



JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE



MINUTES
OCTOBER 27, 2021

MEMBERS

Laura Beretsky, Chair
Heather Heimarck, V/Chair
Tatiana Shannon
Eleanor Rances
Alan Bingham
Jahan Habib
Rose White

STAFF

Roberta Cameron

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) virtually held its monthly meeting at 6:30 pm on the GoToMeeting platform in compliance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 regarding the Open Meeting Law during the COVID-19 crisis.

- Members Present** Chair Laura Beretsky, Vice Chair Heather Heimarck, Jahan Habib, Eleanor Rances, Tatiana Shannon (arrived late)
- Members Absent** Rose White, Alan Bingham
- Staff Present** Roberta Cameron, Arn Franzen, Alan Inacio
- Others Present** David Turin (standing in for Conservation Commission)
Applicants: Barbara Mangum, Alison Drasner, John Hoecker, Susan Hurst, Kathryn Aucella

Agenda Item 1: Roll Call and Approval of the Minutes from September 22

Chair Beretsky opened the meeting at 6:34 and welcomed everyone on the call. She reminded everyone the meeting was being held virtually and being recorded in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 and the order of Mayor Curtatone. Ms. Beretsky proceeded to take roll call and establish quorum. Beretsky then asked if any members of the public were present to comment, of which there were none.

With respect to the September 22 Draft Minutes, Vice-Chair Heimarck pointed out that a discussion about the CPC's practice of making a preliminary review of applications should be reflected as a discussion necessitating further research. Cameron agreed that the intention is to continue discussion about the review process in preparation for the next funding round. A motion by member White to approve the July 28 Minutes as amended by Heimarck and seconded by Heimarck was unanimously approved.

Agenda item 2: Applicant Presentations

- a. Somerville Museum: Barbara Mangum, President of the Board of Trustees of the Somerville Museum made a presentation about the Museum's application for CPA funds to renovate the basement of the Museum to use for collection care and preservation of historic objects. Member Bingham asked to clarify that the amount of funding requested of the CPC is \$157,352 to be used solely for the renovation of the space, which is a standalone portion of the project that can be completed while they continue to seek funding for the rest of the collection care project. Chair Beretsky asked whether the renovated space will have capacity for all of the collections. Mangum responded that the Museum will be making an inventory of their collections to prioritize pieces to return to their collections, as well as potentially developing the attic in the future as additional storage space. Heimarck asked whether other funding sources have been secured, and whether there is a timeline when the funds must be spent. Mangum explained that the Cabot Family grant

is secured and must be spent by the summer. The Yawkey will not support capital improvements. They are also working on fundraising through other organizations and grants. They need about \$185,000 to reach their fundraising goal. Member White asked to clarify that the CPC had approved funding for a similar purpose last year which were repurposed to complete the elevator project, and the Historical Commission had been tasked with determining that the artifacts in the Museum are historic. Member Habib asked about the accuracy/confidence with the cost estimates provided in the application. Mangum explained that the construction estimates were provided by the engineer and contractor currently performing work in the Museum and they are very confident in the cost for the CPA-funded portion of the project. Arn Franzen asked for clarification about the existence or plans for a climate control system. Mangum describe the current and planned facilities for climate control throughout the collections area and the whole Museum.

- b. Elizabeth Peabody House: Kathryn Aucello of the Elizabeth Peabody House made a presentation about the Elizabeth Peabody House application for CPA funds to prepare design for the stabilization of the second floor of their building. Vice-Chair Heimarck and member Bingham pointed out that the budget in the application includes a cost estimate from the design firm that accounts for about half of the requested funds, and wanted to know why such a large contingency was factored in. Aucello explained that they included a large buffer in their request because the cost estimate identifies some services that will be needed and are not included in the quote and fees they anticipate will be required, as well as to account for unanticipated expenses due to the historic structure. Bingham pointed out that this project is a worthwhile project for Historic Preservation in order to protect the integrity of the building and to make it useable for its intended use. Member White agreed that due diligence can require more funding than anticipated. Heimarck asked what the Committee's options are with respect to funding the amount requested, or a lower amount and then supplementing later if needed. CPA Manager Cameron stated that it is administratively easier to fund more than is needed and return unused funds than to have to supplement later, as an additional ask will have to be recommended by the Committee and approved by City Council again. Cameron stated that the Committee has the option to award more than the funds that are requested by the applicant, but was corrected by Heimarck who recalled that last year the Committee was advised by the Law Department that the CPC cannot exceed the amount of funds beyond what was requested in the application.

Chair Beretsky asked if EPH has identified potential funders for the construction phase of this project. Aucello explained that they are working on fundraising for that project specifically and for general building renovations, but that they are waiting to see what the cost is likely to be before they make specific asks. Member Habib asked what the next steps will be after this phase. Aucello explained that they will be working with the design firm to identify appropriate contractors and a timeline for construction, and that the goal of this phase is to have plans to be able to give to a contractor.

- c. Somerville Hispanic Association for Community Development/Grace Baptist Church: John Hoecker architect for the SHA4CD made a presentation about the application for renovations and accessibility improvements to the Grace Baptist Church building in which the SHA4CD is located. Bingham asked about the impact to the foundation of the building from the proposed excavation of the walkway, and stated that the Historic Preservation Commission would like the applicant to come and present detailed plans for the relocated door. Hoecker explained that they have modified their plans to reuse instead of replace the door. Bingham asked whether a wooden floor would be more appropriate for historic preservation as it would be removable and possibly a less expensive alternative. He also pointed out that the application does not meet the CPC's

requirement to provide 3 separate cost quotations. Hoecker pointed out that none of the basement level floors are currently wood, and he anticipates the proposed material is more cost-effective. He also points out that concrete is more durable and cleanable for the types of uses that the space will be used for, in particular food preparation. Member White asked about the phasing for the proposed work. Hoecker responded that the SHA4CD is dependent on raising funds for each phase, which has driven the timeline for breaking the needed renovations into smaller phases. The building is required by MAAB to be brought into compliance with accessibility regulations within five years, where it is not currently accessible at all. There was further discussion about the details of the plan for securing the foundation wall that would be exposed, and whether the budget reflects the unknown costs that may come up when the excavation is started. Hoecker explained that the estimate given by the contractor includes some contingency, but may not anticipate every situation. Delays have also resulted in increasing costs.

- d. Land Acquisition Fund: Arn Franzen of PSUF presented about the application for a contribution to the Land Acquisition Fund (LAF). Member White asked what LAF funds have been used for in the past. Franzen pointed to the Glen Street Park parcel which the City recently acquired, although he did not recall where the funds for this acquisition came from. Beretsky asked what other funding sources might be used to support the full cost of an acquisition. David Turin of the Conservation Commission asked what discretion the CPC has over how the funds would be spent in the future. Franzen responded that in the future any purchase using these funds would have to be approved by the City Council but not by the CPC. A benefit to the LAF is that the City can act more quickly, while the specific uses of the open space would depend on the characteristics of the property and the needs of the public on a case-by-case basis. Turin was concerned that community gardens limit the people who will benefit from an open space. Heimarck recalled that the CPC had wanted to contribute more than was requested for the LAF last year but they were advised that they could only contribute as much as the application specified.
- e. Glen Park Community Garden: Franzen presented about the application for an expansion of the Glen Park Community Garden. Bingham asked whether it was necessary for parking to be included in the area of the park, as shown in the schematic drawing. Franzen responded that there might be a reasonable possibility to set aside handicapped accessible parking on the street instead, and that public meetings during the planning process would provide an opportunity to identify issues and strategies for the final design.
- f. Junction Park: Franzen presented about the application for funds to design an expansion of Junction Park. Turin asked why the estimated cost of the park improvements is so high, and where the rest of the funding would come from. Franzen responded that this is typical of what parks cost today, and that the additional funds would come from a bond. There was discussion about how new spaces increase opportunities for more connected open spaces and more accessibility.

Agenda Item 3: Presentation of Fall Report by Somerville Affordable Housing Trust

Michael Feloney, Director of the Housing Division of OSPCD presented the Fall 2021 Semi-Annual Report prepared by Paul Goldstein of the Housing Division. White expressed the desire to give more time to the discussion about the AHT's work at a later meeting. She asked whether there are ways that the CPC can support the AHT to help ensure that the funds are flowing into community projects. Feloney pointed out that they are in the process of preparing a housing strategic plan with a consultant, and that there would be opportunity to provide feedback through a survey and possibly interviews, which might help to identify ways that they can support one another.

Agenda item 4: Coordinator's Report

Cameron updated the Committee. She reiterated some notes that she first presented at the previous meeting, including an announcement about Preservation Restrictions being signed for Elizabeth Peabody House and Grace Baptist Church, outreach activities, that she has been looking at ways to make the application instructions clearer and more accessible, and reviewing Committee records for purposes of annual reporting. Cameron listed upcoming opportunities for public outreach, including farmer's markets in Davis Square and Union Square, and the winter market which will be starting up soon.

Cameron reported that there are three seats on the CPC that are currently open or will be opening soon, including the Conservation Commission, Housing Authority, PSUF, and possibly a public seat to replace Tatiana Shannon if she does not serve a second term. A new staff person will be starting in November to take the place of Andrew Louw from PSUF. David Turin explained that the Conservation Commission will be selecting a new representative to the CPC at its next meeting. Shannon stated that it is looking increasingly likely that she will be able to continue through at least most of a second term. Cameron stated that she will reach out to the Housing Authority to appoint a new representative to take the place of Eleanor Rances, whose term is expiring. Heimarck pointed out that the Conservation Commission will need to appoint a replacement before the next meeting in order to have a voting member when the Committee makes its annual recommendations. Cameron explained that the process for statutory members is that the appointing board must notify the Mayor's office of the new appointee. Franzen asked whether the need for Council approval will be needed for all new members. Cameron responded that only public members must be approved by City Council, not the statutory members.

Cameron gave an explanation about the cancellation of the Adams Magoun House application. Over the past month Cameron provided the applicant with assistance through the on-call preservation consultant and offered examples of similar CPA applications from which they could identify appropriate contractors for the type of work that is needed on the house so that they can obtain estimates and develop a sufficiently detailed scope and budget. In the end the applicant ran out of time to be able to gather the information needed in order for the CPC to be able to consider the application in the present funding round. With the resources that were provided to her she should be in a better position to be able to apply for CPA funding for next year.

Cameron reminded the Committee that officer elections are due to occur in December, so Committee members should consider in advance of the December meeting whether they would like to run for an officer position.

Cameron also announced that the City Council voted last week to designate Community Preservation Committee members as Special Municipal Employees, which allows for a slight relaxation of rules regarding Conflict of Interest.

Cameron is continuing to work with the City's media staff to be able to set up a facebook page. After next month she will begin working on stakeholder outreach.

She reminds Committee members that there is an upcoming ribbon-cutting for the West Branch Public Library on November 5 at 11:00 AM.

Beretsky asked if there are any further edits or comments on the Evaluation Criteria. Cameron explained that she made a few edits based on feedback received last month and she is willing to make further adjustments if Committee members would like, but that the Evaluation Criteria were included in this month's meeting packet in case Committee Members find them helpful for use in evaluating the proposals that we heard this evening. White suggested that it would be helpful if a summary of available funds could be provided before the Committee votes on its funding recommendations next month. Cameron recalled that there was an estimate included in the previous meeting packet on the second page of the application summary document, but that she is working on gathering the data required to make a more precise report of the funds available before the next meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Other Business

Beretsky announced that the next meeting will be on Wednesday, November 17 at 6:30, and will be held virtually.

Bingham moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by White. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:27.

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. Draft Minutes 9/22/21
3. Full Applications
 - a. Somerville Hispanic Church
 - b. Somerville Museum
 - c. Grace Baptist Church – Somerville Hispanic Association
 - d. Land Acquisition Fund
 - e. Junction Park
 - f. Glen Street Community Garden
4. Affordable Housing Trust CPA Fall Report 10-20-21
5. Outreach calendar
6. Draft CPC Evaluation Chart