

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA) COMMITTEE MEETING

Vote Meeting

Thursday, September 7, 2023, 7:00 P.M.

Via Zoom

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

Committee Members Absent: Victoria Bergland, Elaine DeRosa, Chandra Harrington

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

Public Meeting – Introduction

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

Summary of Committee Process

- Committee had an organizing meeting on May 31, 2023.
- On June 28, 2023, the Committee had its hearing on project requests for FY24 funding.
- On July 26, 2023, the Committee had its hearing on allocation percentages.
- Tonight, Committee will vote to recommend funding allocation percentages and on projects for funding. The committee's recommendations will be placed on the City Manager's Agenda for the City Council Meeting on Monday, September 18th.

Review & Adopt July 26, 2023 Minutes

- Minutes for the July 26, 2023 meeting were approved 6-0-3

Public Comments received through September 7, 2023

- Public Comment closed by a vote of 6-0-3
- Daniel Liss provided a summary of public comments received since last meeting:
 - Duane Callender of the Alliance of Cambridge Tenants sent an email in favor of the 80% allocation for housing
 - Roman Tessema wrote in support of repairing or replacing the playground in Rafferty Park

Project Requests Book & Finances

- Daniel Liss provided an overview of the project request book, showing the financial overview, sections on affordable housing, historic preservation, and open space projects, and summary of public comment received.

- Kevin Foster asked a question about the 22,500 households on the waitlist and how they got on the list. Chris Cotter explained that anyone can get on the Cambridge Housing Authority waitlist and do not need to already be Cambridge residents. There is a preference for applicants that live or work in Cambridge or are veterans.
- Ellen Schacter asked about the CPA Fund Fund Balance. Taha Jennings stated that the fund balance is about \$10 million, which is meant to provide stability as the state match fluctuates. The intention is to not have the fund balance grow, but to maintain a certain amount as a cushion so that funds are available to offset revenue declines.
- Mary Flynn asked whether funds are ever appropriated from the fund balance outside of the annual CPA allocation process. Several committee members stated that in FY21, the committee held an emergency meeting to recommend \$1 million in fund balance for a rental assistance program during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- David Lyons asked about the Open Space and Historic Preservation reserve accounts. TJ and Daniel Liss explained that the balances are from projects that were completed with unexpended balances due to finishing under budget.
- Kevin Foster noted that the requests for Open Space and Historic Preservation match 10% of available funds and asked whether all project requests are included. TJ explained that there was only one request from the public, so all requests are in the book. The City-requested projects did undergo a prioritization before being presented to the Committee.

Committee Vote on Allocation Percentages

- The committee voted to set funding allocations at 80% affordable housing, 10% historic preservation, 10% open space (6-0-3).

Committee Discussion on Projects

- Gary Chan summarized the two open space project requests:
 - \$1,300,000 for Gold Star Mothers (Gore Street) Park Paved Area renovation. This builds on \$100,000 for design appropriated last FY. The project would consist of rebuilding the basketball court as well as a new seating and gathering areas and integrating public art into the design, as well as tree plantings and improvements to reduce the paved area. Construction is anticipated to begin next year.
 - \$760,000 for Rafferty Park partial construction. This park has some of the oldest play equipment in the city, so the park will do a full renovation. The design process will begin this fall or winter.
- Kevin Foster asked about the total cost of the Rafferty Park project and potential future funding needs. Gary Chan explained that the ballpark estimate is \$3 million, but that number will be finalized during the design process. There will be another funding request either through CPA or another funding source for the balance.
- David Lyons asked whether the funding for Gold Star Mothers Park is enough to complete the project. Gary Chan replied that it is and further funding requests are not expected.
- David Lyons asked about the Open Space committee. Gary Chan responded that it is an inter-departmental committee that includes representatives from Community Development,

Public Works, Recreation, Arts Council, and other departments that collaborate on open space projects.

- Ellen Schacter asked to confirm that there were no requests from the public for open space projects. Taha confirmed that that is correct. Ellen also added that Rafferty Park is a good project that she believes will serve lower income families that have less access to open space.
- Charles Sullivan summarized the historic preservation project requests:
 - \$12,000 for 22-CityView, which is part of a series of annual appropriations to record media that is on obsolete forms.
 - \$500,000 for 1627 Massachusetts Ave, a Homeowners Rehab project to restore the shell of an 1863 mansion that will be converted into affordable housing
 - \$194,000 for the Fresh Pond Golf Clubhouse Windows
 - \$200,000 for digitization of legislative records held by the City Clerk
 - \$700,000 for historic preservation grants, including a new grants program for fire prevention in buildings owned by non-profit organizations
 - \$100,000 for a Preservation Project Administrator
 - \$20,000 for a historical marker at Sennott Park
 - \$250,000 for restoration of Stony Brook Gatehouse masonry
 - \$84,000 for preservation processing of library collections, including newspapers, assessors records, and the reference collection
- Kevin Foster asked if any affordable housing CPA funds are going to support 1627 Mass Ave and whether more funds were needed. Charles Sullivan explained that this funding is just a small part of the larger project to ensure that the building’s renovation maintains and restores important historical features. Chris Cotter explained that the Affordable Housing Trust has disbursed \$7.9 million for this project, including \$7.5 million to purchase the site. Homeowner’s Rehab is currently applying for financing and may request more funds from the Trust if needed once the financing plan has been finalized. This is a normal procedure given the complicated funding mechanisms for affordable housing.
- Mary Flynn asked if there are any special rules around the Project Administrator position. Charles Sullivan responded that there is precedent for such a position and there was formerly a CPA-funded position that was subsequently transitioned to the general fund.

Committee Votes on Projects

VOTE 1: Fiscal Year 2024 Local Funds (\$13,000,000)

Vote 1A

80% of FY2024 CPA Local Fund revenues (**\$10,400,000**) allocated to Affordable Housing and appropriated to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust

Vote 1B

10% of FY2024 CPA Local Fund revenues (**\$1,300,000**) allocated to Historic Preservation as follows:

1. \$500,000 appropriated to 1627 Massachusetts Ave. restoration
2. \$700,000 appropriated to Historic Preservation Grants
3. \$100,000 appropriated to Preservation Projects Administrator

Vote 1C

10% of FY2024 CPA Local Fund revenues (\$1,300,000) allocated to Open Space as follows:

1. \$1,300,000 appropriated to Gold Star Mothers (Gore St) Park Paved Area Renovation

Votes 1A, 1B, 1C approved (6-0-3)

VOTE 2: Fiscal Year 2023 State Funds [received in FY2024] (\$3,000,000)

Vote 2A

80% of FY2023 State Match revenues (\$2,400,000) allocated to Affordable Housing and appropriated to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust

Vote 2B

10% of FY2023 State Match revenues (\$300,000) allocated to Historic Preservation as follows:

1. \$200,000 appropriated to Legislative Records Preservation Processing
2. \$100,000 appropriated to Stony Brook Gatehouse Masonry Restoration

Vote 2C

10% of FY2023 State Match revenues (\$300,000) allocated to Open Space as follows:

1. \$300,000 appropriated to the Rafferty Park Partial Construction

Votes 2A, 2B, 2C approved (6-0-3)

VOTE 3: CPA Fund Balance (\$4,600,000)

Vote 3A

80% of the Fund Balance (\$3,680,000) allocated to Affordable Housing and appropriated to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust

Vote 3B

10% of the Fund Balance (\$460,000) allocated to Historic Preservation as follows:

1. \$12,000 appropriated to 22-CityView Record Material preservation processing
2. \$194,000 appropriated to Fresh Pond Clubhouse Windows
3. \$20,000 appropriated to Sennott Park Historic Marker
4. \$150,000 appropriated to Stony Brook Gatehouse Masonry Restoration
5. \$84,000 appropriated to Library special collections preservation processing, including newspapers, assessor's records, and the reference collection

Vote 3C

10% of the Fund Balance (\$460,000) allocated to Open Space as follows:

1. \$460,000 appropriated to the Rafferty Park Partial Construction

Votes 3A, 3B, 3C approved (6-0-3)

VOTE 4: CPA Fund Balance - Administration (\$10,000)

Vote

1. \$10,000 appropriated to Administrative Costs for Community Preservation Coalition membership dues

Vote 4 approved (6-0-3)

Closing

- TJ stated that project request book will be updated to project recommendation book, to reflect tonight's votes; will email Committee and post online
- Recommendations will go to Council Monday, September 18th
- TJ noted that there may be an off-cycle meeting and Committee members should expect communication from Daniel on scheduling.
 - Kathy Watkins and Ellen Schacter both expressed interest in discussing the process and number of meetings.
 - Ellen Schacter and Kevin Foster both recommended discussing ways to increase public engagement, both to increase and diversify participation.
 - Ellen Schacter said it would be helpful to meet with the Affordable Housing Trust to understand their process, since the Trust controls decisions for the actual paying out of CPA housing funds.
- The meeting was adjourned by a 6-0-3 vote