

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA) COMMITTEE MEETING
Public Hearing on FY27 Project Requests
Monday, July 20, 2026, 5:30 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Teresa Cardosi, Elaine DeRosa, Kevin Foster, Mary Flynn, Chandra Harrington, David Lyons, John Nardone, Ellen Schacter, Taha Jennings
Committee Members Absent: Ellen Schacter
Staff: Daniel Liss, Charlie Sullivan, Gary Chan, Jen Letourneau, Chris Cotter, Cortney Kirk, Daniel Messplay, Samantha Elliott

Introduction

Taha Jennings (TJ) opened the meeting and gave an overview of the agenda. He explained that in order to fill the vacancy left by Victoria Bergland as Cambridge Housing Authority representative, the City Manager appointed Elaine DeRosa in that role and Teresa Cardosi as the Affordable Housing Trust representative.

Review and Adopt Minutes

The committee approved the minutes from the June 3, 2026 meeting by a vote of 8-0-1.

FY27 Process & Funding Estimates

TJ gave an overview of the process. Letters of interest (LOI) were due on July 10. The committee is receiving project ideas and related comments at this public hearing. There will be a public hearing on July 27 about the allocation of funding among the three funding categories. The committee will meet on August 31 to take votes on the allocation percentages and funding on specific projects.

TJ also gave an overview of the estimated funding level, which for FY27 will be \$23,765,000. This represents a \$1.25 million increase from FY26. The 10% minimum funding level for any category will be \$2,375,000. The 80% maximum funding level will be \$19,000,000. This also includes \$15,000 for the membership fee for the Community Preservation Coalition.

Public Comment

The following public comment was offered during the meeting:

Laura Jasinski (Executive Director, Charles River Conservancy): The Charles River Conservancy submitted two LOI's and are preparing two applications. One is for improvements to Hell's Half Acre and trees along Memorial Drive. The other is for incremental improvements at the Lynch Family Skate Park in order to augment the public art program there.

Jennifer Lawrence (Public Arts Commission): Speaking as both a member of the Public Arts Commission and a resident of North Cambridge in support of the rehabilitation of the Gift of the Wind sculpture in Porter Square. She said that when people find out she is on the Public Arts

Commission, they always ask her about restoring it. There is funding in the state budget as well, which represents civic partnership in support of this project.

Darrin Korte (Executive Director, Cambridge Community Center): The Cambridge Community Center is requesting funding for restoration of historically appropriate replacement of deteriorated windows, restoration of cedar clapboard clapboards, exterior trim, and other architectural features, including also the installation of insulation, inappropriate air and weather barrier, and other related repairs to protect this historic building from moisture drafts and continued deterioration. He noted that they received funding to become a resiliency hub and emergency shelter, and redoing the envelope to improve insulation will be vital to that project.

Peter DiMuro (Executive Artistic Director, Dance Complex): The Dance Complex is requesting additional funding for the façade, including to resolve safety issues related to the brick and windows and improve airflow circulation. The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority has served as a partner on this project, providing some funding, a line of credit, and partnership on how to strategize the large project.

Jimena Bermejo: She has used the Dance Complex since the 1990's. It remains one of the few places in Central Square where people of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of experience can dance, rehearse, perform, and gather. The building is not just a dance studio, it is a vibrant community hub where art, culture, education, and connection come together.

Daniel Liss (DL) provided a summary of the following written comments:

- Mal Malme asked whether the Vail Court property on Bishop Allen could be used for housing and a community garden. Daniel explained that he wrote back with a link to the Housing Department project page, explaining that the site is being developed for affordable housing now that the lawsuit has been resolved.
- Carolyn Hoffman recommended restoration of the Gift of the Wind sculpture in Porter Square and conserving headstones in the North Cambridge Catholic Cemetery on Rindge Ave.
- David Bergher wrote in about the Cambridge Community Center in Cambridgeport.
- Lauree Mansour recommended lighting at the fields in Danehy Park in order to encourage exercise and build community.
- Alison Scholes wrote in asking whether portions of streets in East Cambridge could be depaved and turned into pocket parks to create open space.
- Candace Young wrote as a member of the Cambridge Plant & Garden Club in support of the Charles River Conservancy's work at Hell's Half Acre. She wrote that Cambridge is lucky to have organizations like the CRC that support biodiversity in planting native plants and are willing to invest further in the health of the tree canopy along Memorial Drive. These projects benefit all Cambridge residents by supporting a healthier environment and she encourages that additional CPA funding be awarded to CRC.

- Pamela Lingel, also a member of the Cambridge Plant & Garden Club, wrote in support of the Charles River Conservancy. She highlighted that the work at Hell's Half Acre will benefit the public and also birds and wildlife. CPA funding in support of the project will have a significant impact on restoring the Hell's Half Acre habitat and the trees along Memorial Drive.
- Jimena Bermejo wrote in support of the Dance Complex. It remains one of the few places in Central Square where people of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of experience can dance, rehearse, perform, and gather. The building is not just a dance studio, it is a vibrant community hub where art, culture, education, and connection come together.
- Allison Crump wrote in support of the Dance Complex. She wrote about the history of the building, built in 1884 as Odd Fellows Hall. After about a century, it became a dance studio called the Joy of Movement, and finally became the Dance Complex in 1993. The public benefit of preserving the landmark structure and the important cultural programming housed in the Dance Complex sends a powerful message of support to the City's cultural community and commitment to preservation of our historic identity.
- Rose Massey, who volunteers at the Cambridge Community Center's food pantry, wrote in support of the Center's funding request. The Center is not just a program site. It is a trusted place where people come for food, supplies, relationships, and support.
- Jude Shabry is also a volunteer at the Cambridge Community Center's food pantry and wrote in support of funding to restore the historic building envelope. Every day, people come through the doors for food and basic supplies, but they also find kindness, consistency, and a place where they are welcomed. The building itself is part of that experience. It has been a community anchor for generations, and it continues to be used every day by children, families, seniors, volunteers, and neighbors.
- Courtney Reid, who is another food pantry volunteer, wrote in. The Community Center pantry serves families, seniors, and individuals from across Cambridge, and the building makes that work possible. It is a place where people can come for help without judgment and feel connected to a caring community. Restoring the exterior will help protect the structure and allow the center to continue meeting community needs from a safe, welcoming, and reliable space.
- Annette Taylor, who also volunteers, wrote in support of the Cambridge Community Center. She has seen how important this building is to Cambridge residents. People come to the Center each week for food, supplies, and support, but they also come because CCC is a place where they are treated with care and respect.
- Beatriz Perez, also a volunteer, wrote in about the Cambridge Community Center proposal. Each week, families and residents come to CCC for food, supplies, connection, and support. The building is not just a backdrop for that work. It is the place that makes the work possible. She supports this project because CCC is both a historic resource and an active community resource.

- The Cambridge Community Center submitted an online petition signed by 19 people in support of their proposal.
- De Ama Battle wrote that the Dance Complex is an entity that nurtures stability and artistic excellence. It is a place where cultural traditions from around the world meet in our open spaces and leave legacies of dance, music, folklore. This energy becomes its own history, preserved through the arts.

Daniel stated that he would send copies of written public comment to the committee after the meeting so members can read them in full.

Overview of Public Proposals

DL shared preliminary information about LOI's received from outside organizations, noting that proposals are subject to change:

Miscellaneous

- We received a proposal from a nonprofit called Cambridge Culinary Commons requesting funding for small business support and the cultivation of the culinary cultural heritage. Daniel wrote back explaining that as presented, it does not meet CPA's very specific criteria and asked some follow-up questions to see whether any components might fit it in historic preservation, but did not hear back.

Affordable Housing

- We received an LOI from the non-profit Girls Chronically Rock related to developing disability housing. They were referred to the Affordable Housing Trust.
- The YWCA submitted a proposal for \$42,300 for their SRO housing building on Temple St. They were referred to the Historical Commission for one of the grant programs.
- A resident sent an email expressing interest in selling their triple decker and asking whether CPA funds could be used to purchase it. They were referred to the Housing Department.

Historic Preservation

- The Maria Baldwin Community Center in the Baldwin neighborhood made an inquiry and was referred to the Institutional Preservation Grant program.
- The New School of Music made an inquiry related to accessibility updates. They're located in a building that's owned by the City in West Cambridge. They aren't ready for this year's funding cycle, but will plan on applying next year.
- The Dance Complex submitted an LOI for additional funding for the restoration of the façade. This was previously funded in FY25.
- The Cambridge Community Center in Cambridgeport submitted an LOI for funding to support the replacement of windows, restoration of exterior architectural features, and envelope repairs to protect the structure from further deterioration.

- Black History in Action submitted an LOI for \$250,000 to renovate the interior of St. Augustine's African Orthodox Church in Cambridgeport. Funding would be used for accessibility features.

Open Space

- The Charles River Conservancy submitted an LOI to continue and expand the habitat restoration work at Hell's Half Acre, which is along the Charles River close to the border with Watertown. Related projects have received funding in past years, including last year.
- The Charles River Conservancy also requested funding to install amenities at the Lynch Family Skate Park. This will build on the street art program that CPA funding supported the past two years.
- Green Cambridge submitted an LOI for continued work on the Alewife Brook Reservation, including further implementation of the Land Management Plan and the creation of a trail.

Overview of City Proposals

Chris Cotter spoke about the continued need for funding Affordable Housing. He described projects in the pipeline, including new units at 2072 Mass Ave, renovations to HRI's Inman CAST Apartments, projects on former Lesley University lots near Porter Square, properties on Mellon St., properties on Concord Ave., Vail Court, and a new 70-unit project in North Cambridge. In addition, the Homebridge program continues to have high demand and will likely need additional funding in the coming year.

Charlie Sullivan listed the historic preservation project applications he has received from city departments:

- Gift of the Wind Restoration
- City Hall Window Treatment
- City Hall Belfry Restoration
- Engine Four Improvements
- Preservation Grants
- Preservation Projects Administrator
- Document Conservation (Library, Public Works, Clerk)
- Clerk Vital Records Conservation
- Clerk Water Petition Conservation
- Cemetery Chapel Stained Glass Windows

Gary Chan gave an update on previous CPA-funded open space projects. He noted that Raymond Park is nearly complete and will be open by the end of the year. There also has been substantial progress on legal agreements related to Rafferty Park, and the project should be under construction in the fall. He then discussed two projects that the Open Space Committee is requesting for FY27 funding. First is Hoyt Field in Riverside, which is an important park for the community and for the Moore youth center. The project is currently in its community process.

The committee is also requesting funding for Wilder-Lee Playground in Mid-Cambridge, near the Longfellow School building.

Committee Discussion

TJ opened the floor to Committee discussion and questions.

Elaine DeRosa asked about the impact that construction on Hoyt Field would have on the youth center. Gary Chan explained that it is too early to know exactly what will happen, but that they will take that into account as they plan construction.

Chandra Harrington talked about how Hoyt Field has come up in oral histories she is compiling. It has been very important to the community of Black Cantabrigians. Cortney Kirk said that she has heard similar things as they gather public input on the design.

Elaine DeRosa and Mary Flynn both expressed appreciation for the work of City staff in outreach, and noticed the number of LOI's submitted by community organizations.

Teresa Cardosi asked whether the New School of Music has programs in Cambridge Public Schools for children. TJ and David Lyons both said that the programs they do are valuable, but that they are not in the CPS system.

Adjournment

TJ reminded committee members about the joint meeting with the Affordable Housing Trust at 4:00 on July 23, as well as the next public hearing on Monday, July 27.

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