



City of Somerville Community Preservation Committee

Minutes

August 26, 2026

- Members Present:** Ryan Kiracofe, David Turin, Eric Parkes, Jon Bronenkant, Michael McNeley, Joe Capuano, Rona Fischman
- Members Absent:** Mary Jo Bohart, Carlos Ayala
- Staff Present:** CPA Manager Roberta Cameron
- Others Present:** Ted Fields, Economic Development Senior Planner; Ralph Henry, Deputy Director of Capital Projects; Josh McCorkle, Strategy & Development Property & Tenant Relations Manager; Jeffrey O'Neill; Cortney Kirk; Brian Postlewaite, Director of Engineering; Matthew Caughey, CEO of Elizabeth Peabody House; Sam Dennis of Platt Anderson Freeman Architects; Eugene Damian of Mission Church of Christ; Binoj Pradhan; Barbara Mangum of the Somerville Museum

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 of Funding Applications for FY27

Committee members heard presentations from remaining applicants for FY27 CPA funding requests.

Somerville Armory

Ted Fields of Economic Development, Ralph Henry of Capital Projects, and Josh McCorkle of Strategy & Development introduced themselves and presented the application for CPA funding for an exterior needs assessment of the Somerville Armory's Exterior Envelope. The needs assessment will guide investments to preserve the condition and character of the historic structure.

Kiracofe asked what are the anticipated capital needs that the report is expected to highlight. Fields responded that the stucco exterior is compromised and has worsened since the last assessment was undertaken in 2021. There are also wood-framed windows that need to be addressed, and the roof has some areas of concern.

Member Turin asked for a description of the 2021 assessment. Fields explained that these issues were identified in that report but most have worsened since that time. That 2021 assessment noted several mechanical systems nearing the functional end of their lifecycles, and that the interior was largely uninsulated. Turin asked why a new assessment was needed now rather than implementing the 2021 assessment. Fields responded that phasing and priorities have shifted since the earlier report, and that the proposed study will focus on exterior envelope before mechanical systems.

Member McNeley asked whether the project has been deemed to be an eligible historic asset. Cameron replied that the project is on HPC's upcoming agenda to determine whether the building is significant to Somerville's history.

Vice-Chair Parkes asked whether the condition assessment is the appropriate next step for restoration of the building. Henry explained that the 2021 study did not focus on historic preservation needs, so that the proposed assessment will guide the restoration of building elements that contribute to its historic character.

Member Fischman asked what the roof is made of. Henry described that there is some flat EPDM, flat rubber roofing, and asphalt shingle. Fischman is concerned that it will not make it through another winter without leaking and creating more problems. Henry explained that the City has a vendor who mitigates roof issues. Fields explained that the asphalt shingles were installed when the previous owner renovated the building in 2010. The City suspects that it has leaks but has not traced the sources of possible water infiltration.

Spring Street Triangle

Residents Jeffrey O'Neil and Cortney Kirk presented their application for a plan to convert the Spring Street traffic island into a pocket park. The idea is to remove approximately 3,000 square feet of asphalt and create community space with pollinator habitat, space for tree planting, and accessibility. The proposal is resident-driven in partnership with the Engineering Department. Neighbors are committed to ongoing volunteer stewardship. The project could be a pilot for similar spaces around the city. A funding request of \$45,000 would enable collaboration with the Engineering Department and reviews by other City departments to ensure permitting and procurement compliance.

McNeley asked the applicants to confirm that they are coordinating with the City's traffic department to ensure alignment over the removal of street area to expand the park. Kirk explained that the planning process proposed to be funded with this grant would facilitate coordination to determine the best configuration of a reduction in roadway. They would consult with the Traffic Commission, Mobility, Public Space & Urban Forestry, and Emergency Response.

Fischman asked what would happen to the houses on a section of street which ends up being closed off to expand the parklet. Kirk pointed out that along two of the three sides of the triangle there are not currently any driveways or curbcuts. Turin asked if street parking would be impacted by the project. Kirk added that on two sides of the triangle there are fire hydrants, so that no one is parking directly next to the island. She estimates that only about 3 cars are utilizing the street parking in the area that might be incorporated into the parklet.

Turin asked if there is community support for the proposed change. Kirk and O'Neill stated that they have talked with many neighbors and have heard overwhelming support.

Turin asked whether the location of fire hydrants would be a problem for expanding the parklet. Director Postlewaite explained that the design process would entail reviews with DPW, Fire Department, and other City departments that have joint responsibility over the streets, and the final approval would be made by the Traffic and Parking Committee.

Member Bronenkant asked how this project will have broad community impact. Kirk asserted that the space is public and will be an improvement to the greater Spring Hill neighborhood. As Somerville is in an open space deficit this project can touch a lot of people and is a neighborhood bonding spot. Kirk imagined that this project might lead the way for similar projects in other neighborhoods.

Kiracofe expressed support for the proposal.

Elizabeth Peabody House

Matthew Caughey introduced himself and architect Sam Dennis of Platt Freeman Anderson Architects who has been working on the Elizabeth Peabody House renovations. He presented his request for funds to complete exterior restoration of the clock tower, replacement of the front door and non-historic window, and repair of shingles and trim that have been impacted by water intrusion.

Parkes asked whether there is ongoing water intrusion. Dennis explained that the paint has failed on all of the exterior trim, which is letting moisture into the woodwork which is badly deteriorated. Parkes asked how confident the cost estimate is for the scope that would be carried out with this grant. Dennis reported that they worked with the builders to develop a detailed scope and list of materials and labor that will be required. The same company recently completed the structural work on the building which came in on budget. Caughey pointed out that they anticipate the project can be completed in 6 weeks, and may be finished before the end of the fiscal year if approved this fall.

Mission Church of Christ

Eugene Damien of Mission Church of Christ introduced himself and shared an overview of historic significance of the building at 130 Highland Ave and the types of services the organization provides to the community, including a food pantry and food security programs. The organization is requesting a \$25,000 grant for a condition assessment, in particular to explore sources of water infiltration through the tower and windows, and to protect the building from water damage.

Kiracofe and Parkes observed that a condition assessment is a logical first step to preserving a building like this.

125 Highland Avenue

Binoj Pradhan introduced himself as a long-time Somerville resident and new owner of 125 Highland Ave. He recalled that the previous owners had the building under agreement with a developer who wanted to demolish it but community members protested and City Council placed it under a Local Historic District. The building owners at the time then let the building fall into severe disrepair. Pradhan was enchanted by the building because of the architecture, the resemblance of the interior of the sanctuary to Noah's Ark. Pradhan envisions restoring the building and transforming it into a community gathering space. They want to repair the building from the ground up, addressing the roof and exterior, restoring the interior, improve the electrical and plumbing system, create accessibility, improve bathrooms and kitchens, and make the building safe and functional for the community. They

intend for it to become a place for community events, culture, celebrations, educational programs, workshops, youth and family activities, senior programs, meetings, and performances throughout the year – to provide indoor community space which is in short supply in Somerville.

Kiracofe asked to confirm whether the funds were being requested for assessment or design. Pradhan stated that they have already used their own funds to hire a historic preservation architect and prepare an assessment of the highest priority needs, and that the funds will be used for construction to stabilize and restore the building. McNeley asked how the budget was derived for the tasks identified in the application. Pradhan explained that he reached out to a firm that is working on restoration of a neighboring historic building and asked them for assistance in preparing a cost estimate for the work needed at 125 Highland.

Cameron oriented the Committee to the evolution of the application for 125 Highland Ave, which includes a revised scope and budget that the applicant prepared after further consultation with their architects to drill down on what the priorities would be for this grant in response to feedback she gave to their initial application. Pradhan added that urgent conditions in the building necessitated that they use their own capital to pay for emergency repairs to halt deterioration, and that they are now seeking CPA funds to support the work of restoration.

McNeley asked what the intention is for use of the property after restoration, to understand the community benefit. Pradhan said that he sees a need for more rental space for community gathering similar to the Armory. He has an attorney who is helping them to apply for licensing so that they can begin renting it out when the building is stabilized and they have been able to bring it up to code and meet accessibility requirements. Kiracofe inquired and Pradhan confirmed that he intends to use 100% of the building space for this purpose.

Kiracofe asked for information about the entity that is applying for the funds, 125 Church LLC. Pradhan explained that this is a Somerville-based family business, having a restaurant in Teele Square and two other development projects. They didn't realize how much work the building needed, and what the historic guidelines would require, and how complicated it would be to obtain permits.

Cameron asked whether the intention is to preserve only the front section of the building and to redevelop the rear for another purpose, or to preserve and restore the entire building in its current form. Pradhan stated that he definitely intends to preserve the architecture of the front space and keep it as a community gathering space. On the rear section they would like to also restore it and use it for community space, but would consider demolishing it and putting a residential development in the rear of the property instead.

Parkes asked whether the project will be phased, or if they expect to proceed with the entire \$4-5M restoration scope concurrently. Pradhan replied that he hopes to use CPA funds and his own capital to get the church portion of the building in condition to open to the public so that he can begin renting it and generate revenue that will help to improve other aspects of the building. A CPA grant will help to stabilize the building and get it occupied.

Somerville Museum

Barbara Mangum of the Somerville Museum introduced herself and described the artifacts which the museum has applied for an FY27 grant to conserve. These include four works of art, six early maps, a photo archive, and restoration of the Loring Door in the front of the exhibit room. She shared the overall budget and presented priorities based on the importance and condition of the assets.

Agenda Item 2: Somerville Museum's Second Request for a Budget Change for their FY25 Grant

Cameron recalled that the Somerville Museum had made a request last month to repurpose unused contingency funds to expand their contract with the Archive Conservation consultant. Because the request was time sensitive and there was no change in the overall scope, a decision was made to approve the request administratively rather than waiting for the CPC to approve it. Now the Museum was returning with another request to repurpose funds which had originally been budgeted for project management since the Museum covered the cost with its own resources. Since this request was not as time sensitive, she preferred to allow the CPC to opportunity to vote on it.

Parkes moved to approve reallocation of the project management portion of the budget to cover additional archives conservation, seconded by Bronenkant. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Agenda Item 3: Approval of Meeting Minutes

McNeley moved to approve the meeting minutes from July 22, 2026, seconded by Fischman. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Agenda Item 4: Administrative Updates

Cameron shared a schedule of upcoming outreach events and invited committee members to sign up to assist with tabling.

Adjournment

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

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. Draft Minutes 7-22-26
3. Full Applications
4. Public Comments
5. Presentations
 - a. Somerville Armory
 - b. Spring Street Triangle
 - c. Elizabeth Peabody House
 - d. 125 Highland
 - e. Somerville Museum
6. FY27 CPA Financial Workbook
7. Somerville Museum Budget Update
8. CPC 2026 Calendar

Minutes prepared by Roberta Cameron