

CPA Public Hearing-Project Recommendations

Thursday, June 20, 2019, 6:00PM

Sullivan Chamber, Cambridge City Hall, 2nd Floor

795 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139

CPA Committee (CPAC) Members Present:

- Lisa Peterson, Deputy City Manager (Chair)
- Corinne Espinoza, Planning Board
- Kaki Martin, Conservation Commission
- Chandra Harrington, Historical Commission
- Victoria Bergland, Cambridge Housing Authority
- David Kale, Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs

- ❖ Chair Lisa Peterson welcomed the committee and attendees, and explained the purpose of the meeting. She stated that the Committee will hear recommendations on projects which must be used for affordable housing, open space, or historic preservation. Further each of those areas requires at least 10% of the total CPA funding available to Cambridge.
- ❖ There will be an estimated \$13,230,000 total funding available which is \$500k more than last year - 10% of total funding equals about \$1.32M.
- ❖ Written comments will be read into the record which will remain open until July 31st. Ideas can also be submitted through the website.
- ❖ The next meeting will be to hear recommendation on the percentage allocation for each area and will take place on July 31st at 6pm.
- ❖ The CPAC will vote on September 17th. The CPAC recommendation will then be forwarded to the City Counsel for a vote.

Public Comment:

- ❖ Cathie Z. - Head of Magazine Beach Partners, noted that previous CPA funding has been used for several projects at Magazine Beach, and that summer programs were starting soon. She requested \$50K to match an earmark requested by a State Representative, and would support a supplemental site survey, and geotechnical studies as part of the next phase of park renovations. She thanked the Committee for historic preservation funds for St. Augustine Church, which received \$50K and is an important center for community
- ❖ Laura J. - Executive Director of the Charles River Conservancy, requested \$125K to fund wetland restoration at Hell's Half Acre. She noted that CPA funds have been used in this area previously and this would be a continuation of that work. The Conservancy has been working closely with the Plant and Garden Club to secure private funding as well.

Hell's Half Acre is 7.5 acres along the riverfront. The wetlands contain exotic invasive plants which should be removed to give natural plants a chance. Will work with a contractor to develop plan to use volunteer labor.

- ❖ Peter D. - Thanked the Committee for previous funding. He noted that the Concord Highlands projects is halfway done and would not have been possible without CPA funds. More housing opportunities will become available through Affordable Housing Overlay zoning, but funding will be needed.
- ❖ Carlston S. - Representing the Cambridge Housing Authority. Thanked the Committee for funding. He noted the recent completion of Jefferson Park Apartments, and several other projects over the next several years. Will be back on July 31st to talk about allocations. Noted that affordable housing developers continue to face dwindling federal funds. The waiting list is thousands long and several years wait.
- ❖ Natalie R. - CEOC staff person, read a petition from tenants of Fresh Pond Apartments.
- ❖ Yemmi - Represents CEOC, as well as Fresh Pond tenants. She noted Fresh Pond Apartments is home to many families concerned about being under-housed, people are worried.
- ❖ Kathleen H. - Norfolk Street, asked the committee to continue to support affordable housing at the maximum 80% allocation. In memory of Cheryl Ann Pizza-Zeoli who recognized the affordable housing crisis we are in. She stated that many projects are in need of CPA funds. Affordable housing is still the number one issue for Cambridge residents, in addition to having a moral responsibility.
- ❖ Kit Eccles - Thanked the Committee on behalf of the congregation at St. Augustine Church. He noted that parts of the building are deteriorated, but that it is a beautiful historic building, and he wants to be able to keep it intact. The church has been able to accumulate almost enough money needed.
- ❖ Gabe C. - Thanked the committee for support of the St. Augustine church project. Started thinking about houses of worship in Cambridgeport last year. Encouraged looking at properties in a historic way. He noted work with students on drawings and sketches. Important to maintain interest in history for younger people in the City. Requested \$20k for research.
- ❖ Hassan R. - Asked for support for efforts that provide housing for those that are experiencing homelessness. He noted tiny houses for the homeless, which are inexpensive to buy and maintain. Affordable housing to chronically homeless, designed to provide temporary shelter. Cost \$4k and can be built in one day. Usually temporary until more permanent housing found. CPA funding could be leveraged, and has the power to eradicate homelessness.

- ❖ Tina A. - Director of CEOC, noted the importance of CPA funding for Fresh Pond Apartments. She shared a story of a single mom whose son left for college and she had to decide if she could afford for him to go at all. CPA funding has impacts on the future also. She asked the Committee to consider Fresh Pond Apartments when making a decision.
- ❖ Eric G. - Talked about Gerry's Pond environmental justice issues. He noted it is an important site and an opportunity for the city to be a catalyst. He requested a study for potential for better use and said the City can play an important role.
- ❖ John N. - Representing the City Open Space Committee, which is made up of staff from several different City departments, shared open space committee requests:
 1. Linear Park - design and construction for a portion of Linear Park - estimated \$5M.
 2. Hoyt Field - Heavy use including by adjacent youth center, project would include replacement of two playstructures - estimated \$800K.
 3. Rafferty Park - Neighborhood park and somewhat of a hidden gem, has one of the oldest playstructures in the City - estimated \$1,500,000.
 4. Wilder Lee Park - smaller parcel, project would upgrade the park and make it more inviting.
 5. Alewife Path - New open space, develop a plan and design for connections from Russell Field to Fresh Pond.
 6. Raymond Park - There have been some smaller improvements recently. There are drainage issues at the site and improvements needed for community garden and play area. Construction price estimate is just a placeholder - estimated \$1,500,000.
 7. Longfellow School play area - Building currently serves as swing space for school construction projects. Project would include upgrading asphalt and installing age appropriate play equipment - estimated \$550K.
- ❖ Charlie S. - Executive Director of the Historical Commission, submitted a hand out for the committee outlining several historic preservation project requests.
- ❖ Committee member Chandra Harrington asked why temporary repairs at the Fire Station? Charlie S. responded that it had to do with timing issues.
- ❖ Chris Cotter - Director of the Housing Division in the Community Development Department, noted how CPA funding is used for affordable housing, and provided updates on several projects:
 1. Concord Highlands project should be done early next year.

2. There will be a groundbreaking for 23 affordable units outside of Kendall Square at Linwood Park.
 3. 40 rental units at Frost Terrace is underway.
 4. Looking forward, Fresh Pond Apartments has been a top priority - significant funding will be needed. Biggest expiring use building, but last of ten that were identified; then the focus will be on new units.
- ❖ Will continue to look at market for opportunities to create affordable housing; can be challenging/expensive.
 - ❖ CPA funds will be key to Envision planning recommendations.
 - ❖ Financing to first time home buyers. 8 homebuyers out in the market. Several more buyers are in the process now.
 - ❖ Lauren - Just a Start (JAS) - Noted that the organization is grateful for CPA funds. Multiplied capacity of affordable housing funds, also historic preservation funds have helped owners keep homes affordable.
 - ❖ Chair Lisa Peterson read written comments into the record and stated the record will be kept open.