



KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE



MINUTES
APRIL 27, 2022

MEMBERS

Heather Heimarck, Chair
Rose White, Vice-Chair
Laura Beretsky
Alan Bingham
Jahan Habib
Rebecca McKevezit
Tatiana Shannon
David Turin

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, Heather Heimarck, Rebecca McKevezit, David Turin, Laura Beretsky, Jahan Habib, Rose White
- Members Absent** Alan Bingham, Tatiana Shannon
- Staff Present** Roberta Cameron, Alan Inacio, Michael Feloney, Paul Goldstein
- Others Present** Cory Mian (POAH), Jon Springfield (POAH), Amber Christoffersen (MyWRA)

STAFF

Roberta Cameron

Roll Call

Chair Heimarck opened the meeting at 6:35 and reminded everyone that the meeting was being held virtually and being recorded in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 and the Mayor's order. CPA Manager Cameron called the roll. Due to error, the meeting was not recorded for the first 10 minutes.

Agenda Item 1: Public Comment

Public comment was held after approval of the minutes as members of the public were not initially able to access the meeting.

Ward 7 Councilor Judy Pineda Neufeld voiced support for the Clarendon Hill request for bonding. She noted that the City Council (then Board of Aldermen) authorized the full \$10M for this project, including the \$4M to be funded through CPA. She quoted from the authorization letter and conversations she has had with residents to underscore the impact that the project will have on Clarendon Hill residents and the neighborhood.

Marianne Wallace, a Somerville resident asked whether the workers on this project will be paid a prevailing wage according to the law passed in 2018. Jon Springfield from POAH responded affirmatively that all of the workers on the project would be paid prevailing wages.

Rand Wilson, a Ward 6 resident and member of the Somerville Stands Together Coalition stated that he is pleased that the project will be going forward using prevailing wages, and asked whether construction work completed off-site would also be obliged to follow prevailing wages. Cory Mian of POAH stated that the prevailing wage law would not apply to work completed off-site. Wilson asked that the CPC and the City confirm that portions of the project carried out off-site be covered by prevailing wage law.

Agenda Item 2: Approval of the Minutes from February 23 and March 23

In two separate motions, Member Beretsky moved to approve the meeting minutes from February 23 and March 23, seconded by Vice-chair White. Both motions passed unanimously, 6-0.

Agenda item 3: Clarendon Hill Request for Bonding

Cameron introduced Paul Goldstein, member of OSPCD Housing Division and staff liaison to the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust (SAHT), who explained the background of the request for bonding for the Clarendon Hill redevelopment project. The project was initiated by the Somerville Housing Authority in 2015, has been in planning up to this time, and is ready to begin development later this year. At its March meeting the SAHT passed a motion to request that the CPC authorize \$4M bonding in support of the project. Debt service payments would come directly out of the SAHT’s annual allocation from the CPC before it would be transferred to the Trust, similar to the way that the 100 Homes Initiative debt service payments currently are.

Jon Springfield from POAH provided an overview of the project, with the aid of a slide presentation. POAH is partnering with developers Redgate and the Somerville Community Corporation in addition to the Somerville Housing Authority. The development will have a total of 591 units, including replacement of existing public housing and 80 new affordable units, plus market rate units. He reviewed the community process and project design updates between 2016 and 2019. The project received a 40B Comprehensive permit on September 30, 2020, and is preparing to start Phase 1 construction in summer/fall 2022, to be completed in 2024. CPA funds will be used entirely to support Phase 1, Building E.

Chair Heimarck highlighted the fact that the CPC awarded the SAHT \$10M back in 2017 for both the 100 Homes Initiative and this project, but that it was determined that only the 100 Homes project could be authorized at that time (\$6M). Now SAHT is now asking the CPC to approve the mechanism of bonding for this project, while the payments would come out of the funding allocation which the CPC already entrusts to the SAHT to spend according to its discretion. She pointed out that the project has a long history and is very complicated due to the number of funders and mechanisms that have been brought together to enable it.

Vice-Chair White emphasized that the CPC is relying on the expertise of the SAHT for its recommendation to move this project forward. She applauded POAH for its efforts to bring this project together, that they have deepened the level of affordability, and are not returning to the City for additional funds.

Cameron showed a model debt service schedule for the proposed \$4M bond.

Member Habib asked whether the project may be impacted by further cost escalation. Jon Springfield responded that they have built in an escalation factor as advised by the contractors. There is no certainty but they are making their best assumptions.

Member Beretsky asked whether the CPC might consider conditioning its authorization on a requirement that work be carried out onsite in order to address the concerns of the members of public who spoke. Director of Housing Feloney explained that the imposition of such a condition would risk undermining the project. Cory Mian clarified that the funds provided by CPA would cover the procurement of materials manufactured off-site, and that it would be problematic to attempt to ensure that CPA funds only apply to labor onsite and not the materials used.

Member Beretsky made a motion to authorize bonding of \$4M for the Clarendon Hill redevelopment project, seconded by Member Habib. The motion passed unanimously 5-0, with member White recused due to a previous role she held POAH.

Agenda item 4: Blessing of the Bay Contract Extension

Cameron explained that the Blessing of the Bay project was awarded CPA funds in 2017, but due to a number of setbacks the implementation of the project was delayed. The contract was extended by one year in 2021, but now the timeline has shifted again so that they need to ask again for an extension. Amber Christoffersen of the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyWRA) provided more details about the planting schedule and the need to extend the project timeline.

Member White made a motion to extend the contract for the Blessing of the Bay project by one year, seconded by Member Turin. The motion passed unanimously 6-0.

Christoffersen invited members to come to the park in August through September to see plants coming up, and to follow the project on social media.

Agenda Item 5: Annual Review – Public engagement, draft program area updates, and CPA priorities

Cameron shared a presentation of the draft updates to the CPA plan, summarizing a draft document that was included in the meeting packet. The intention is that the CPC will approve the final plan for this upcoming funding round at its next meeting in May. Cameron will prepare an updated draft of this section by Monday, 5/9, and will incorporate any CPC member comments received by 5/13 into the final version to be approved at the May meeting.

First she presented data gathered from the public engagement process. Next Cameron showed the overall priorities that would apply to all projects. Turin asked how these priorities are used in the evaluation of projects and Cameron explained that they are part of the scoring rubric, and that projects would be rated on a scale of 1-4 for consistency with the CPA plan.

Heimarck asked how the CPC can evaluate the goal of awarding geographically diverse projects. Cameron suggested this can be accomplished by expanding the pool of applicants for CPA funds and by encouraging the City to apply for projects in different areas. A map of CPA projects was prepared for the CPC's SomerVoice page and could be added to the Plan update and to the CPC's web page.

Discussion about the overall goals led to a request that an introduction be added to the CPC priorities providing context with details about meeting the needs for all of the program areas, and offer the goal of geographic and social diversity, rather than including that as a priority.

Cameron explained that she added a section explaining the legal criteria for what constitutes allowable projects, and advises applicants about how to expand the reach of CPA, for example by combining CPA funding with other funding sources. She provided another example which could be added, that interpretive signage is not eligible on its own but can be layered onto CPA projects if entities such as the Historical Commission or PSUF prepare in advance a "wish list" of signs they would create given the opportunity. Member White expressed concern that providing the parameters of CPA eligibility in the CPA plan might place unnecessary constraints on the types of projects that can be funded.

With respect to the Open Space & Outdoor Recreation priorities, Heimarck asked whether “expand urban agriculture opportunities” (suggested to be removed) was included in any of the remaining/suggested priorities. Cameron responded that “Invest in racially, economically, and age-diverse neighborhoods providing a range of opportunities that reflects demand for participation in outdoor recreation” encompasses urban agriculture, as the OSRP strongly advocates for urban agriculture to meet demand. There was discussion about the wording of this priority. Suggestions were offered to rephrase this priority to create “multigenerational spaces” or to encourage age-diverse recreation opportunities.

Cameron presented a new set of suggested Historic Preservation priorities which had not been articulated in previous plans. She explained that these priorities are drawn from the CPC’s experiences with applications it has received in prior funding rounds, as well as comments received through tabling events and surveys.

With respect to Community Housing, White suggested that the CPC’s evaluation of needs and priorities should directly follow guidance from the SAHT to ensure consistence, since the CPC has entrusted SAHT with the decision about how to use the housing funds. She wants to ensure that it is clear to developers who they are answering to, and that the priorities are set by the body with the most in-depth knowledge. White strongly favors deferring to the priorities that the SAHT discerns in their upcoming strategic planning process. Heimarck and Turin suggested that the CPC might be able to articulate broad values without being in conflict with specific needs that the SAHT identifies as its priorities, and confer with the SAHT to ensure consistency. Cameron suggested that this plan update can include a disclaimer that the CPC’s priorities will be updated to align with the priorities established in the SAHT’s new strategic plan.

Finally Cameron presented a list of actions pursued by herself and the Committee over the past year and invited members to provide feedback on a list of suggested actions for FY23. Beretsky suggested that specific ways of broadening the applicant pool should be incorporated as part of the action steps.

Agenda Item 6: Other Business

Cameron explained that Groundwork Somerville has invited CPC members to table at an event at South Street Farm on Saturday, May 7. White said that she would attend, and David Turin said that he may be available.

Cameron provided updates that the first batch of PRs have been sent to the state for approval, and the Historic Preservation Commission is scheduled to approve the LHD small grant program on 5/17, so that the program may be launched on 5/18. Finally the building assessment for the Magoun House has just kicked off with the consultant.

Adjournment

Member Beretsky moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by White. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. Draft Minutes 2-23-22 and 3-23-22
3. Clarendon Hill CPC 4-27-2022 slides
4. Clarendon Hill Bonding Memorandum 4-20022

5. CPC questions – SAHT and POAH Responses
6. Blessing of the Bay Extension Request
7. FY23 Community Preservation Plan Draft Presentation
8. FY23 CPP Draft for Review 4-27-22