

Notes from Community Preservation Act (CPA) Committee Meeting – May 23, 2018 @5:30 P.M.
Ackerman Room

CPA Committee Members Present:

Kevin Foster (Resident)
Ellen Shachter (Resident)
Susan Schlesinger (Resident)
Corinne Espinosa (Planning Board)
Kaki Martin (Conservation Commission)
Chandra Harrington (Historical Commission)
Victoria Bergland (Cambridge Housing Authority)
Lisa Peterson (Deputy City Manager/Chair CPAC)
David Kale (Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs)

Staff Attendees:

Justin Casanova- Davis (Budget Analyst- Budget Office)
Chris Cotter (Director of Housing Division-CDD)
Taha Jennings (Assistant to the City Manager-Executive Office)
Jen Letourneau, (Conservation Commission Director Senior Engineer- Public Works)
Karen Preval (Senior Management Analyst-Executive Office)
Charles Sullivan (Executive Director-Historical Commission)

- The meeting convened at 5:36 p.m., Deputy City Manager (Committee Chair) Lisa Peterson asked all committee members and staff to introduce themselves.
- Chair Peterson, stated that this was the organizing meeting and offered all new CPAC members an opportunity to meet privately to discuss questions they may have about CPA law and statutes. The CPA schedule was reviewed. The public hearing for projects will be held on June 13, 2018 at 6:00 P.M. at City Hall; the second public hearing on allocations is scheduled for July 19, 2018 at 6:00 P.M. at City Hall the final CPAC committee meeting to take a vote on allocation recommendations will be held on September 5, 2018, prior to the setting the tax rate on September 24, 2018. Chair Peterson reviewed the role of the Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC) which included hearing project ideas, staff priorities, the needs of the public, and making project and percent allocation recommendations to City Council.
- CPAC member Ms. Shachter mentioned that housing allocations are managed through the Affordable Housing Trust that was set up in 1989 and leverages funds by other financing sources and works on creation and preservation of long-term affordability.
- Chair Peterson mentioned that historic preservation project requests are recommended from the Historical Commission and open space provides more flexibility regarding recommending projects
- Chair Peterson summarized a law suit against the Town of Acton where an organization argued that the Town of Acton violated the Anti- Aid Amendment by providing historic preservation grants to religious institutions. The courts said that communities must analyze grants under a three-factor test. The Historical Commission will be working closely with the Law Department on grants to religious organizations.
- Executive Director of the Historical Commission, Charles Sullivan, mentioned that a recent lawsuit (Caplan vs. Town of Acton) challenged the authority of the town to make a CPA grant to the First Unitarian Church. The Supreme Justice Court (SJC) decision was notably unclear, but cited the Anti-Aid amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution in questioning the appropriateness of using CPA funds to restore stained glass

windows with religious iconography. He mentioned that the church had also applied for a planning grant for other properties and that the case had been sent back to the lower court for reconsideration. It was also mentioned that City of Cambridge, since 2005 has provided 30 churches with funding for envelope repairs – to preserve exterior envelopes, siding, windows and accessibility projects. In response to the Acton suit, FY19 preservation grant applications will be reviewed by the Historical Commission and Law Department on a case to case basis. Stained glass windows will not be funded right now.

- CPAC member Ellen Shachter asked what the law says regarding public purpose and what is the City’s Law Department thinking.
- Executive Director of the Historical Commission, Charles Sullivan mentioned that buildings need to be functional, safe and secure regardless of the use.
- CPAC member Kevin Foster asked what percent has been funded to churches and asked for a list of all projects and funding allocated to stained glass windows.
- CPAC member Susan Schlesinger asked what other communities were doing.
- Executive Director of the Historical Commission, Charles Sullivan mentioned that Cambridge is the only community in state that has a more grant organized program and other towns are more project by project basis.
- Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs, David Kale provided information regarding CPA finances, including last year’s financial information, the current financial position and anticipated CPA funding for FY19. A summary of CPA fund allocations and appropriations of all sources was distributed to members. Mr. Kale stated the City of Cambridge went from a 100% state match from Cambridge’s initial CPA participation to an estimate 11.5% in FY19. The recording fees collected at the registry of deeds are the state match funding source for 172 communities. Year to date, \$180M has been allocated to CPA projects.
- Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs, David Kale stated that the FY19 estimated CPA allocation is \$12,730,000. This includes \$2.1M from fund balance, which is generated when the City collects CPA revenues in excess of estimated receipts. A \$10,000 membership fee to the Community Preservation Coalition, again has been included in the FY19 estimate.
- CPAC member, Kevin Foster asked how we could move funds last year to other projects.
- Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs, David Kale stated that the CPAC members can recommend transfers within a same category to other projects from completed projects that have unexpended balances.
- CPAC member, Ellen Shachter mentioned that last year the City appropriated additional funds for housing and asked if the City would be doing the same this year.
- Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs, David Kale stated in FY18 \$2.8M from the general fund building permit fee were appropriated to affordable housing and in FY19 building permit revenue is \$3.45M, which also has been appropriated to affordable housing.
- Chair Peterson asked staff to provide brief updates on the status of FY18 projects.

- Executive Director of the Historical Commission, Charles Sullivan provided an update on past Historic Preservation funded projects:
 - 1,975 projects have utilized preservation grants for restoration work to support affordable housing
 - Half of CPA funds support grants for affordable housing agencies, non- profit owners (60-40%) while municipal projects have received the balance. Ideas for projects, come from departments, however CPAC makes the decision on what projects to fund.
 - The African American Heritage Trail may request additional funds in FY19.
 - The Library continues digitizing 1846 publications.
 - Sidewalks on Brattle and Boardman are in progress and the O'Connell Branch Library repairs are out to bid
 - There were no updates on the golf course.
- CPAC member Kevin Foster asked if departments would be requesting additional funds.
- Executive Director of the Historical Commission, Mr. Sullivan mentioned that the Library may submit a request to fund compact shelving and markers
- Assistant to the City Manager, Taha Jennings provided an updated status of previously funded open space projects:
 - Sennott Park received \$480K and the community process will begin in the winter 2018
 - Amigos/Morse playground is under one contract that was previously funded in FY16. Construction will begin late summer to early fall.
 - Magazine Beach boat launch construction has begun and was funded through Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), community groups and neighborhood partners. The City provided \$25K
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- CPAC member Kevin Foster asked if FY19 would include other school projects?
- Mr. Jennings stated there's an internal open space committee that looks at the City's uses and needs throughout the year.
- CPAC member Corinne Espinosa asked about the process of how the community can request funds from the City.
- Chair Peterson stated that on June 13, 2018 the public can present project requests along with sending requests online.
- Mr. Sullivan stated that nonprofit organizations are provided information.
- Director of the Housing Division in the Community Development Department, Chris Cotter mentioned that the Affordable Housing Trust has 9 members who work with requests that are considered by the Trust at monthly meetings. A key consideration for the Trust is how CPA funds can be used to leverage other funding from state, federal and private funders. He provided an updated status on some major multi-year projects.
 - Jefferson Park – CHA's rebuilding of 104 state public housing units will be completed in June.
 - A building permit was issued, for Concord Highlands, which will create 98 new affordable rental units with units affordable to low, moderate-, and middle-income households.
 - Other new developments are underway where sites have been acquired and/or commitments have been made:
 - Permits have been approved for Frost Terrace, where CPA funds will fund 40 new affordable rental units to be built in Porter Square; the developers are now applying for funding from the state.
 - Just A Start will be renovating their Linwood Court property and will use CPA funds to add 23 new affordable rental units there; they are also now applying for state funding.
 - Work continues to preserve expiring use buildings, with efforts to advance a plan to preserve 504 affordable units at Fresh Pond in progress and the Trust ready to consider a request.
 - Funding for homeownership continues to be offered to income-eligible homebuyers through the HomeBridge Program, which can fund between 40-50% of the home purchase price to make units

affordable to moderate- and middle-income buyers; two units have closed recently, and 9 approved buyers are currently searching for homes.

○ /families are out searching.

- CPAC member Kevin Foster asked about property being built near Russell Field. It was stated that was the CHA's rebuilding of the Jefferson Park public housing to which the Affordable Housing Trust provided \$8M.
- CPAC member, Kevin Foster was concerned about federal funding and asked for an update.
- Mr. Cotter stated that the CDBG program, which is a federal program for affordable housing, received more funds this fiscal year (10 % on block grants). Hopes are that Congress will preserve funding
- Chair Peterson asked if there were any additional questions and mentioned that the project request form will be available online May 24, 2018.
- Meeting adjourned at 6:42 P.M.