

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA) COMMITTEE HEARING
Public Hearing on FY27 Funding Allocation Percentages
Monday, July 27, 2026, 5:30 P.M
Virtual

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, Jen Letourneau, Chris Cotter, Cortney Kirk, Samantha Elliott, Lois Wu

Introduction

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

FY27 Process & Funding Estimates

TJ gave an overview of the process. Committee had an organizing meeting on June 3, 2026. On July 20, 2026, the Committee had its hearing on project requests for FY27 funding. Tonight, is the hearing on allocation percentages. Committee will vote to recommend funding allocation percentages and on projects for funding at the August 31, 2026 meeting. The City Council will vote on the recommendations at the regular September 14, 2026 meeting.

TJ provided an overview of the funding estimates. The anticipated FY27 funding is \$23,765,000. The 10% minimum funding level for any category will be \$2,375,000. The 80% maximum funding level will be \$19,000,000.

TJ provided are the preliminary totals for project requests we received. The totals are still being refined and vetted, and it is possible that some proposals will be reduced in scope, withdrawn, or deferred. For Historic Preservation, the preliminary total is between \$2.7M and \$2.8M. For Open Space, the preliminary total is between \$2.1M and \$2.4M.

Review and Adopt Minutes

The committee approved the minutes from the June 20, 2026 meeting by a vote of 8-0-1.

Public Comment

The following public comment was offered during the meeting:

Cathleen Higgins advocated for 80% funding for housing, noting that two recent projects received combined 3,400 applications for 135 units. Open space and the preservation of culturally significant structures are important but are secondary to the life-changing benefit that comes from having a safe, secure home.

Tina Alu spoke both as a resident and on behalf of CEOC and its participants to encourage the committee to continue allocating 80% funding for affordable housing. CEOC has worked with new tenants at the 52 New St. project and witnessed the joy and relief that they experienced being housed in a beautiful building that feels like home.

Sara Barcan (Executive Director, Homeowners Rehab) was grateful for the support their projects have gotten from CPA over the 25 years since Cambridge voters adopted it. It is a critical tool for Cambridge's affordable housing pipeline. Over the past decade, HRI has received more than \$75 million in funding to build about 220 units with an additional 120 under development. Demand for affordable housing in Cambridge remains at a desperate level and vacancy rates at HRI properties are very low. HRI also submitted petitions from residents urging 80% funding for affordable housing.

Carl Nagy-Koechlin (Executive Director, Just-A-Start) stated that CPA funds are critical for the organization's ability to produce affordable housing. Time and time again, when the city surveys its residents, the cost of housing is always the top priority. Cambridge also has a very high cost of development and needs all the tools at its disposal to produce affordable housing. The housing agencies have been very productive in recent years, but can't build housing fast enough.

Margaret Darling Moran (Deputy Executive Director for Development, Cambridge Housing Authority) urged the CPA committee to maintain 80% funding for affordable housing. CPA funds account for 40%-50% of Affordable Housing Trust funding, and the Trust has been critical in efforts to expand and maintain affordable housing in Cambridge. Housing changes people's lives. The CHA opened 160 Norfolk St with \$10 million of trust funding, which has provided housing for 62 individuals who were formerly homeless. For every dollar of city funds, the CHA was able to secure between \$4-\$5 in funding from other sources. The CHA has more than 600 units in the pipeline, which are very exciting, but the funding is needed to address the overwhelming need for affordable housing.

Daniel Liss provided a summary of the following written comments:

- Daniel received 4 petitions with a total of 113 signatures in support of 80% allocation for affordable housing.

Committee Discussion

TJ opened the floor to Committee discussion and questions.

Chandra Harrington asked about the composition of public comment. TJ said he thought that the petitions fill the role of people filling the Sullivan Chamber before COVID. Elaine DeRosa pointed out that people are overwhelmed with everything that is happening and it is difficult to get people to sign petitions or come to meetings right now.

Kevin Foster asked if the community outreach approach could be stated for the record so that the committee members understand that city staff put serious effort into it. Daniel Liss summarized the various forms of outreach, including various city departments sharing with their distribution lists, a press release, legal ads for the two public hearings, and inclusion in city newsletters including the being featured in the daily newsletter. Kevin Foster encouraged the committee to think of new ways to expand outreach and try to get new voices involved in the CPA process.

Chandra Harrington noted that in the past people spoke up in support of open space when there were particular projects that garnered interest. Taha noted that other funding sources are supporting large open space projects and the city is meeting the needs through different sources.

Jen Letourneau reviewed the history of the CPA rules around open space, explaining that at an earlier time, CPA funds could not be used for active recreation unless they exceeded the 10% minimum, but that the law changed to remove that restriction.

Adjournment

TJ reminded committee members that the vote meeting will be August 31, 2026 at 5:30 PM. Daniel Liss will send the project request book to members and post it on the website beforehand so that people will have a chance to review it before the next meeting.

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