

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA) COMMITTEE MEETING
Vote Meeting

Wednesday, September 3, 2025, 5:30 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Elaine DeRosa, Mary Flynn, Kevin Foster (arrived at 5:38), Chandra Harrington, David Lyons, John Nardone, Ellen Schacter, Taha Jennings

Committee Members Absent: Victoria Bergland

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

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. There were public hearings on July 28, 2025 to receive feedback on project ideas and on August 20, 2025 to receive comment on the allocation of funds between funding categories. The City Council will vote on the appropriations on September 15, 2025.

Review & Adopt August 20, 2025 Minutes

The committee voted to adopt the minutes from the August 20, 2025 meeting (7-0-2).

Public Comments received through September 3, 2025

Daniel Liss read into the record public comment received since the previous meeting:

- Deborah Armstrong wrote in support of affordable housing for low-income households. Thanks to affordable housing, she was able to raise her three children in Cambridge, which provided a great opportunity for them.

Project Requests Book & Finances

Daniel Liss provided an overview of the CPA Request book, noting the financial overview, information about affordable housing, the requests for historic preservation and open space, and a summary of public comment received during the process. He stated that the available 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. In addition, there is \$113,187.74 available in the Historic Preservation Reserve and \$360,946.53 available in the Open Space Reserve.

Committee Vote on Allocation Percentages

TJ opened discussion on the allocation of funding between the categories of affordable housing, historic preservation, and open space.

Mary Flynn stated that based on the compelling testimony the committee heard around the need for affordable housing and projects in the pipeline, it makes sense to fund housing at 80%. There is enough in the reserve funds to fully fund all the project requests in the other categories.

Elaine DeRosa stated that she’s looking forward to the joint meeting with the Affordable Housing Trust and appreciated hearing from the community and being able to say yes to their request.

Ellen Schacter said that she is involved in the CPA process in Somerville and understands that Cambridge is fortunate to be in a position to provide significant funding for open space and historic preservation even at just the 10% allocation.

The committee voted to allocate funding as follows: 80% to affordable housing, 10% to historic preservation, and 10% to open space (8-0-1).

Committee Vote on Projects

Daniel Liss read the list of historic preservation project requests:

Project Title	Amount	Project Requestor
Backstage Theatrical Accessibility Improvement Project	\$100,000	Multi-Cultural Arts Center
Cannon Carriage Replacements	\$60,000	CHC/DPW
City Hall Vestibule Improvements	\$185,000	Capital Building Projects
Declaration of Independence Document Conservation	\$20,000	City Clerk
Golf Course Clubhouse Foundation	\$325,000	Capital Building Projects
Golf Course Clubhouse Windows	\$348,000	Capital Building Projects
Historic Markers Project Manager	\$100,000	CHC
Legislative Records Preservation	\$170,000	City Clerk
Preservation Grants	\$850,000	CHC
Recorded Media Preservation	\$12,500	22-CityView
Slide Archive Preservation	\$37,500	Arts Council
Stony Brook Reservoir Barn	\$45,000	Water Department
Sullivan Chamber Improvements	\$100,000	Capital Building Projects
Washington Elm Marker	\$10,000	CHC/DPW
Historic Preservation Requests, Total	\$2,363,000	

Ellen Schacter asked how the \$850,000 in preservation grants compared to prior allocations. Charlie Sullivan explained that it was \$700,000 last year and that the Historical Commission expects to do additional outreach to non-profits.

Kevin Foster asked about the Golf Clubhouse windows project. He expressed concern that there have been two previous funding allocations for the windows, with the stated plan that DPW would complete the installation. He wanted clarification on the progress of the project given the large amount of funding already allocated.

John Nardone provided further background information. In FY22, CPA funding was used to hire a consultant to complete a comprehensive assessment of the state of the clubhouse. The assessment found that the windows were more deteriorated than had been realized. Additionally, there were significant problems with the doors, the vestibule, the roof, the foundation, and other components of the building. The project is more comprehensive than just the windows. The total project is expected to cost about \$1.6 million, which includes both CPA funding and capital funding.

Kevin Foster expressed concern that the repeated requests for funding gives the appearance of mismanagement. He asked whether green fees are allocated to support the clubhouse.

John Nardone said that he wasn't sure the exact amount, but believed that green fees do support the general operations.

TJ noted that the green fees are general fund revenues and that it isn't necessarily tracked the way it would be if it were an enterprise fund, although there is a revolving fund for the clubhouse shop.

Chandra Harrington asked for clarification on the revolving fund.

Daniel Liss explained that the revolving fund is used for the shop to replenish golf supplies that people purchase. He also noted that the operations of the golf course slightly exceed green fee revenue, and that there is a small property tax subsidy of about \$30,000 for the course's operations.

Chandra Harrington asked whether there is a long-term maintenance plan for the course and the clubhouse.

John Nardone explained that the Capital Buildings staff are looking at buildings in a more comprehensive way, both to get the building back to where it needs to be and to making sure there is a plan to maintain it.

Jen Letourneau noted that the golf course dates back to 1939, and that the Recreation Division did a comprehensive study of the soil, looking for ways to minimize any adverse effects to the sensitive ecological area. The course is heavily programmed year round, and in addition to golfing it is used for birding and skiing.

Kevin Foster first stated that he uses the golf course, but still wants to examine the large amount of money being allocated to it, which is approximately a quarter the funding for Historic Preservation and Open Space. He wants to ensure that in the future, the funding is looked at holistically for the impression that it might make on the community about how CPA funds are being spent.

David Lyons said there may be an issue with funding the project piecemeal over time rather than seeing it at once as a comprehensive plan. He asked whether this funding would be enough to complete the project, and also whether the Fresh Pond Master Plan Advisory Committee had reviewed the work.

John Nardone responded that this should be enough money, but that it won't be finalized until the project has been bid out. He noted that bids have been coming in very high for all construction projects. Jen Letourneau explained that the Fresh Pond Master Plan Advisory Committee had been presented with information focused mainly on the landscape work that also touched on the rehabilitation of the building.

Ellen Schacter said that the public golf course is an important asset for accessibility because it allows people that otherwise wouldn't be able to afford membership at a private club the opportunity to play.

David Lyons asked about the cost of replacing windows, as well as the status of the Lexington Ave firehouse windows project from the year before.

John Nardone stated that custom historic windows are more expensive than standard windows you could get at Home Depot. Charlie Sullivan said that the rest of the Lexington Ave firehouse renovation was complete, but that the windows hadn't been replaced yet. Taha Jennings noted the importance of windows for sustainability standards.

Elaine DeRosa asked where the budget numbers for the requests for the golf course came from. Charlie Sullivan explained that there had been capital requests related to the building for many years, but that it did not receive sufficient capital funding to make progress on the repairs. This allocation would allow the project to progress.

Kevin Foster suggested that the project refer to the envelope instead of just the windows so that it is more clear that this is a broader project. The language should provide an explanation of the actual scope of the project.

Charlie Sullivan agreed that it should have been presented as a single package to show that it is a more comprehensive project. John Nardone also stated that this work will allow the building to be as airtight as possible and allow the exterior to remain structurally sound.

Elaine DeRosa said that she was concerned that if there was a delay, the budget would get more expensive rather than less and would be concerned about letting a community asset deteriorate.

Ellen Schacter agreed that changing the description of the project would help it go forward.

Mary Flynn noted that the City Council had questions about the clubhouse last year and that changing the way the project is presented would be good. She agreed that the golf course is a great asset for the city.

Charlie Sullivan, following Kevin Foster's suggestion, recommended combining the two projects and labeling them as envelope repairs. Daniel Liss said that he will work with staff to update the description in recommendation book provided to City Council.

Daniel Liss presented the list of Open Space project requests to the committee:

Project Title	Amount	Project Requestor
Alewife Trail Design and Signage Planning	\$71,000	Green Cambridge
Danehy Park Improvements Plan Multi-Year Plan	\$1,500,000	Open Space Committee
Fresh Pond Golf Course Environmental Work	\$250,000	Human Service Programs
Lynch Family Skatepark Improvements	\$50,000	Charles River Conservancy
Maher Community Garden Fence Rehabilitation	\$150,000	Open Space Committee
Rafferty Park	\$270,000	Open Space Committee
Re-establishing Native Species & Supporting Tree Care at Hell's Half Acre	\$40,000	Charles River Conservancy
Wilder-Lee Park	\$250,000	Open Space Committee
Open Space Requests, Total	\$2,581,000	

Kevin Foster asked for more information about the Golf Course environmental work and what specifically the money would fund.

Jen Letourneau explained that a consultant already worked for a year, including taking soil samples, analyzing the use of fertilizers, and looking at water samples in the reservoir to establish a baseline environmental status. She also noted that no public courses have gone completely organic. This funding would help build up the soil with organics to make the grass more resilient with less fertilizer and pesticides.

Kevin Foster asked about the funding for Danehy Park and whether this was a complete request or whether there would be further funding needed.

Kevin Beuttell explained that the \$1.5 million is primarily for planning and design work for improvements to the park and how to prioritize them. There will be a working group and citywide public meetings to solicit feedback on plans. There will be more significant capital investments in Danehy Park in the future.

David Lyons asked whether the Fresh Pond golf course work would have benefits for the water supply.

Jen Letourneau explained that it would, and that the project will target specific location to minimize runoff of macronutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen. The analysis will also look at rain events and possible scheduling of treatments.

Chandra Harrington asked for further clarification on the funding for Danehy Park.

Kevin Beuttell responded that the funding will be used for planning work, looking at both the scope and sequencing of changes to the park. There will technical documents that will guide future funding requests.

David Lyons asked about the funding for Rafferty Park, and whether this request would be enough to complete the project.

Gary Chan explained that the project cost has increased due to the opportunity to create a pedestrian connection to Concord Ave. Currently, the only access is through a private parking lot, so this would increase access. CPA funds would not go towards building the connection, but would supplement funding for the park proper to ensure it is built to appropriate standards.

David Lyons asked whether there would be any connection to the quadrangle neighborhood to the east. Gary Chan responded that it is premature at this point, but that may be an option in the future as the area is built out.

The committee then recorded the following votes to approve funding and forward the recommendations to the City Council for appropriation:

VOTE 1: Fiscal Year 2026 Local Funds (\$19,700,000) (Approved 8-0-1)

Vote 1A

80% of FY2026 CPA Local Fund revenues (\$15,760,000) allocated to Affordable Housing and appropriated to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust

Vote 1B

10% of FY2026 CPA Local Fund revenues (\$1,970,000) allocated to Historic Preservation as follows:

1. *\$100,000* appropriated to the Multicultural Arts Center Backstage Theatrical Accessibility Improvement Project
2. *\$60,000* appropriated to Cannon Carriage Replacements
3. *\$72,000* appropriated to City Hall Vestibule Improvements
4. *20,000* appropriated to the Declaration of Independence Document Conservation
5. *\$393,000* appropriated to Fresh Pond Golf Clubhouse Foundation and Envelope
6. *\$100,000* appropriated to Historic Markers Project Manager
7. *\$170,000* appropriated to Legislative Records Preservation
8. *\$850,000* appropriated to Preservation Grants
9. *\$12,500* appropriated to Recorded Media Preservation
10. *\$37,500* appropriated to Slide Archive Preservation
11. *\$45,000* appropriated to Stony Brook Reservoir Barn
12. *\$100,000* appropriated to Sullivan Chamber Improvements
13. *\$10,000* appropriated to Washington Elm Marker

Vote 1C

10% of FY2026 CPA Local Fund revenues (\$1,970,000) allocated to Open Space as follows:

1. *\$71,000* appropriated to Alewife Trail Design and Signage Planning
2. *\$889,000* appropriated to Danehy Park Improvements Plan
3. *\$250,000* appropriated to Fresh Pond Golf Course Environmental Work
4. *\$50,000* appropriated to Lynch Family Skatepark Improvements
5. *\$150,000* appropriated to Maher Community Garden Fence Rehabilitation
6. *\$270,000* appropriated to Rafferty Park Construction
7. *\$40,000* appropriated to Re-establishing Native Species & Supporting Tree Care at Hell's Half Acre
8. *\$250,000* appropriated to Wilder-Lee Park

VOTE 2: Fiscal Year 2025 State Matching Funds (\$2,800,000) (Approved 8-0-1)

Vote 2A

80% of FY2025 State Match revenues (\$2,240,000) allocated to Affordable Housing and appropriated to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust

Vote 2B

10% of FY2025 State Match revenues (\$280,000) allocated to Historic Preservation as follows:

1. \$280,000 appropriated to Golf Clubhouse Foundation and Envelope

Vote 2C

10% of FY2025 State Match revenues (\$280,000) allocated to Open Space as follows:

1. \$280,000 appropriated to Danehy Park Improvements Plan

VOTE 3: CPA Fund Balance - Administration (\$15,000) (Approved 8-0-1)

Vote 3A

1. \$15,000 appropriated for membership dues

VOTE 4: Historic Preservation Reserve (\$113,000) (Approved 8-0-1)

Vote 4A

\$113,000 of Historic Preservation Reserve funding as follows:

1. \$113,000 City Hall Vestibule Improvements

VOTE 5: Open Space Reserve (\$331,000) (Approved 8-0-1)

Vote 5A

\$331,000 of Open Space Reserve funding as follows:

1. 331,000 appropriated to Danehy Park Improvement Plan

Closing

TJ noted that the project recommendations book, with the updates requested by the committee, will be emailed to the committee and posted on the website. The recommendations will be on the City Council agenda on September 15, 2025.

TJ stated that he discussed setting up a joint meeting with the Affordable Housing Trust with Chris Cotter, and it will likely not be until late fall or winter due to the volume of business the Trust currently has. When they move through their business, we can work on scheduling the meeting.

TJ opened the floor to any general discussion.

Kevin Foster said he noticed that there are many projects that receive significant CPA funding over multiple years, such as the golf course or Magazine Beach, and wanted information on which projects have other sources of funding and which are completely supported by CPA.

TJ said that is a valid question and that he would have to think about the best way to gather and present that information.

Daniel Liss announced that some committee members' terms have expired and that staff would be in touch about possible reappointment.

Adjournment

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