

Notes from CPA Committee Meeting-9/7/11 @ 5:30pm-795 Mass. Ave, 2nd floor, Ackermann Room

The CPAC met for a publicly posted working meeting on September 7, 2011, at which CPAC Chair Richard Rossi read into the record a synopsis of three letters/emails received since the August 31, 2011 hearing. In this correspondence, two wrote in favor of an 80% allocation to Affordable Housing and a third provided a petition with 52 signatures in favor of an 80% allocation to Affordable Housing. Three members of the public attended the meeting.

Mr. DePasquale provided an overview of anticipated available CPA funds for allocation in FY12, noting that \$9.6 million will be available this year from a combination of local receipts, state match and reserve funds, which is up \$50,000 from FY11, primarily due to an increase in local receipts. Mr. Rossi outlined the FY12 CPA public process (as articulated above), then the meeting was opened for CPA Committee member discussion.

CPAC Member Susan Schlesinger asked what the largest allocation had been in prior years of CPA funding and what the main reasons are that the state match has gone down.

CPAC Member (and City Treasurer) Louis DePasquale answered that more communities had adopted the CPA than in earlier years and that receipts from the Registry from fees collected have been down in the economic downturn. He noted that the highest year of CPA funding was FY08, when \$12.6 million was available.

CPAC Chair Rossi noted that the City is hopeful that the pending legislation in the State House will firm up the CPA funding source for the state match funds, and that passage would loosen up restrictions on use of Open Space funds, which the City is particularly interested in. He noted that the City has been in touch with many legislators in support of passage of this legislation.

Chair Rossi then recapped the public comment from the prior CPA public meetings, for which the CPAC members had meeting notes with greater detail.

CPAC member Albe Simenas raised the comments by speakers receiving Historic Preservation grants for Affordable Housing, and inquired as to whether more money directed to this particular use would be allowable and/or would be detrimental to the funding for Affordable Housing disbursed by the Affordable Housing Trust.

Historic Commission Executive Director Charles Sullivan responded that one-third to one-half of the CPA funds received for Historic Preservation is divided between institutional non-profits and affordable housing agencies. He noted that demand for historic preservation grant funds has exceeded available funding in recent years. He noted that preservation of municipal buildings and landscapes and preservation of historic documents also receive CPA Historic Preservation funds and that these categories also have more need than available funds. He noted that he is seeking more funding for grants this year than in prior years and that the requests for CPA Historic Preservation funds this

year are in excess of \$2.4 million. Finally, he noted that CPA Historic Preservation funds can go to smaller scale owner-occupied housing, whereas the Affordable Housing Trust cannot fund such projects.

CPAC member Susan Schlesinger noted that non-profit, non-housing historic preservation grantees have fewer resources available from which to seek funding, but that it is important for smaller affordable housing projects to have access to funds.

CPAC member Albe Simenas inquired whether a 2% increase in funding to Historic Preservation, specifically targeted to housing, would (or would not) be a loss to Affordable Housing, rather than just a response directed to a particularized need.

Mr. Sullivan noted that he believed that the CPAC could specifically allocate historic preservation funds to housing.

CPAC member Ellen Shachter noted that the listing in the CPA booklet (p. 37) regarding FY12 CPA Historic Preservation project requests, in excess of \$2.4 million, seemed to be primarily for municipal agency projects and that only \$600,000 was requested for non-profit and affordable housing grants.

Mr. Sullivan noted that there is a backlog of requests for funding from non-profits.

CPAC member Susan Schlesinger noted that all categories of CPA funding have needs in excess of funds available. She then inquired what the funding for the Magazine Beach Powder house was intended for.

Mr. Sullivan responded that part of the funding sought was for emergency repairs to stabilize the building, which is in ruins, and that part was to fund a study regarding what the structure could be used for, while retaining its historic character. He noted that the North Bennett Street School had been approved by the DCR to work on the repairs and the study, and that the DCR had agreed to match any local funding 2 for 1. He noted that the structural study would be a blueprint for future work.

CPAC Chair Rossi cautioned that the City's prior dealings with the DCR with regard to Magazine Beach had been fraught with delays, resulting in a \$1 million contribution by the City being held for 11 years by the DCR before work was performed.

CPAC member Albe Simenas noted that action now would keep the potential for a future renovation viable.

CPAC member Bill Bibbins noted that community interest in the project was growing.

CPAC member Gerald Clark stated that he heard a generally more favorable attitude toward an 80% allocation to affordable housing this year than in recent years and that the speakers seemed less contentious than in recent years. He said that it appeared that an 80% allocation to housing had widespread community support this year.

CPAC member Bill Bibbins said that only about 8% expressed an interest in changing the 80-10-10 allocation this year.

CPAC member Albe Simnas noted that there were many petitions in favor of the 80% for housing allocation this year. He also said that people still don't seem to understand that the City spends other resources for Open Space projects and that the CPA isn't the only resource available for that purpose.

CPAC Chair Rossi noted that at a recent meeting he had attended with CHA staff, that they had stated that the need for family-sized larger units is still the greatest need that they see.

CPAC member Susan Schlesinger reiterated that she felt that this year's meeting was less contentious than in recent years and that she thought it was because more tenants who are concerned about losing their housing were present, and that the threat of loss of expiring use rentals created a more compelling story than concerns about "big developments in my neighborhood." She said that she found the "save my home" testimony very compelling.

CPAC Chair Rossi asked CDD Housing Director Chris Cotter about numbers of expiring use units the City would be able to retain with CPA funds. Mr. Cotter noted that hundreds of expiring use units have been preserved since the adoption of CPA and that another 950 units face expiring use restrictions in the next ten years.

CPAC member Susan Schlesinger said that the number of expiring use units coming up in the next few years is daunting and the need for preservation of their affordability is immediate.

CPAC member Ellen Shachter stated that she heard an overwhelming need expressed for affordable housing and that it was significantly greater than the need expressed for historic preservation. She noted that the greatest local unmet need is for affordable housing.

CPAC Chair Rossi noted that a lot of folks may not understand the concept of expiring use restrictions, but that they do understand compelling testimony from neighbors about losing their homes or being told they have to move. He further noted that, with regard to the Whittemore Garden Open Space funding proposal, there had initially been a willing seller, but that as a result of recent down-zoning petitions and resistance in the neighborhood to development of an adjacent parcel, the owner now may not be as willing to sell. He also noted that the City is looking to the DOR for clarification on the proposal to purchase this parcel with CPA Open Space funds and may need to look to another funding source, if the parcel is still available but the DOR does not look favorably on the CPA-funded purchase.

CPAC member Susan Schlesinger asked whether Belmont has raised or allocated any funds for purchase of the Silver Maple Forest.

CPAC Chair Rossi that he was not aware that the Belmont has done so. He further noted that the majority of the Silver Maple Forest property lies in Belmont, with only 15-20%

of the site in Cambridge; that the property owner is not willing to sell it, thus obtaining it would require an adverse taking at significant cost; and that acquisition could potentially involve the state legislature.

CPAC member Louis DePasquale noted that he thought that the woman from Belmont who spoke at the CPA hearing indicated that Belmont had allocated CPA funds for this project, but that it was only a small amount and would need a significant commitment and contribution from Cambridge if the purchase were to be viable.

CPAC Chair Rossi noted that the Silver Maple Forest purchase was significantly different than the Whittemore Garden proposal, where there had been a willing seller and potential for a friendly taking.

CPAC member Albe Simenas noted that, with an unwilling seller (for the SMF), Cambridge and Belmont would need to agree to purchase and take the land, which is a larger political question than is before the CPA Committee.

Mr. Rossi asked whether there was any further discussion members wanted and the group agreed to close discussion at 6:30 PM and move to voting on the percentage allocations first and the particular project allocation recommendations, thereafter. He also noted that a vote would be taken to transfer unexpended funds from completed historic preservation projects to other historic preservation projects, but that this vote would not require City Council approval.

Accordingly, on September 7, 2010, the CPA Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council, through the City Manager, that the CPA funds be allocated as follows: 80% to Affordable Housing and 10% each to Historic Preservation and Open Space, and further, voted unanimously that the allocated funds be appropriated as follows:

#### **Recommended FY 2012 Allocation and Appropriation of CPA Funds**

##### **VOTE 1: Fiscal Year 2012 Local Funds (\$6,750,000)**

###### ***Vote 1A***

80% of FY2012 CPA Local Fund revenues (**\$5,400,000**) allocated to Affordable Housing and appropriated to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust.

###### ***Vote 1B***

10% of FY2012 CPA Local Fund revenues (**\$675,000**) allocated to Historic Preservation as follows:

1. *\$500,000* appropriated to the Historic Preservation Grants program; and
2. *\$175,000* appropriated to the former CPD HQ adaptive reuse rehabilitation.

###### **Vote 1C**

10% of FY2012 CPA Local Fund revenues (**\$675,000**) allocated to Open Space as follows:

1. *\$350,000* appropriated to Watershed Protection and Landscape Stabilization-Glacken Slope; and
2. *\$325,000* appropriated to Watershed Protection –Parkway Community Garden.

**VOTE 2: Fiscal Year 2011 State Funds [received in FY12] (\$1,850,000)**

*Vote 2A*

80% of FY2011 State Match revenues (**\$1,480,000**) allocated to Affordable Housing and appropriated to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust.

**Vote 2B**

10% of FY2011 State Match revenues (**\$185,000**) allocated to Historic Preservation as follows:

1. *\$75,000* appropriated to the former CPD HQ adaptive reuse rehabilitation;
2. *\$105,000* appropriated to the City Hall Painting Project, to restore the original color scheme to public areas; and
3. *\$5,000* appropriated to the Magazine Beach Powderhouse preservation repairs.

*Vote 2C*

10% of FY2011 State Match revenues (**\$185,000**) allocated to Open Space as follows:

1. *\$25,000* appropriated to Watershed Protection - Parkway Community Garden; and
2. *\$160,000* appropriated to Watershed Protection and Landscape Stabilization - Golf Course.

**VOTE 3: CPA Fund Balance (\$1,000,000)**

*Vote 3A*

80% of the Fund Balance (**\$800,000**) allocated to Affordable Housing and appropriated to the Affordable Housing Trust.

**Vote 3B**

10% of the Fund Balance (**\$100,000**) allocated to Historic Preservation as follows:

1. *\$20,000* appropriated to Magazine Beach Powderhouse preservation repairs;
2. *\$20,000* appropriated to DPW City Engineer Archives, document scanning;
3. *\$30,000* appropriated to Old Burying Ground, headstone and table tomb restoration; and
4. *\$30,000* appropriated to Cambridge Cemetery, granite stairs and enclosures.

**Vote 3C**

10% of the Fund Balance (**\$100,000**) allocated to Open Space as follows:

1. *\$100,000* appropriated to Watershed Protection and Landscape Stabilization - Golf Course.

**VOTE 4: CPA Fund Balance - Administration (\$7,500)**

**Vote 4A**

1. \$7,500 appropriated to Administrative Cost for Community Preservation Coalition Membership Dues.

**Attendance at Community Preservation Act Committee Meeting: September 7, 2011**

Committee Members Present:

Richard Rossi, CPA Committee Chair, Deputy City Manager  
Louis DePasquale, Assistant City Manager, Finance  
Wyllis Bibbins, Member, Historical Commission  
Gerard J. Clark, Cambridge Housing Authority  
Ellen Shachter, Resident, City of Cambridge  
Susan Schlesinger, Cambridge Resident  
Albe Simenas, Chair, Conservation Commission  
Bill Tibbs, Planning Board

City Staff Present:

Charles Sullivan, Executive Director, Historical Commission  
Brian Murphy Assistant City Manager for Community Development  
Chris Cotter, Director of Housing, Community Development Department  
David Kale, Budget Director  
Nancy Schlacter, Assistant to the City Manager