27 school year.

Chair Kiracofe asked Bronenkant to expand on what is driving the cost escalation. Bronenkant explained that the first phase of the project entailed large portions of green infrastructure and asphalt for the site which was more complicated and costly than anticipated. PSUF is also concerned about tariffs increasing the cost of playground elements in Phase 2, since one of the major playground manufacturers is based in Canada.

Kiracofe asked what other sources of funding might be used to pay for the project. Bronenkant explained that schoolyards are not eligible for many state and federal grants for park improvements because they cannot be protected in perpetuity. They are looking at some smaller grants for accessibility, and the Somerville Persons with Disabilities Commission would like to give funds for play equipment, but these will be for small amounts, between \$10,000 and \$50,000.

Member Turin asked whether CPA funds come with a requirement for permanent restriction. Cameron shared that the CPA enabling legislation requires permanent restrictions where funds will be used for acquisition, but otherwise it is at the committee's discretion. In recent years the Somerville CPC has been adding a condition to open space/recreation improvements that the funds will have to be returned if the recreation use is discontinued within 50 years unless the CPC voted to waive the requirement. Turin wondered why the City is not contributing funds besides CPA, given the high priority.

Director Oliveira responded to some previous questions. She observed that another reason schoolyards are not eligible for other funding sources is because they are exclusively used by the schools part of the time. She further added that the City is experiencing a budget shortfall and capital needs such as a new school and infrastructure, so that CPA is a more critical source of funding for eligible projects.

Turin noted that the cost of Phase 1 is \$1.7M, while the cash portion of the FY26 grant was \$1.4M. He asked whether the City has already bonded the \$300k to cover the whole budget. Bronenkant replied that the bond does not have to be drawn until the City has the bill for the work, which is anticipated to happen in September or later.

McNeley acknowledged that the total request for the Kennedy Schoolyard is a very large ask of CPA funding, and he asked whether the contractor can give a detailed estimate for Phase 2. Bronenkant

explained that the contractor could not give the estimate as they are likely to bid on the second phase of the work, but they can ask the landscape architect to do so. McNeley commented that a funding request based on a detailed estimate would be preferable to a rough \$1M request. Director Oliveira added that the project was required to be broken into two phases to be bid separately to minimize impact during the school year. Kiracofe asked when the bidding would take place. Bronenkant anticipated over December, as winter is the best time.

McNeley wondered whether the committee could wait until the bids were received before recommending the funding for the project. Bronenkant confirmed that all funds must be committed before a project can be put out to bid. Bronenkant suggested that bonding would provide a way to have the funding available if and when it's needed down the line without displacing projects that might be funded this year to commit more funding than might be required to complete the project. McNeley asked whether the CPC has the power to revoke a bond authorization. Cameron recalled that the committee voted to reduce the bond authorization for the same project last year when they added more current year funding to the balance.

McNeley expressed dismay that the Phase 1 work funded by the CPA appeared to be primarily a parking lot, and that PSUF is seeking more funding in Phase 2 to construct the actual open space and recreation elements of the project. He asked whether PSUF might be able to solicit funding from elsewhere to pay for the parking lot and green infrastructure portion of the project. Bronenkant reflected that they may be able to look to DPW for green infrastructure maintenance under existing contracts. The underlying reason for the parking lot and infrastructure portion of the project was to enable the reduction of the size of the parking lot to expand the area dedicated to recreation, as well as underlying infrastructure to improve resiliency. This project accomplishes a goal of the CPA to expand open space. Member Turin asked whether the green infrastructure for the parking lot was eligible for CPA funding. Director Oliveira asserted that the parking lot, green infrastructure and park expansion are all integral to the project as a whole and that the project was separated into phases to avoid disruption during the school year. She pointed out that the first phase of came in over budget due to unforeseen volatility in the market. McNeley reiterated that he has been a big supporter of this project but he wants to make sure that the committee is doing its diligence. He asks for a way to get resolution on the budget and to ask for other departments to reduce the burden on the CPA.

Member Fischman asks what will happen if the funding is denied. Director Oliveira reiterated that the options would be for the City to seek funding from the capital budget, additional CPA funds, to value engineer the project which might diminish the planned recreational aspects. They might have to delay Phase 2 while they adjust the design and re-bid the project and/or pursue alternative sources of funding.

Member Capuano asked how many spots were eliminated from the parking lot and whether the lot had been fully utilized. Bronenkant responded that the lot was reduced by 16 spaces and that teachers are allowed to park on the street in the surrounding neighborhood. The Mobility team provided data that the neighborhood can accommodate the displaced parking. Capuano expressed concern for the parking needs in the neighborhood.

Member Ayala asked how PSUF is accounting for the rising costs in the market and the possibility that bids will come in higher. Bronenkant replied that the purpose for this additional funding request is to account for that possibility, and that they have included a contingency and a cost escalation clause in the project budget. He described an example of value engineering that they have already considered,

namely to locate the play structures closer together to reduce the area of expensive poured-in-place surfacing. They do not want to skimp on the actual play structures or surfacing because those are critical to the functionality and maintenance of the playground. But they may be able to save money on the choice of shade structures or pervious pavers.

West Somerville Neighborhood Schoolyard

Bronenkant gave a brief presentation on the request for funds to paint sealcoat graphics on the asphalt in the WSNS schoolyard. Graphics have been designed with community input. If funded, the project could be completed over spring vacation.

Member Fischman asked what is the lifespan of the sealcoat paint. Bronenkant explained that it starts to fade after 3-4 years and might need to be replaced within 10 years of installation. He described that the standard paint has a non-stick gritty texture.

Member Bohart asked whether it can be painted over when it is worn out. Bronenkant stated that a new layer of base coat can be applied on top of the old graphics, and that cracks can be patched with a leveling liquid before repainting. By contrast the existing surface of the Kennedy Schoolyard, which is 30 years old, is so cracked and buckling that it would have to be milled and repaved before it would make sense to repaint.

Artfarm

PSUF planner Alison Maurer presented the request for funding for Artfarm, joined by senior arts planner Michael Rosenberg. A new 1.33 acre park will be constructed over the top of the Poplar Street Pump Station, which is a major infrastructure project nearing completion. It will be the first public open space in the Brickbottom neighborhood, and provide climate resilience, an agricultural resource and a hub for community connection. Arts functions will be integrated into the landscaping including a stage and exhibition space. Maurer described community engagement and City and regional planning efforts that have contributed to the design of the park. The hope is to put the park project out to bid so that its construction can overlap with the conclusion of the pump station construction. Some other funds have supported the project so far, and PSUF is waiting on determination on grants that have been applied for. If awarded, these grants would reduce the amount of bond requested for Artfarm. While they are awaiting final cost estimates they are negotiating and value-engineering to keep the project to a maximum budget of \$5.9M (with \$900k already secured).

Member Bohart asked about the purpose of the pump station. Maurer confirmed that it holds stormwater, and will serve 60% of the city and releasing into the MBTA drainage system.

Member Turin asked for clarification about the other funding sources contributing to the Artfarm budget. Maurer distinguished between the funds which have been awarded versus applied for, and those which have been partially spent on design.

Kiracofe invited members of the public to share comments.

Peter John Marquez expressed support for the project. He noted that he has been part of discussions going back to 2013 when applying for the ArtPlace grant, when it was dubbed "Brickbottom Commons." Prior to that he recalled the original name for the project was the ArtFarm for Social Innovation, which highlighted the potential to build great utility for the community in the space. He emphasized the importance of the project for the city and the neighborhood.

Matthias Rudolf serves on the Union Square Neighborhood Council but is speaking as a resident of Prospect Hill. He feels the Arfarm project will be very important for the revitalization of the Brickbottom area and contribute to the art community. It is a magnet and an important part of Union Square.

Connie Blaszczyk, a Brickbottom resident commented that Ward 2 is one of the least green areas in the city and is ripe for development and transformation, with the recent development of GLX and planned lowering of McGrath Highway and Squires Bridge. The neighborhood is a gateway to Somerville and will be increasingly important. Artfarm will fulfill a role in defining the area, reflecting Somerville's identity as an art community, as well as fulfilling the goals for greening, open space, and community-building. Completing the park is a very important opportunity.

Jenn Harrington thanked PSUF staff and the Somerville Arts Council for their role in public engagement and planning for the Artfarm project. She is disappointed that the plan no longer includes indoor space and hopes that it could be reintroduced if funding is found. She asked that planners identify potential raindate spaces for the types of activities that might occur at the space and underscored the importance of planning for programming as well as design of the space.

Kiracofe thanked the members of the public and invited committee members to ask further questions of PSUF.

McNeley wondered how much volume of community use the park is anticipated to receive in comparison to the amount of funds requested. He asked if PSUF can provide more data on connectivity to the park from bus routes, Greenline Extension, community path, and pedestrian access in light of the lowering of McGrath Highway. Maurer offered to provide some analysis and some context of the long-term vision for a spine of green spaces across the neighborhood setting the tone for future development.

Member Bronenkant invited Director Oliveira to provide an overview of how the Artfarm project aligns with the City's plans for parks city-wide in upcoming years. Oliveira shared how the PSUF Division, who are responsible for public space and trees, has been connected with the CPA program since its inception. She pointed to the City's Open Space and Recreation Plan that identifies goals and projects for the next 10 years based on community needs and an assessment of the condition of existing parks and open spaces. She noted that under the City's new charter a capital improvement plan is required and is currently under development. Park projects are competing for funding for all other types of City projects. Given what is happening economically overall, CPA is an increasingly important source of funding for parks projects. The Artfarm project is crucial as it is the future-looking focal point of an emerging neighborhood. The Artfarm and Kennedy Schoolyard projects have both been long-planned priorities serving a large public and the important goal of expanding open space.

Turin asked when the Capital Improvement Plan is expected to be completed and what the time horizon is for the plan. Oliveira said that the City has been without a Capital Plan for a couple of years and she expects that it will be prepared by the end of the year. She believes that it will be a five-year plan and that it sets a course for investment of City funds. Turin remarked that debt service will reduce the availability of CPA funds for open space in the future. Oliveira pointed out that the bond request can be reduced if the City is awarded grants from other sources to support this project.

Kiracofe framed that bonding means that the current committee is borrowing from CPCs 10-20 years in the future, and that the committee wants to be good stewards considering the aggregate effect of

bonding decisions. Oliveira added that construction has become much more expensive than it was when some earlier major park projects were completed, and that the Kennedy Schoolyard and Artfarm are the last major projects on the list for some time. The value of open space expansion in Somerville is currently \$17m per acre if the city were to acquire land. Maurer concluded that Artfarm can be seen as the fulfillment of a long-term community dream rather than taking away from the future.

Agenda Item 4: Administrative Spending Request

In accordance with practices established by the CPC in earlier times, Cameron is requesting the CPC's approval of administrative spending for large amounts. In this case she is requesting to spend \$10,000 for annual membership dues to the Community Preservation Coalition. Member Bohart asked if there are peer to peer learning opportunities through the Coalition. Cameron replied that she runs a peer network for CPA managers of Cities across the state and the Coalition recently joined a meeting to talk about some of their current legislative initiatives to advocate for improvements to the program and additional state funding. The Coalition also provides technical assistance to CPC's.

Bohart moved to pay \$10,000 from the CPA Admin reserve to the Community Preservation Coalition for Somerville's annual membership dues, seconded by Fischman. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0.

Agenda Item 5: Somerville Museum Project Update

Cameron shared that the Somerville Museum has completed most of the projects funded in their FY25 grant, and have some funds remaining from project elements that came in under budget. They requested to repurpose those remaining funds to expand the amount of work carried out under the Archives Conservation item in their grant scope. The Museum requested an expedited decision so that they could take advantage of the contractor working on site, so Director Inacio approved the minor change administratively. However, Cameron invited the CPC to give feedback on the decision and to provide input on how similar decisions should be made going forward.

Agenda Item 6: Historic Preservation Monitoring Update

Cameron announced that the consultant's report on the Historic Preservation Guidelines was completed and included in the meeting packet. She gave a brief overview of the outcome of this project, described in a summary, also included in the meeting packet. She described new monitoring procedures for historic preservation projects to ensure CPA funds are used for projects that comply with the Secretary of the Interior Standards and the new clawback conditions.

Agenda Item 7: Administrative Updates

Cameron reviewed upcoming public outreach events and invited committee members to review the calendar and volunteer to join her in tabling.

Cameron read a statement that the Mayor's Administration is undertaking an assessment of multi-member bodies and welcomes input from existing committee members about the function of their committees.

Adjournment

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

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. Draft Minutes 6-24-26
3. FY27 Funding Round Full Applications
 - a. 125 Highland Ave Renovation
 - b. 277 Broadway Elizabeth Peabody House Clocktower Restoration
 - c. Artfarm 10 Poplar Street
 - d. Kennedy Schoolyard Renovation
 - e. Mission Church 130 Highland Ave
 - f. Somerville Museum FY27 Collection Care
 - g. Somerville Armory Condition Assessment
 - h. Spring Street Island
 - i. West Somerville Neighborhood Schoolyard Graphics
4. FY27 CPA Financial Workbook
5. Somerville Museum Revised FY25 CPA Budget
6. Somerville FY27 Community Preservation Coalition Dues Invoice
7. Historic Preservation Guidelines Final Report
8. Historic Preservation Guidelines Project Summary Conclusions
9. CPC 2026 Outreach Schedule
10. CPC 2026 Calendar

Minutes prepared by Roberta Cameron