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CPA Committee Meeting

Wednesday, June 9, 2021

5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Committee members present: David Kale, Susan Schlesinger, Kaki Martin, Chandra Harrington, Ellen Shachter, Kevin Foster, Owen O’Riordan, Mary Flynn, Victoria Bergland

Committee members absent: None

City staff present: Jennifer Mathews, John Nardone, Taha Jennings, Charlie Sullivan, Chris Cotter, Jen Letourneau, Abby Bentley

I. Chair David Kale (DK) opens meeting:

- Virtual meeting conducted under Governor Baker’s Open Meeting Law suspension rules. All votes will be taken by roll call.
- Purpose of tonight’s hearing is to receive recommendations from the public and City staff on projects to receive FY22 CPA funding for affordable housing, open space/recreation, or historic preservation. Each of these areas must receive at least 10% of the total FY22 CPA funding available to Cambridge.
- Meeting will begin with an overview of FY22 funding estimates.
- Will take the agenda slightly out of order and open to public comment before City staff presentations. Will then hear from City staff discussing the City’s continued need for affordable housing funding and presenting specific project requests for historical and open space/recreation projects.
- DK takes attendance by roll call.
 - Members Kaki Martin (KM) & Ellen Schachter (ES) absent at meeting start. Join subsequently.

II. May 12, 2021 Minutes

- KM joins meeting.
- Owen O’Riordan (OO) makes motion to approve minutes. Motion passes 8-0-1 absent (Ellen Shachter).

III. FY22 Process & Funding Estimates

- Committee will receive project ideas and related comments tonight. Committee will hold public comment open after tonight’s meeting, to continue receiving project requests and related comments between tonight and July 14 hearing on funding allocation percentages.
- There is a new project application form available on CPA website, and city staff person Jennifer Mathews (JM) is available to help members of the public complete a project application form between now and July 14.

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- There is also a separate, more general public comment form on CPA website for any comments related to CPA projects or funding other than a specific project proposal.
- City will continue to promote the upcoming CPA meetings and project application form.
- Upcoming meetings:
 - **Wednesday, July 14, 2021** – Hearing on % allocations to each CPA spending category.
 - **Tuesday, September 14, 2021** – Meeting to vote on funding allocation % and specific funding for projects.
 - July and September meetings may be virtual or in-person. Pending state legislation would allow public bodies to continue meeting virtually after state of emergency ends on June 15. Staff will follow up with Committee members regarding July and September meetings.
- **FY22 Funding Estimate:**
 - DOR issued estimate for the November 2021 state match at 32.3%.
 - Based on state match, local revenues, and fund balance amounts, **estimate FY22 CPA funding at \$17,510,000**. This is a \$2,180,000 increase over last year's funding.
 - \$10,000 will be used for annual Community Preservation Coalition membership dues

IV. Public Comment

- **Peter Daly, Executive Director, Homeowners Rehab.** Discusses projects he has worked on with the Historical Commission through Preservation Grants program and effectiveness of CPA funding. Construction costs continue to rise and further CPA funding for affordable housing is critical to allow developers to take advantage of opportunities through new Affordable Housing Overlay zoning. New projects are in the pipeline, so continued CPA funding is vital to increase number of units.
- **James Williamson.** Increasingly disenchanted with CPA, which he originally supported. Has seen destruction of community through housing developments and doesn't want to see more. Lack of tenant voice and perspective on affordable housing, particularly on Affordable Housing Trust, and it's important to have that. Wants CPAC to look critically at where and how CPA funds are used for housing.
- **Tina Alu, Executive Director, Cambridge Economic Opportunity Council (CEOC).** Speaking in support of funding for affordable housing. There are many developments CPA funding can continue to support this year, including redevelopment at Jefferson Park, Just-A-Start projects, and 2072 Mass. Ave among others. CPA funding has done so much for many of our most needy residents; particularly for families.
- **Cathie Zusy, Magazine Beach Partners.** Requesting \$150,000 in open space funding for Magazine Beach Park, a state DCR property. Has requested and receive CPA funds in previous years. Continues requests because DCR is underfunded and typically only

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improves properties through matching funds. Previous CPA funding has been paired with state and community funding to do excellent work at the park, including restoration to the Powder Magazine, landscaping, a canoe/kayak launch, and major shoreline improvements. Funding this year would go toward turning the sunken parking lot into a grassy beach, ideally while DCR is undertaking pool improvements in the next year.

- **Steven Nutter, Executive Director, Green Cambridge.** Speaking on behalf of Green Cambridge, which is affiliated with Friends of Alewife Reservation, and seeking funding to restore DCR property in the Alewife area. DCR supports the work to improve urban wilds and agricultural resources. Funding would go toward two particular sites, restoring approximately 25,000 square feet of the reservation.
- **Jim Perrine, President, Commonwealth Community Developers.** Wants to thank previous speakers who have supported continued funding for affordable housing. Has worked in affordable housing development since very young and feels privileged to do that work in home community of Cambridge. Remember that housing provides people with a feeling of personal value; funding goes toward creating homes and putting smiles on the faces of people who need them.
- ES joins meeting during public comment period.

V. City Staff Presentations

- **Charlie Sullivan, Executive Director, Cambridge Historical Commission.** Number of historical preservation projects for funding this year. CS shares screen with images of potential projects and provides descriptions:
 - Golf Clubhouse (DPW)
 - Flagstaff Park Flagpole (DPW)
 - Preservation Grants (CHC)
 - Sumner Statue Restoration (CHC)
 - Sennott Park Historical Parker (CHC)
 - Digitization of Architectural Survey (CHC)
 - Digitization of City Records (City Clerk)
- **Chris Cotter (CC), Housing Director, Cambridge Community Development Department.** Thanks CPAC for all previous years of funding. Have had major affordable housing milestones in recent years including renewal of expiring use restrictions and passage of Affordable Housing Overlay. Focus can now turn to additional units. CC summarizes some individual projects; in total, requests for 500+ units across the City are before the CHAT. Also looking at revamping Homebridge program for first-time homebuyers. Over 20,000 people currently on the CHA waitlist. CPA funds are critical to affordable housing efforts in Cambridge, particularly because they can leverage additional funds.

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- **Abby Bentley (AB), Assistant City Arborist, Department of Public Works.**
Requesting \$125,000 to expand City's bare root nursery and related soils management program at Fresh Pond. AB shares presentation on history of nursery, plans for expansion, benefits of expansion and project budget. Expanding nursery allows City to further implement Urban Forestry Master Plan. Bare root trees require less maintenance and are less expensive than balled and burlapped trees but need a nursery to support them before permanent planting, which is seasonal. Nursery would expand number and variety of trees for planting throughout City.
- **John Nardone (JN), Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Works.**
Presenting on behalf of the City's Open Space Committee. In previous years, OSC has submitted multiple projects for consideration; this year, streamlining to focus on two.
 - Raymond Street Park - \$1,350,000 requested for renovation. Heavily used park with playground, basketball courts, and community garden, all of which would be renovated as part of the project. Anticipate second request to CPAC. FY22 funds would go toward design and some construction; FY23 request for remaining construction costs would be informed by design.
 - Rafferty Park - \$360,000 requested for design of park renovation. Rafferty is one of the City's older parks, and a hidden gem used heavily used by surrounding community. Funding for design will allow a more informed second request in FY23 for construction costs.

VI. Closing Public Comment

- JM confirms no additional members of the public have joined during staff presentations. No further public comment.
- Mary Flynn (MF) makes motion to close in-meeting public comment. Motion passes 8-0-1 (Susan Schlesinger absent).
- DK reiterates that that the comment period will remain open between now and next hearing on July 14, 2021 for additional public comments related to potential projects and funding. Project application form and separate public comment form are available on CPA website.

VII. Committee Discussion

- MF asks about bare root nursery proposal and specifics of available trees. AB clarifies that bare root trees acclimate as quickly as balled and burlapped trees once planted. There is some limit on the species of bare root trees you can get in the fall, but City got 32 species this spring. Planting is easier and water demands are the same, so significant benefits overall.
- DK asks if bare root nursery expansion has been reviewed and approved by other stakeholders, including Water Department and Fresh Pond Advisory Committee. AB

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confirms staff have been working or will work with all other departments supporting project.

- ES asks about potential changes to Homebridge program and income caps. CC confirms price limits and income ranges last changed in 2018, but staff are hearing buyers are not having success within price limits, particularly for three-bed homes. Thus additional review.
- Victoria Bergland (VB) asks for further detail on Raymond Park renovation and whether community garden will be included. JN confirms it will be. VB recommends considering greenhouse or other structures for expanded-season gardening.
- KM asks if bare root nursery proposal includes specifics at this point for planting locations; any unique needs? AB explains bare root trees thrive equally as park or street trees; same locations in which balled and burlapped trees work.

Meeting adjourns.