

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA) COMMITTEE HEARING

Public Hearing on FY 26 Funding Allocation Percentages

Wednesday, August 20, 2025, 7:00 P.M

Committee Members Present: Elaine DeRosa, Mary Flynn, Chandra Harrington, David Lyons, John Nardone, Ellen Schacter, Taha Jennings

Committee Members Absent: Victoria Bergland, Kevin Foster

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

Introduction

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

Summary of Committee Process

TJ gave an overview of the FY26 CPA Committee process. There was an organizing meeting on June 4, 2025 and a public hearing on project ideas on July 28, 2025. The committee will vote on recommendations on September 3, 2025 and the City Council will vote on the appropriations on September 15, 2025.

TJ stated that the anticipated FY26 funding is \$22,515,000. The 80% maximum funding level for any category is \$18,000,000 and the 10% minimum is \$2,250,000. Community Preservation Coalition dues are increasing from \$10,000 to \$15,000 based on local revenue collections.

Daniel Liss noted the total request amounts. For Open Space, there were \$2,581,000 of requests. If the committee funded open space at 10% and approved all requests, \$330,000 of the Open Space reserve would be required. Doing so would leave a balance of approximately \$30,000. For Historic Preservation, the requests total \$2,363,000. If the committee funded historic preservation at 10% and approved all requests, \$113,000 from the Historic Preservation Reserve would be required. Doing so would leave a balance of approximately \$200 after.

Review and Adopt Minutes

The minutes from the July 28, 2025 meeting were approved (7-0-2).

Public Comment

The following public comment was offered during the meeting:

Tina Alu (113½ Pleasant St) spoke both as a resident and as the director of the CEOC on behalf of its participants to encourage 80% funding for affordable housing. CPA has been an important financial resource to invest in any new opportunities for affordable units. The 80%/10%/10% allocation will keep Cambridge ready with the needed resources to preserve current buildings and pursue new opportunities to expand the affordable housing stock for all residents who are waiting for an affordable and secure home.

Teresa Cardosi (7 Woodrow Wilson Court) spoke in support of 80% funding for affordable housing. There are sufficient funds for all project requests for Open Space and Historic Preservation, and the situation is growing worse for affordable housing.

Cathy Higgins (345 Norfolk St) spoke in support of 80% funding for affordable housing. The recent 2025 report on the Affordable Housing Overlay has demonstrated the value of funds sent to the Affordable Housing Trust, which have created hundreds of new homes with many more in the pipeline. Residents are fortunate to live in a city whose leaders have the vision and will to make this much housing a reality.

Myniece Greenidge (402 Rindge Ave) recalled speaking at a CPA meeting in the past and asking at what point would affordable housing no longer be affordable. As a lifelong resident that has lived for 20 years in a Just-A-Start community, she has had the privilege of remaining a Cambridge resident and living in a diverse development. Shelter is a basic human need. She supports an 80% funding allocation for affordable housing.

Margaret Donnelly Moran (362 Green St) is the Deputy Executive Director of the Cambridge Housing Authority, which submitted some petitions from their residents in support of the 80% allocation for affordable housing. CHA has recently used CPA funds for sites at 116 Norfolk St and 16 Wendell St, which added 84 units of housing for people who were previously unhoused. The former Jefferson Park Federal building is under construction, replacing 175 existing units and adding 103 new deeply affordable units. There are more than 14,000 residents, applicants, and people on the CHA waitlist. CPA funding is critical to meeting the overwhelming need.

Daniel Liss summarized other public comment received outside of the meeting for the record:

- Sandra Fairbank (Mt. Auburn St.): Wrote in support of the Charles River Conservancy proposal for Hell's Half Acre. She has been involved with their work at the site for almost a decade and believes that CRC is highly deserving of the funding. The project will increase the biodiversity and beauty of the urban area.
- Desiree Charles wrote to state that Affordable housing provides low-income individuals the chance to have a comfortable home when market rents are unaffordable.
- Cathy Higgins (Norfolk St) wrote in support of 80% allocation for affordable housing because the City has a moral obligation to do all it can to enable the creation of deeply affordable homes for the greatest number of people possible.
- Theresa Cardosi (Woodrow Wilson Ct) wrote in support of 80% for affordable housing, stating the need for housing is still dire.
- Jean Hannon (Woodrow Wilson Ct) wrote in support of 80% for affordable housing. As a lifelong Cambridge resident, she was fortunate enough to secure a subsidized apartment, which allowed her to continue living here. She wants Cambridge to continue to be open to people of all backgrounds.
- We received six petitions with a total of 250 signatures in support of 80% allocation for affordable housing.

Daniel Liss stated that he would send the committee members the full text of the written public comment by the end of the week.

Committee Discussion

There was no committee discussion.

Next Meetings

TJ noted that the next meeting will be Wednesday, September 3 to vote on recommendations for funding allocations and projects. Daniel Liss will send the project request book to committee members and post it on the website next week so that people will have a chance to review it before the next meeting.

Adjourn

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