

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA) COMMITTEE MEETING

Public Hearing on FY24 Project Requests

Wednesday, June 28, 2023, 7:00 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Elaine DeRosa, Kevin Foster, Mary Flynn, Chandra Harrington, David Lyons, Kathy Watkins, Taha Jennings, Ellen Shachter (joined at 7:34)

Committee Members Absent: Victoria Bergland,

Staff: Daniel Liss, Jennifer Letourneau, Charlie Sullivan, Chris Cotter, Gary Chan

Public Meeting – Introduction

Taha Jennings (TJ) opened the meeting. Members of the committee introduced themselves.

Past Meeting Minutes

- TJ reported on advice from the City’s Law Office indicating that the current committee membership can vote to approve the minutes previous meetings.
 - Minutes for September 6, 2022 were approved 7-0-2
 - Minutes for May 31, 2023 were approved 7-0-2

FY24 Process & Funding Estimates

- TJ provided an update on the process of soliciting project proposals. The application form is on the website, and is due July 31.
- The hearing on the percent allocations to each category will be Wednesday, July 26, 2023 at 5:30
- Early September meeting to vote on funding allocation percentages and specific funding for projects
- The estimated funding level for FY24 will be \$20,610,000

Public Comment

- Eleni Macrakis, HRI: Eleni spoke about the 1627 Mass Ave project, a property purchased from Lesley University for affordable housing. HRI is proposing a project for historic preservation funds for exterior renovation. The building is currently beginning the process for an interior renovation to be used as affordable housing. The external rehabilitation requirements are extensive, and include replacing or repairing architectural features with appropriate materials and finishes. The building was designated a local landmark by the City Historical Commission and is on the National Register of Historic Places. HRI received a letter from the Massachusetts Historical Commission indicating the project would have no adverse effect on the property.

Presentations by City Staff

Chris Cotter gave an update on affordable housing and past CPA funding to the Affordable Housing Trust (AHT)

- There are 12 sites where development or preservation of affordable housing is underway
 - 61 units are currently under construction at three sites
 - 395 additional units at three more sites will be under construction in the coming months
 - More than 250 units proposed at 5 sites where Affordable Housing Overlay or other review completed or now underway (more funding will be required to complete these projects)
- City and affordable housing developers looking at a number of new sites for future affordable housing projects
 - Four new sites now under agreement where new affordable housing will be proposed
- HomeBridge home ownership program also gets AHT funding
 - 8 buyers currently approved; 89 units purchased to-date

Charles Sullivan gave an update on CPA historic preservation funding.

- Traditionally, half of CPA funds have been used for preservation grants and half have been allocated to specific projects, though the proportions have been shifting
- The preservation grant program provides funding to affordable housing developers and non-profits with historically significant properties to help rehab their buildings
 - Initiating grant program for a fire detection system and churches and other similar quasi-public buildings
- The commission has also received requests from a variety of City departments
 - City Clerk to preserve City records
 - 22-Cityview to digitize archive recordings of public meetings
 - Water Department to restore masonry at structures in the reservoir watershed
 - Public Works for window restoration and foundation waterproofing at Fresh Pond golf clubhouse
- Historic Commission is working on a request for funding to support administrative staff to implement CPA-funded projects, many of which are delayed
- HRI is requesting funds for restoration of the exterior of 1627 Mass Ave, as discussed by Eleni Macrakis during public comment

Gary Chan gave an update on open space projects funded by CPA and other funds

- Projects that received past CPA funding are proceeding
 - Sennott Park is under construction
 - Gold Star Mothers Park is undergoing the community process and design
 - Raymond Park will undergo community outreach over the summer with design beginning in the fall

- There is a call for artist being developed for the public art wall on the Cambridge-Watertown Greenway
- The Peabody School Playground is expected to go out to bid this summer with construction starting in late 2023
- Construction on Danehy-New Street Connector Multi-Use Pathway and Linear Park is expected to start in 2024
- Hoyt Field Play Structures and Furniture was originally scoped as targeted improvements to play areas, but staff is revisiting to look at additional areas of the site
- The Open Space committee expects to submit the following proposals for FY24 funding:
 - Gold Star Mothers Park Court renovation construction
 - Rafferty Park renovation partial construction

The committee closed public comment for the hearing by a vote of 8-0-1.

TJ reiterated that written comments and public proposals will be accepted until July 31, 2023.

Committee Discussion

- Ellen Schacter expressed concerns about declining public participation and attrition over time, saying the committee should have a discussion about addressing the issue.
- Kathy Watkins asked how CPA funding fits into the resources for affordable housing
 - Chris Cotter noted that funding can work out to \$200,000 per unit for large projects and more for smaller projects and the home-ownership program
 - The FY24 budget has more than \$24 million in City support for trust separate from any CPA funding
- David Lyons asked for clarification on whether the 1627 Mass Ave project would be considered affordable housing or historic preservation funding
 - Charles Sullivan answered that exterior work would be from Historic Preservation portion
 - Chris Cotter confirmed that the Trust already has and will continue to provide significant funding for that project
- David Lyons asked about percentage of City support for playgrounds outside of CPA
 - TJ answered that there is \$3.5M in FY24 budget, but that funding can vary year-to-year. In years past, CPA was primary way of funding open space projects, but City is increasing support through City budget
 - Jennifer Letourneau added that CPA Project Request Books from previous years are available on line and include information on open space projects funded outside of CPA.

Adjournment

- TJ reminded committee members that the next meeting will be July 26 at 5:30
- The September meeting is still being scheduled
- The meeting adjourned by a vote of 8-0-1