

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA) COMMITTEE HEARING

Public Hearing on FY 24 Funding Allocation Percentages

Virtual Meeting

Wednesday, July 26, 2022, 5:30 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Elaine DeRosa, Kevin Foster, Mary Flynn, Chandra Harrington, David Lyons, Ellen Schachter, Kathy Watkins, Taha Jennings

Committee Members Absent: Victoria Bergland

Staff: Daniel Liss, Jennifer Letourneau, Gary Chan, Chris Cotter, Charles Sullivan, Adam Corbeil

Public Meeting – Introduction

Taha Jennings (TJ) opened the meeting and took attendance.

Summary of Committee Process

TJ provided a summary of the CPA process:

- Committee had an organizing meeting on May 31, 2023.
- On June 28, 2023, the Committee had its hearing on project requests for FY23 funding.
- Since June 28th, the Committee held public comment open to receive additional project ideas and online comments.
- Tonight, is the hearing on allocation percentages.
- Thursday, September 7, 2023 meeting – Committee will vote to recommend funding allocation percentages and on projects for funding.
- Anticipated FY24 funding is \$20,610,000.
- Comment period on projects closes Monday, July 31. Comment period on allocation percentages will remain open until the September 7, 2023 meeting.

Review & Adopt June 28, 2023 Minutes

- Minutes for the June 28, 2023 meeting were approved 8-0-1

Public Comment

- Sara Barcan, Executive Director of HRI (281 Franklin St.): Delivered a petition through staff at CDD of 214 people from 4 housing developments. Their housing and its residents have had great benefit through CPA and all petitioners are in agreement of the 80% allocation and supportive of CPA. CPA Funding has been a very valuable resource in several recent projects to create, renovate, and preserve affordable housing.

- Cathleen Higgins, 345 Norfolk St: Strongly advocating 80% for affordable housing. If the amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay pass, there will be a need for money to build the larger projects. As a renter, has anxiety about rents increasing, so the City needs to do everything it can at the local level.
- Carl Nagy-Koechlin, 52 Carruth St. Dorchester, Executive Director, Just-a-Start: Works to develop affordable housing in a very difficult real estate market and supports maximum amount of 80% of CPA funds to affordable housing. Housing affordability is the biggest threat to the continued vitality, health, and wellbeing of Cambridge and its residents. This funding allows projects to go forward without other funding sources, allowing them to happen more expeditiously. Just-a-Start has 250 units in the pipeline, but producing them is contingent on funding being available.
- Tina Alu, 113½ Pleasant St., CEOC: Encouraging continued allocation at 80% affordable housing, 10% for historic preservation, and 10% for open space. CEOC staff has met with hundreds of low-income families applying for the City's cash assistance program, and maintaining affordable housing is the number one issue they raise for themselves and neighbors. It's critical to devote every dollar available to any opportunity to create new affordable units, and this year is no different.
- Margaret Donnelly Moran, Deputy Executive Director of Development of the Cambridge Housing Authority: Recommending that the board maintain the 80% designation for affordable housing. There are over 22,000 distinct applications on the CHA's waiting list. Residents report that they would be unable to continue to live in Cambridge without access to CHA housing.
- Jean Hannon, 7 Woodrow Wilson Court: Believe the 80% funding level for affordable housing should be maintained. As a resident of CHA housing, doesn't believe she'd still be able to live in Cambridge without access. Along with the AHO, these are important pieces of the puzzle to allow affordable housing work to continue.
- Carolyn Carleton, 929 Massachusetts Ave: Supporting 80% affordable housing, 10% to historic preservation and 10% to green space. Able to live in Cambridge through CHA Section 8 vouchers. Before World War II, her father was able to live in the servants quarters of wealthier relatives, but now those opportunities do not exist, and most of her family has moved out of Massachusetts due to the expense of housing.

Project Applications and Comments received through July 21, 2023

- TJ stated that there have not been any additional project applications or comments received as of July 21, 2023
- Daniel Liss summarized comments received to date on recommended allocation percentages for the record:
 - Received four different petitions from residents of affordable housing developments signed by a total of 234 people in support of allocating 80% of CPA funds for affordable housing.
 - Daniel received a phone call from Shari Tucker in support of allocating 80% of CPA funds for affordable housing. She said she is a tenant in Cambridge and is very concerned about housing and wants to make sure it gets the highest amount of funding possible.
- Public Comment closed by a vote of 8-0-1

Committee Discussion

TJ opened the floor to committee discussion.

- Ellen Schacter is concerned about the participation issues and lack of diverse opinions, even as she strongly supports the 80% allocation for housing, recognizing that there are other sources of funding for historic preservation and open space.
- Elaine DeRosa thinks that COVID has changed the way public participation, which needs to be re-energized. Because of all the work around the overlay and great projects, it's hard to not say 80% for affordable housing.
- Mary Flynn had a question about the HRI project with the preservation funding how to distinguish what is historic preservation and what is affordable housing. She was concerned about potentially giving more than 80% to affordable housing.
 - Charlie Sullivan explained that it would be used exclusively for the renovation of the shell of the historic mansion at 1627 Mass Ave, not for the fit-out of the affordable units on the interior or the addition to be built in the parking lot behind it. The affordable housing units and the addition will be funded through other sources. The request will be very specific and detailed so there is no confusion about mixing funds.
- David Lyons supports 80% for affordable housing. He particularly supports it when open space and historic preservation can dovetail with housing needs. He also believes there should be more funding from other sources for open space.
- Kathy Watkins always wants to advocate for open space, but believes that the 80% for housing is more important. She continues to advocate funding for open space from other pots of funds, like the City's capital program.
- TJ mentioned the possibility having additional meetings outside of the four basic ones – asked the committee to keep that on their radar.
 - Kevin Foster strongly supports extra meeting and wants to look at best practices from other cities. It would be great to diversify the participants and requestors of funding.

Next Meetings

- The next meeting will be Thursday, September 7 at 7:00 to vote on recommendations for funding allocations and projects. Daniel will send the full CPA request book to committee members before the meeting so they have time to review the proposals.
 - Ellen Schacter asked whether all proposals from the public would be included in the book, regardless of whether they are likely to be awarded funding. TJ replied that all proposals would be included.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by a vote of 8-0-1.