

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA) COMMITTEE MEETING
Public Hearing on FY25 Project Requests
Wednesday, July 17, 2024, 5:30 P.M.
Via Zoom

Committee Members Present: Elaine DeRosa, Mary Flynn, David Lyons, Ellen Schacter, Taha Jennings, Kathy Watkins, Kevin Foster, Chandra Harrington
Committee Members Absent: Victoria Bergland,
Staff: Daniel Liss, Andrea Carrillo-Rhoads, Mark Gallagher, Gary Chan, Jen Letourneau, Dave Kaplan, Chris Cotter, Charles Sullivan, Elliott Veloso

Introduction

Taha Jennings (TJ) opened the meeting and gave an overview of the agenda.

Review and Adopt Minutes

The minutes of the May 29, 2024 meeting were approved by a vote of 8-0-1

FY25 Process & Funding Estimates

TJ reviewed the calendar for the FY25 CPA process and said the estimated funding level will be \$21,310,000, a \$700,000 increase. In addition, there is about \$1.1 million each in the Historic Preservation and Open Space reserve funds after the transfers from available balances completed at the last meeting.

Public Comment

The following public comment was offered during the meeting:

- Barbara Dorrattie (92 Monuments St., Medford), a teacher at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, spoke in favor of the Farm@CRLS proposal. The proposal would put a community garden on the CRLS campus, where students could take leadership and provide services to the community. The project is linked to the school’s curriculum for science and African-American Studies, and will provide a means to learn about restorative justice and the history of Black farmers.
- Laura Jasinski (27 Charnwood Road, Medford) of the Charles River Conservancy spoke in favor of a proposal for Spatial Justice and Public Art at the Lynch Family Skate Park in North Point Park. The park is one of the most used state parks. The Conservancy has done extensive community engagement on the role that community art can have on the space. The proposal is also similar to the free wall/graffiti art project on the Cambridge-Watertown Greenway, which received CPA funds recently.
- Steven Nutter (24 Maple Ave., Somerville) of Green Cambridge spoke in support of two proposals. The first is continued funding for the Alewife Reservation Restoration, which has received past CPA funding. The program is a collaboration with the Mayor’s

Summer Youth Employment Program and provides both ecological restoration and pathways towards green jobs for Cambridge youth. The second is the Farm@CRLS proposal. Green Cambridge has been working with CRLS faculty and administrators since 2019, and received ARPA funding to design the project. They are requesting funds to continue with construction. The farm will function as an outdoor classroom that will integrate with the curriculum and provide pathways for green jobs for Cambridge youth.

- Ryan Masse (175 Maple St., Marlboro) spoke on behalf of the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House, located at 71 Cherry St. The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority is submitting the request in conjunction with the house to continue the historic restoration of the House and additional space for a food pantry and affordable housing units.
- Alex Cardelle (25 Cottage Ave, Somerville) of the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority spoke in support funding for the Margaret Fuller House. The committee providing funding in FY22, but as construction nears, they learned of additional work that needs to happen. In addition, costs of the existing project have increased due to construction inflation, so the request will support completing the work already funded.
- Tina Alu (13 Pleasant St) of the CEOC spoke in general support of funding for housing. The CEOC sees people desperate for housing on a daily basis, and many people will have to wait years for units their families can live in.

The following comments were received prior to the meeting:

- Janet Plotkin wrote to advocate for funds to restore the fountain and replace plantings at John F. Kennedy Park, outside of Harvard Square. This park is property of DCR and maintained by Harvard.
- Keisha Greaves wrote in support of disability housing with a supportive living environment that includes on-site medical and therapeutic services such as nursing, physical therapy, and mental health therapy.

Daniel Liss reviewed the outreach strategy for this CPA cycle:

- Information shared with CPA stakeholders by members of CPA committee
- The City issued a press release that was:
 - Distributed on June 12 to the City Council, local Cambridge and Boston media, business associations, places of worship, and neighborhood associations
 - Featured in June 13's City Daily Update e-newsletter and reissued as a reminder over the following 3 nights
 - Published as a City news story, including being featured on the homepage
- Information distributed to neighborhood associations by Community Development
- Distributed to contacts/partners of the Historical Commission and Conservation Commission
- Information sent to housing agencies to distribute in their buildings
- Information shared with organizations that reached out for information since the close of last year's process

Presentation of Proposals

Chris Cotter gave a presentation on the need for funding by the Affordable Housing Trust. The Trust has an unprecedented pipeline of projects that will need funding. There are more than 725 units moving through the development process, and additional properties recently purchased and pending acquisition. There will be close to \$200 million needed to cover all anticipated requests over the next 5 years. CPA funds continue to be an incredible resource for the Trust along with the funding in the annual budget.

Ellen Schacter asked about breakdown between rental and ownership units. Chris Cotter responded that most are rental units because there are more external funding resources that can leverage Trust funds. The chief source of new ownership units is the Homebridge program.

Charlie Sullivan gave an overview of the requests made by City departments:

- City Hall façade
- Fresh Pond golf course clubhouse
- Lexington firehouse envelope
- River Street firehouse roof
- Restoration of Works Progress Administration paintings in the Department of Public Works
- The two Historical Commission grant programs for affordable housing and non-profit buildings
- Funding for the architectural inventory digitization
- Masonry restoration of Library stone steps

Daniel Liss listed the outside proposals received. He noted that because the deadline was the previous Friday, not every project had been vetted yet for appropriateness and compliance with CPA guidelines. Any concerns would be discussed with organizations to see whether they can be addressed.

- The Dance Complex in Central Square is seeking funding for building envelope restoration
- Historic New England is seeking funding for structural repairs and preservation of the Cooper-Frost-Austin House on Linnean St.
- The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority is requesting additional funds for the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House, both to do additional restoration work and to account for inflation. This project received funding in FY23, and was discussed in public comment.
- The Mass Ave Baptist Church at 146 Hampshire St. requested funding for roof repairs, replacement of windows, and a new boiler.

Gary Chan presented project requests on behalf of the Open Space Committee. Both projects represent large projects that have received partial CPA funding in the past. Both are currently undergoing design and community process.

- Raymond Park in Neighborhood 9 needs renovation to bring it to current standards and has drainage and accessibility issues that need to be addressed.
- Rafferty Park in Cambridge Highlands behind Sancta Maria Nursing Facility. The park is showing significant wear and the playground equipment doesn't match the needs of the most users. The project in design and construction should start next year, completing in 2026.

Mark Gallagher presented a project request on behalf of the Water Department. The Department is looking for funding for a land acquisition in Lexington abutting watershed lands the City owns adjacent to the reservoir. The request is for \$1 million out of the total \$3 million cost of the acquisition. Acquiring the land would allow it to be protected from development, which could create stormwater runoff that would affect the quality of the water in the reservoir.

Daniel Liss listed the outside proposals received. He repeated the disclaimer that the projects have not been vetted yet and noted that there was public comment in support of all three of them.

- Green Cambridge requested funding to implement the Alewife Wetlands Master Plan
- The Charles River Conservancy requested funding for an artist-in-residence and free wall program to facilitate graffiti art in the Lynch Family Skate Park.
- Green Cambridge requested funding for a garden and outside classroom space on the campus of the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School.

Committee Discussion

TJ opened discussion for the committee.

Kathy Watkins asked about the process and seeing the actual proposals. TJ responded that this hearing and the next are for gathering public input and that written materials would be provided to the committee before the September vote meeting.

Ellen Schacter asked about the costs of each of the requests. Daniel Liss ran through the list, noting that there were approximately \$3.4 million in Historic Preservation requests and \$3.0 million in Open Space.

Several committee members asked about the timing of the land acquisition and whether there were constraints as to how quickly that had to be approved. Andrea Carillo-Rhoads responded that the anticipated closing date will be at some point in October.

Kevin Foster asked about why the land acquisition wasn't using bond funding. Mark Gallagher explained that the City's bonding schedule does not have extra capacity and TJ noted that the timing of the bonding process is not a good fit given the urgency of this proposal. TJ also explained that the City was considering using water fund balance and free cash and by using multiple funding sources, no one source will be overly burdened by the acquisition.

TJ noted that there is a long history of using CPA funds to acquire land around the reservoir, including more than \$1 million in funding.

Adjournment

TJ noted that the next meeting will be July 31 at 5:30 and requested committee members respond to the survey for the September meeting. The meeting was adjourned by a vote of 8-0-1.