

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA) COMMITTEE MEETING

Organizing Meeting

Wednesday, June 4, 2025, 5:00-6:30 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Elaine DeRosa, Mary Flynn, Chandra Harrington, David Lyons (arrived late at 5:10), Ellen Schacter, Kathy Watkins, Taha Jennings

Committee Members Absent: Victoria Bergland, Kevin Foster

Staff: Daniel Liss, Charlie Sullivan, Jen Letourneau, Chris Cotter, Claire Spinner, Cortney Kirk, Christine Yu, Adam Corbeil

Introduction

Taha Jennings (TJ) opened the meeting and gave an overview of the agenda.

Election of Chair

The committee elected Taha Jennings chair by a vote of 6-0-3.

Approval of minutes

The committee approved the minutes from the September 12, 2024 meeting by a vote of 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 present (Ellen Schacter), 3 absent

Background / Introductions

TJ gave a brief overview of the history of the CPA process in Massachusetts and Cambridge. Funding can support affordable housing, historic preservation, and open space, with a requirement that a minimum of 10% go to each category.

FY26 Funding Estimates

TJ provided an overview of anticipated funding for FY26, noting that funding comes from three sources: CPA surcharges assessed to local property owners, matching funds from the state, and use of fund balance. The City's finance team is working on projecting the amounts for FY26, with a preliminary estimate of \$22.1 million. The FY25 funding level was \$21.3 million.

2025 Meeting Schedule & Process

TJ provided an overview of the 2025 CPA committee schedule. The committee was in the organizing meeting. There will be two public hearings in July or August, one on project ideas and one on the allocation of funds between the three categories, that are being scheduled. Finally, there will be a meeting in September to vote on recommendations to the City Council.

Daniel Liss (DL) explained that after speaking with CPA administrators from other communities across Massachusetts, he was proposing adding a requirement for a letter of interest (LOI) noting the funding category, an estimate of the requested funding and total project budget, and a brief description of the project from organizations proposing projects. After organizations submit the LOI, City staff would review it and meet with the

organization and make a determination on whether the proposed project is eligible and appropriate for CPA funding, and then invite organizations to submit a full proposal. He explained that this process would give the City an opportunity to thoroughly vet the proposals and do the full due diligence, while it would save organizations from putting effort into a full proposal for a project that is ineligible. The LOI would be due July 11th, which is the same schedule as the full application was due last year.

Ellen Schacter asked whether the committee would receive information on any proposals that were screened out after the LOI. DL answered that they would.

Chandra Harrington asked whether this would create a burdensome amount of work for City staff. DL replied that the amount of additional work would be minimal, and that it could potentially save time related to reviewing full proposals that are ineligible.

Ellen Schacter asked when the final proposals would be due. DL said that hadn't been finalized yet, and that organizations were encouraged to submit the LOI's as early as possible.

Kathy Watkins noted that in her experience applying for grants, she found LOI's helpful because they are easier than full proposals, and thus lower the barrier to entry. They provide an opportunity for City to provide feedback that would make proposals stronger.

Elaine DeRosa asked how this change would impact the timeline. DL explained that the timeline would be broadly similar to last year, and more generous to organizations than previous years.

TJ asked what would happen if someone introduced a project at a public hearing that did not have a corresponding LOI submitted. DL explained that at that point it would not be permitted to submit, and provided some examples of what steps need to happen between project submission and presentation to the Committee in September.

Ellen Schacter asked whether participation would be meaningful at the public hearing if the deadline has already passed. DL offered the example that City staff would hear the testimony and would be able to incorporate it into planning processes along with other stakeholder feedback.

David Lyons asked whether any organizations had reached out asking about this year's process. DL said that he had one referral from a CPA colleague in Somerville, but did not have the details.

Chandra Harrington stated she supported the new process with the LOI.

DL then provided an overview of planned outreach. The City will issue a press release and include information in the daily email newsletter; information will be shared with the city's neighborhood associations and stakeholders of the Historical Commission, Conservation Commission, and Housing Department. The summer Participatory Budgeting newsletter will mention the CPA process. DL encouraged all members of the committee to share information with their networks.

Review of Balances Available for Transfer

TJ stated that there are available balances from projects that no longer need funding that can be transferred into the Open Space Reserve account:

- \$203.17 from Little Fresh Pond and Shoreline Project (FY2004)
- \$84,630.00 from Farm@CRLS (FY2025)

David Lyons asked for an explanation of the Farm@CRLS project. Kathy Watkins explained that there were two concerns. First, although the project had support of the CRLS faculty, it did not have support of the school administration. Second, there were concerns that an Article 97 open space restriction on land in the middle of the CRLS campus could cause challenges if the school building is renovated in the future.

The committee voted to approve the transfer (7-0-2).

Committee Discussion

There was no general committee discussion.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Closing

TJ reminded committee members to assist DL in scheduling the two public hearings.

The meeting was adjourned by a vote of 7-0-2.