



KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE



MINUTES

FEBRUARY 23, 2022

MEMBERS

Heather Heimarck, Chair
Rose White, V/Chair
Laura Beretsky
Alan Bingham
Jahan Habib
Rebecca McKevez
Tatiana Shannon
David Turin

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) virtually held its monthly meeting at 6:30 pm on the GoToMeeting platform in compliance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 regarding the Open Meeting Law during the COVID-19 crisis.

- Members Present** Vice Chair Rose White, Alan Bingham, Tatiana Shannon, Rebecca McKevez, David Turin, Laura Beretsky, Jahan Habib
- Members Absent** Chair Heather Heimarck,
- Staff Present** Roberta Cameron, Sarah White, Alan Inacio
- Others Present** Ron Cavallo

STAFF

Roberta Cameron

Agenda Item 1: Roll Call

Vice-Chair White stood in as Chair for the meeting, as Heather Heimarck was absent. Vice-Chair White opened the meeting at 6:35 and reminded everyone that the meeting was being held virtually and being recorded in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 and the Mayor's order. CPA Manager Cameron called the roll. Member Bingham was initially not able to participate in the meeting due to a technical problem, but he was present as an observer until he was promoted to join the meeting as a panelist.

Agenda Item 2: Approval of the Minutes from November 17 and December 15

Member Beretsky moved to approve the meeting minutes from January 26, 2022, seconded by member McKevez. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Agenda item 3: LHD Small Grant Program Guidelines

Cameron introduced Sarah White, Senior Planner for Historic Preservation, who explained the background of the Local Historic District Property Owner Restoration Fund. The fund was established through a CPA grant that was awarded in 2016. Senior Planner White described the program and the guidelines for the program which Cameron shared on the screen, and then invited Committee members' questions about the program. Member Turin asked for clarification about the definition of LHDs. Senior Planner White explained that the City maintains a list of properties that are LHDs, and she described the process by which properties are designated as LHDs. Turin confirmed that the LHDs were not created in conjunction with the small grant program, but that the process has been ongoing since long before the CPA-funded program was established.

Member Bingham (who was just promoted to participate in the meeting) made a motion approve the LHD Small Grant Program guidelines, seconded by Member Habib. The motion passed unanimously 8-0.

Public Comment:

Cameron pointed out that a member of the public had joined the meeting after the beginning of the meeting when public comment was on the agenda. Vice-Chair White invited the person to address the Committee. Ron Cavallo, a Somerville Resident introduced himself. He has made an effort to attend different City Committees. He is fascinated to learn how the City operates, and appreciated the opportunity to observe. Cameron encouraged Mr. Cavallo to attend the Public Hearing in March and to take the survey to contribute to the Committee's annual review.

Agenda item 4a: Review Draft Application Instructions

Cameron shared the Draft Application Instructions on the screen and summarized the contents of the document. She invited committee members to provide feedback on the instructions. Member Beretsky commented that the instructions are a very long document, which can make it a barrier for applicants. Cameron pointed out that Section 4 of the draft application packet is intended to provide information to applicants about the grant agreement which they will be required to sign if they are awarded the grant. Previously non-city applicants were required to sign several documents with their applications, which are needed as part of the grant agreement packet but not relevant to the CPC's consideration of the project's merits. Moreover, since the grant agreement documents were not required to be signed by City departments, it made the application process functionally different for City vs. non-City applicants. Member Shannon suggested that Section 4 could be provided as a separate document. Bingham suggested that the applicants be required to initial the pages of Section 4 to acknowledge that they have read it. Cameron suggested that the checklist on the first page of Section 4 could be added to the Eligibility Determination Form, requiring that applicants acknowledge their familiarity with Section 4. Member Turin asked whether there have been instances where grantees have not cooperated with the contract forms or general conditions in the past. Cameron explained that she is trying to make the grant agreement process more transparent and easy to navigate by providing the information more clearly up front. Bingham pointed out that there have been grantees who have not complied with historic preservation requirements or restrictions in the past. Vice-Chair White pointed out that in her experience applying for CPA funds in several communities this is one of the more complicated application processes, but that the information we are providing and requesting is reasonable. There was further discussion about how the CPA Manager can assist applicants to ensure that the process is accessible to applicants who may not have an understanding of what is needed to apply.

Cameron reviewed the components of the application to identify how the information provided in the packet is useful to applicants. Member Bingham suggested that a visual flow-chart might be helpful to provide a simplified summary of the process. Cameron invite Committee members to create an example. There was agreement that the Calendar on the front page might serve as a visual summary.

Vice-Chair White suggested that the Environmental Justice Map have an explanation of context to state where the EJ designations come from.

Cameron pointed out that the application currently lacks and ought to have a mention of the potential need for a public access agreement.

Cameron asked for feedback on the narrative prompts. White asked whether the CPC's application was coordinated with the AHT with respect to housing-related questions. She pointed out that the eligibility chart included housing criteria. Cameron pointed out that the eligibility chart (Table 1) comes from the

Department of Revenue and is standard, statewide. The AHT would need to follow the same eligibility criteria for housing projects.

Beretsky asked whether the online form will have numbers that match the questions on the paper version of the form, and whether the instructions may be confusing for applicants answering the form online. Cameron noted that she has not yet created the online form, and can adjust the instructions accordingly once she tests how the form will work online. Beretsky pointed out that there are a lot of questions in this application. She suggested that it may be possible to condense and combine questions. There was debate about whether it is more organized to have separate numbered questions versus multi-part topical questions that invite a longer narrative. Beretsky suggested to consider grouping feasibility together with financial questions.

Turin asked whether it will be possible to work on an application iteratively directly online rather than preparing in advance in Word. Cameron said that she isn't sure yet how the online platform will work.

Cameron said that she will include the next draft in the April meeting packet. She will not schedule further discussion on the agenda in April, but will invite written feedback which she can incorporate into a final version for the Committee's approval in May.

Bingham expressed appreciation for the instructions clarifying the requirement for applicants to come to HPC earlier in the process. Cameron pointed out that she has received input over the past 6 months about how the Committees and staff want the process to work, and she is trying to document this in the application materials.

Agenda Item 4b: Project Status Update

Cameron explained that she has looked up every project that the CPC and AHT have funded with CPA funds since the beginning of the program to develop a list which she presented to the Committee. She aggregated the projects into the total amount that was funded at unique sites or for specific programs over multiple years, and looked at the level of completion for each project, identifying projects that are completed, in progress, are preparing to begin, or are stalled.

There was discussion about the two projects on the list that had bonded CPA funds, and Turin asked for clarification about the ability to bond projects using CPA funds.

Bingham reiterated that it is important to make the public more aware of this information. Beretsky commented that it takes longer than one would expect for some projects to be completed, which contributes to the challenge of keeping the public engaged. (1:05:55)

Agenda Item 5: Other Business

Cameron reviewed updates on activities described in the Coordinator's Report.

- She described the efforts to launch the public outreach effort, including the survey, SomerVoice site, tabling events, web page updates, newsletter and facebook feed, poster and video advertising the survey, and public hearing.
- She requested Committee members volunteer to assist with tabling events scheduled over the month of March.
- She is ordering temporary lawn signs to place at projects under construction. Permanent signs will require further coordination with City staff.

- She reminded committee members that Conflict of Interest acknowledgements are due.
- She updated the Committee that the Clarendon Hill affordable housing project which had previously been discussed for bonding with CPA funds a few years ago but was not ready to proceed at that time, is expected to come back for an off-cycle request later in the spring. She suggested that Committee members familiarize themselves with the concept of bonding with CPA funds over the next couple of months, so that they can be prepared to respond when the bonding request is submitted. She shared a link to a training session that was offered by the Community Preservation Coalition recently on the subject of bonding.
- She announced a ribbon-cutting scheduled for the Central Hill Playground on Thursday, March 10.
- She has scheduled a line-up of invited testimony for the public hearing focused on learning about a range of community needs.

Member Bingham moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by member Beretsky. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. Draft Minutes 1/26/22
3. Coordinator's Report
4. Guidelines and Grant Agreement General Conditions for LHD Small Grant Program
5. Draft FY23 Application Packet
6. Draft CPA Project Status Update