



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2018, 7:00 PM
MINUTES

MEETING AT SOMERVILLE CITY HALL
93 HIGHLAND AVENUE
3RD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

DRAFT Meeting notes prepared by Vanessa Boukili

Commission Members in attendance: Owen Wartella (acting Chair), Cristina Kennedy, Aladdine Joroff, Mathias Neuber (left meeting at 8:34 pm), David Turin (arrived around 7:15pm)

Commission Members absent: Rachel Borgatti, Michael Fager

Others in Attendance: Arn Franzen (Parks & Open Space), Kristen Stelljes (CPA), Tori Antonino (Green and Open Somerville)

Staff: Vanessa Boukili (Conservation Agent)

Owen Wartella called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm followed by introductions.

New Business:

- 1) Community Gardens discussion with Parks & Open Space (7:06 pm)
 - Arn Franzen presented plans for Allen Street community garden and park.
 - Small site which is currently community gardens and a small front space used for social gathering that is not well maintained. It will be reconfigured to provide a play area for young children.
 - Terra-Ink Landscape is the firm and the plans are mostly done. Plan that was chosen is an “urban farm” concept that includes space for natural, active, intentional play.
 - The layout changes will cause changes to the community garden. The fence line will be pushed back, and the playground gates and paths will no longer line up with the current garden configuration. So the layout of some of the garden beds will also shift slightly to match and the shed will be moved.
 - Construction was initially going to be done this winter, but the plans are being finalized now and will be going to bid in January. Construction is now planned to take place next spring and summer. Plan is to do the work in the gardens first, so potentially gardeners will not lose the entire season.
 - Mr. Franzen reached out to the community gardeners for the community meetings, but there was very little response. He has shared the plans with the garden coordinator(s).



- The plots are currently elevated and 10 x 10, and they will be modified to be 5 x 10. This will create 12 additional plots. The current gardeners can keep their 10 x 10 spaces, but any future gardeners will be given a 5 x 10 plot. Head start (across the street) will be signing up for one of the plots, and it will be used as an educational space.
- The garden will still have gates, but they will not be locked. Commissioners suggested that signage be put up about respecting garden plots and food.
- **Action:** Arn Franzen to let Tara and the garden coordinators know about the new construction timeline for Allen Street, and to make sure Erica and Lisa (Shape-Up Somerville) are involved.

2) CPC Discussion with Community Preservation Act Manager (Kristen Stelljes) (7:42 pm)

- Overview of CPA: Community Preservation Act is MA State law that municipalities adopt, and then a surcharge is put on property tax. In Somerville the surcharge is 1.5% (3% is max). Somerville is blended community, so City puts in some money and those funds get matched by the state. CPA funds can be used for three types of projects: Affordable Housing, Historic Preservation, and Open Space & Recreational Lands. Legislation prohibits use of CPA funds for artificial turf. Somerville adopted CPA in 2012, and FY 2015 was first year funds were awarded. To date CPA has funded just under \$4 million in Open Space & Recreation projects, 18% of funds if you include bonding (29% of funding not including bonding). So far CPA has acquired two properties for a total of 0.17 acres (0.04 parcel and 0.13 acre parcel).
- Reviewed handout “Open Space Projects Funded through CPA FY15-18”. For FY2019, two projects under consideration. From the initial applications this year, the East Somerville Community School project withdrew. At this point total ask for Open Space & Rec project is approximately \$600,000 more than what is available. There is also a deficit in the Historic side. Total CPA money is a rolling amount, so the available total will probably go up, but there will still be a deficit.
- It is very common for projects to request CPA funds for multiple stages of project (ex. design, construction).
- Q&A:
 - Can apply for CPA funds for a project that includes turf, but apply for all except for the turf part?
 - Cannot apply for design or construction of the turf part of any project. But can apply for funds for the design and construction of other parts of the project that do not include turf. Ex. schoolyards that want turf field can apply for the proportion of the project that does not include artificial turf.
 - Is there a clawback provision? If award money and it is not used properly, can CPC get the money back?
 - Each project has an agreement or memoranda of agreement. If project violates terms, CPC can get money back. Also, if project does not spend all of the money, the remainder comes back to the CPA. Money must go back into the reserve from which it came.
 - Are there requirements about public accessibility for CPA funded projects?
 - It is project-dependent. Ex. Growing Center – public access agreement, which is mutually agreed upon by Friends of Growing Center and CPC.
 - Have there been any actual Open Space projects (ex. natural area or wild-lands) or have they all been Recreation?
 - By CPA definition, all of the projects have been Recreation, in part because of use. Blessing of Bay project has been the closest to CPA-defined open space, but because it is

a park with play areas it still fits the Recreation definition. By the CPA definitions, Somerville does not really have any open space areas.

- When considering projects, what is best way to give input, and when in the process would the input be most useful?
 - Can provide input through ConCom representative. ConCom will always have a representative as required by enabling legislation.
- Can also submit input through public comment period. This year the public comment period extends through Oct 31st.
 - Would be helpful for Commissioners to provide input directly related to area of expertise. Ex. value of project towards contributing to open space & recreation, and conservation value for Somerville. Some CPC members know nothing about open space or conservation, so it would be useful to help educate them about open space value of projects.
 - Ex. Historic Preservation Commission – all members review projects and submit comments to CPC.
- Does CPC have a sustainability or climate change review metric?
 - Not in a formal way. Would be helpful for ConCom to provide recommendations for dealing with tradeoffs. Given limited amount of open space we have in city, each space has to provide variety of uses for different populations. CPC doesn't get involved in design, each project goes through own public process. But if there are ideas for funding restrictions to ensure value of project, would be useful. Can also communicate directly with project staff regarding any design concerns.
- If project receives partial funding from CPC, does CPC state what the funds should be used for?
 - Project-dependent. If cannot fully fund project, CPC generally asks requestors what they can cut, or what their priorities are. In other cases CPC states how much money they can provide, and hope that project managers can make it work. Can also apply again in the following year.
- If projects get phase 1 funding, does that make them more likely to get phase 2 funding?
 - CPC does guarantee future funding. They consider each application on its individual merits and in relation to other projects that have applied that year.
- Is there a way for ConCom to keep up to date with CPC goings-on more regularly?
 - Send out CPC newsletter to all Commissioners (Boukili can send out, or can sign up directly at www.somervillema.gov/CPA). Will send out latest one to Commissioners before Oct 31st.
 - Holistic feedback on projects would be very useful, as most public feedback is currently contributed by individual project-specific stakeholders.
- Timeline this round:
 - Proposals were submitted by Sept 25th. Then there are/were two public meetings where applicants present to community, and there is verbal public comment. First public meeting was Oct 11th, second one will be Oct 24th. CPC then deliberates in November and makes decisions in December.

3) Morse-Kelly Pollinator Garden Report (Tori Antonio) (8:20 pm)

- CPA funded project. Received \$13k, including volunteer time the value of the project is approximately \$25K.
- Approximately 90% of the plant material was installed over the last few weeks. 12 volunteers participated over two weekend days, and an additional 5 volunteers during the week, totaling

about 100 volunteer hours. All the plants are native. They were acquired from Arc Wild and are of great quality. All the plants were started from seed. In preparation for planting, soil was cleared by a few iterations of allowing weeds to germinate and grow and then removing them. Plantings were installed very densely to make it more difficult for weeds to grow back. There is heavy salting and plowing on the sidewalk here because it is near a bus stop. The plants installed were drought and salt tolerant.

- The path has been installed, and tree trunks were incorporated into the layout. The space is designed as a sanctuary zone for wildlife, butterflies, etc. There is a special “doggie zone” at corner with wood chips and oyster mushrooms where dog bathroom use is encourage.
- Space still needs permanent fencing and signage.
- Green and Open Somerville will train volunteers to maintain the space.
- Project is a great example of ConCom and CPA working together. CPA funded project, and ConCom plays an advisory role. Can continue this type of relationship for other projects of particular ConCom interest.

Updates and Discussion:

1) Ongoing Projects updates (8:11 pm)

- a) DCR Mystic River Outfall Maintenance project (DEP #287-0059)
 - Outfalls were maintained last year, but did not communicate with Commission before they did the work. Restoration/ tree planting ongoing, possibly this fall.
- b) Charlestown Bus Facility project (DEP #287-0058)
 - Put in flood wall and they are doing some staging on Somerville side, which was discussed with Commission in March. No other work being done on Somerville side, but Agent Boukili has requested a site visit.
 - **Action:** *Agent Boukili to arrange site visit between Thanksgiving and end of year to discuss winterization. Commissioner Wartella to attend site visit.*
- c) Other projects
 - Exploratory borings for pedestrian bridge (DEP #287-0062): completed two borings on land, third boring in tidal zone will be done from a barge (mobilizing this week).
 - **Action:** *Boukili to check on status of casing removal project.*

2) Education and Outreach (8:16 pm)

- a) Educational brochure(s)
 - Commissioners to send any additional comments on revised brochure to Agent Joroff.
 - Will need two different types of brochures, this will be more formal brochure, later will need a general education brochure.
 - **Action:** *Agent Boukili to work with T&I staff on formatting.*
 - **Action:** *After reformat this brochure to be able to easily print it, put this on website.*

3) Letters/ notifications (8:38 pm)

- a) Letter to DCR regarding Draw 7 Park
 - Dan Driscoll had mentioned that ConCom could write letter about Draw 7 Park project.
 - Consider combining discussion with MyWRA funding opportunity for coastal restoration.
 - *Tabled further discussion.*
- b) Checkbox for Conservation Commission permits on DCR forms
 - **Action:** *Agent Boukili to ask Thomas Dalton about this and get sample DCR form(s).*
- c) Send a letter to Carli Fence about Conservation Commission jurisdiction
 - **Action:** *Commissioner Joroff to draft letter.*

- d) Communications with City of Somerville Departments about Conservation Commission jurisdiction
- Commissioner Wartella to discuss with Commissioner Borgatti.
 - Possibly create a bullet point list of information (ex. checklist), and provide a map of ConCom jurisdiction.
 - Different departments may need different levels of information. Can also email out the educational brochure.
 - *Tabled further discussion.*

Other Business:

- 1) XMBLY – final environmental impact report arrived today.
 - *Boukili: Ask VHB for ftp site link.*
- 2) CoastSweep clean-up event at Draw 7 Park this weekend (Saturday, or Sunday rain date).

Approval of minutes:

- 1) Vote to approved September 25th, 2018 minutes with no amendments at 8:47 pm [motion – Kennedy, second – Joroff; vote: 4:0:0].

Adjourn:

- 1) Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 8:48 pm [motion – Turin, second – Kennedy, vote: 4:0:0].

Outstanding Action Items:

October:

- **Action:** Arn Franzen to let Tara and the garden coordinators know about the new construction timeline for Allen Street, and to make sure Erica and Lisa (Shape-Up Somerville) are involved.
- **Action:** Agent Boukili to arrange site visit for Charlestown Bus Facility project between Thanksgiving and end of year to discuss winterization. Commissioner Wartella to attend.
- **Action:** Boukili to check on status of casing removal project.
- **Action:** Agent Boukili to work with T&I staff on educational brochure formatting.
- **Action:** After reformat this brochure to be able to easily print it, put this on website.
- **Action:** Agent Boukili to ask Thomas Dalton about Checkbox for Conservation Commission permits on DCR forms and get sample DCR form(s).
- **Action:** Commissioner Joroff to draft letter to Carli Fence.

September:

- **Action:** Boukili to put more information on the website, such as the community gardener agreement, coordinator responsibilities, etc.
- **Action:** Boukili to update Garden Map to include more street names (remove walkshed circles or put on interactive map so that people can zoom in and out).
- **Action:** Erica and Lisa to provide report on research and ideas to the Commission by the end December. Invite them to January ConCom meeting to discuss report and next steps.
- **Action:** Invite garden coordinators to March ConCom meeting.

April:

- **Action:** Talk to DCR about including a check box for Conservation Commission permits on their permit forms (ex. is this project within 25 feet of a wetland? If so, contact local Conservation Commission).
- **Action:** Send letter to Carli Fence about Conservation Commission jurisdiction.
- **Action:** Send email to DPW, Planning, Engineering, Capital Projects, and any other departments who might review construction or development projects. Remind them of Conservation Commission jurisdiction and requirements that must be following when working near the river.
- **Action:** Talk to Garden Coordinators about accounting of garden fees.
- **Action:** Commission to start a list of suggestions for Garden Coordinators about how to be more open/ inclusive, especially to folks on the waitlist (ex. "garden-sitting" when gardeners are on vacation).
- **Action:** Commissioner Joroff to revise ConCom Policies document, then Commissioners to read though it again to make sure everyone is willing to follow it.

List of Meeting Documents (located here: K:\OHCD\Shared\Conservation Commission\Agenda + Minutes + Legal Notices 2018\2018_10_23_Meeting_Documents):

- Agenda (2018_10_23_Agenda.pdf)
- Ongoing Project Data Spreadsheet (Ongoing Project Data.xlsx)
- September Meeting Minutes (2018_09_25_Minutes_Draft.docx)
- Allen Street Community Meeting Presentation (2018-06-05_Allen St PG_2nd CM + CON COM.pdf)
- CPA Handout: Open Space Projects Funded through CPA FY15-18 (CPA Handout.pdf)
- Conservation Commission Draft Educational Brochure (Brochure format Con Comm.docx)
- Letter examples – Winter Hill Yacht Club and Draw 7 Park (K:\OHCD\Shared\Conservation Commission\Agenda + Minutes + Legal Notices 2018\2018_10_23_Meeting_Documents\Letter examples)
- Incoming correspondence: Ocean River Institute letter.pdf