



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE



JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

MINUTES JULY 28, 2021

MEMBERS

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

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, Andrew Louw, Cristina Kennedy, Alan Bingham, Jahan Habib, Rose White, Tatiana Shannon

Members Absent Eleanor Rances

Staff Present Roberta Cameron, Alan Inacio

Others Present

STAFF

Roberta Cameron

Agenda Item 1: Roll Call and Approval of the June 23 Minutes

Ms. Beretsky opened the meeting at 6:35 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. She noted that Mr. Alan Bingham was not present at roll call but did join the meeting shortly after, citing technical difficulties trying to be added as a panelist to the meeting. Chair Beretsky then asked if any members of the public were present to comment of which there were none. After a period of technical difficulties, grammatical comments were made on the minutes from member Habib and member Shannon. After getting those comments on the record a motion to approve was made by member White and seconded by vice-chair Heimarck. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Agenda item 2: Coordinator's Report

Chair Beretsky turned the floor over to CPA Manager Cameron who described the activities she has undertaken in her first few weeks in this role. Based on introductory conversations she has had with Committee members, City Staff, and some applicants and grantees, she has prepared some materials to be presented to the Committee later in the meeting, including an outreach plan and evaluation criteria.

Agenda item 3: Eligibility Determination Forms

After an introduction of the item from Chair Beretsky, Cameron explained the goals for the Committee's discussion of the Eligibility Determination Forms: to confirm the eligibility of each project and to highlight any specific questions which the Committee would like the applicants to address in their full applications. Based on the Committee's discussion this evening Cameron will communicate with each of the applicants.

- a. Land Acquisition Fund: Beretsky asked if there is a dollar amount attached to this application. Cameron explained that the current application form does not ask for an amount to be requested

at the EDF stage, although it would be helpful information to have. Member Louw said that PSUF plans to submit an application for \$100,000. Member Shannon said that she would like to learn whether there are other avenues of funding for the Land Acquisition Fund. Vice-chair Heimarck moved to approve the EDF. After asking for clarification about the process and the language of the motion, member Rose seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

- b. Junction Park: Beretsky asked again if there is a ballpark dollar amount to be requested. Louw stated that PSUF will be requesting \$100,000 to cover design and soft costs. They will also be pursuing a PARC grant for construction. Member Kennedy moved to approve the EDF, seconded by member Habib. The motion was unanimously approved. Vice-chair Heimarck then commented that she would like to know how the arts will be involved in the design.
- c. Glen Street Community Garden: Louw explained that PSUF is looking for approximately \$200,000 in construction funding to expand the community garden, and that they are looking into a process for community involvement. Heimarck repeated her request that the applicant describe how they will incorporate arts in their full application. White moved to approve the EDF, seconded by Heimarck. The motion was passed by seven members with member Bingham abstaining.
- d. Somerville Hispanic Church: Cameron shared supplemental information that was provided by the applicant. She explained that, in addition to \$11,000 to cover the cost of emergency structural repairs that were discovered during the repairs of the roof previously funded by CPA, the applicant was looking for funds to undertake three additional tasks related to handicapped accessibility: the creation of an accessible path from the sidewalk to the side door on the right side of the building, to fill in the basement floor between the kitchen and the stage, and to install the foundation of an elevator (which will be the objective of a future project). White asked whether this project falls under historic preservation. Bingham explained that this project is to create ADA compliance, which is CPA eligible, but he expressed doubt that filling the entire floor is in the purview of CPC if it goes beyond the needs of providing access to the building. Bingham pointed out the need for the applicant to come before the Historical Preservation Commission to request approval for these and any other changes to the building, as the building is in a Local Historic District. Louw asked whether applicants are required to be reviewed by HPC as part of the application process. Cameron recommended that the CPC finds the project to be eligible on condition that the HPC agrees in concept to the scope of the project prior to submitting the full application. There was further discussion about the role of the HPC in permitting for any improvements to the building regardless of the funding source. Shannon asked whether the cost estimates listed in the information are up to date. Director Inacio pointed out that there is time for the applicant to obtain a response from the HPC prior to the CPC making its recommendations, and that they can at that time vote to recommend any portions of the project which are deemed to be eligible. Louw moved to approve the EDF with condition that the applicant seek advisory input from HPC on the scope of their project, seconded by Heimarck. The motion passed unanimously. Vice-chair Heimarck suggested that Cameron should reach out to the Coalition to ask whether there is precedent for projects like this.
- e. 24 Walnut St: Cameron explained that the table on page 1 of the EDF erroneously identified the project as both affordable housing and historic preservation because the building is currently an affordable home. The proposed work, however, would only potentially qualify for CPA funding under the category of Historic Preservation. Bingham noted the building is not on the National Register and is not in a Local Historic District, so the applicant will need to come before the HPC to be determined to be historically significant. Bingham opined that all of the proposed scope of

work with the exception of replacing windows would be considered to be maintenance, and that he feels that the porch is in need of repair rather than replacement. Shannon asked whether it is logistically possible for the applicant to request recognition by HPC within the timeframe of the application process, and Bingham affirmed that it is. White agreed with Bingham's assessment of the proposed scope being mostly maintenance with the exception of replacing the windows. Vice-chair Heimarck stated that the term "historically significant" is the correct term for the determination that is needed by the HPC. She pointed out that the applicant should be aware that if they receive funding from the CPC as a historic preservation project they will be required to put a Preservation Restriction on the property. Bingham suggested that the applicant would also benefit by finishing their application for National Register recognition and that they should apply to become a Local Historic District and then become eligible for the CPA-funded small grant program of the Historic Preservation Commission. White asked for clarification about the criteria for what makes a building or asset be historically significant. Louw made a motion to approve the EDF subject to correcting the errors in their EDF and obtaining the HPC's determination that the building is historically significant, and that the applicant be advised that some of their scope may be maintenance and not be eligible for CPA. The motion was seconded by Bingham and approved by seven members. White recused herself due to her formerly serving on the board of the Somerville Community Coalition.

- f. 33 Bow St: Members Louw and Bingham agreed that the items on the scope in the application appear to be for maintenance. Heimarck asked to confirm that the building is on the State Register of Historic Places and then moved to deny the eligibility of this project. The motion was seconded by Bingham and approved by seven members, with White recused. Heimarck and Bingham suggested that the applicant be invited to consult with the HPC to identify potential projects on their historic buildings which could be eligible for CPA funding in the future.
- g. 1783 Adams Magoun House: Member Bingham described this building as remarkable as it is the second oldest house in Somerville. He explained that windows were previously replaced that do not properly fit and are letting water into the building. The HPC has been advising the applicant on how to obtain quotes for replacement with appropriate windows. Bingham moved to approve the EDF, seconded by member Shannon. The motion was unanimously approved.
- h. Somerville Museum: Chair Beretsky asked whether there was a ballpark cost estimate. Shannon stated that the Museum is looking for estimates but she is not aware that they have. Kennedy asked whether this is part of work that had already been approved for a previous grant but was diverted to the elevator project, and Bingham affirmed that it is. Kennedy asked that the applicant clarify in their full application the timing of the basement renovations. Shannon said that it is her understanding that some artifacts have been reserved from storage to enable them to be shown in November regardless of the timing of this project. Bingham moved to find the project eligible, seconded by Shannon. The motion was approved by six members, with Heimarck and Louw abstaining. Cameron requested that Shannon clarify her relationship with the organization applying for funds. Shannon replied that she is a volunteer for the organization but does not serve on the Board.

Agenda Item 4: Proposed Evaluation Criteria

Cameron shared a proposed scoring chart for the committee's consideration for having rational criteria during the process of making recommendations. She suggested that if the criteria were approved by the CPC this evening it could be provided to applicants to be able to take into consideration as they prepare their full applications. Louw asked whether the state provides criteria for CPCs to use, and Cameron

explained that this chart was borrowed from other CPC communities and lightly tailored for Somerville. Committee members agreed that it will be helpful for both the CPC and applicants to have reliable and objective criteria. Several members expressed a desire to have additional time to review the criteria and to provide feedback to hone the chart. Louw and Heimarck suggested that the criteria not be shared with applicants this year but be used internally this round. Beretsky invited members to send Cameron comments directly and to bring the Evaluation Criteria back to a later meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Community Outreach

Cameron shared an outline for a public engagement strategy and explained that she is looking for ways that she can support the Committee in sharing information and obtaining feedback from the public. Bingham said that he has been concerned about a lack of awareness of CPA, and that he would like to advertise CPA accomplishments, to show how valuable CPA funding is to the City. The West Branch Library, for example, hasn't been announced. Heimarck asked how they can reach more people in the short term and long term. She would like to table at mobile markets. She would like to have a supply kit prepared to table at events. White agreed with wanting a kit and asked Cameron to elaborate on what might go into the box. Cameron described some elements that are left over from previous years and suggested that it would be helpful to expand the questions that the Committee asks to invite input from the public. White expressed concern that affordable housing will not be as prioritized by the public through this type of outreach, and several committee members shared their experience that many people are concerned about housing affordability and gentrification, and that it has been highly supported in the past. Bingham suggested additional means of increasing awareness through newspapers, social media, and standard signage. Members discussed the requirement and practice of posting signs during and after CPA project completion. Kennedy pointed out that social media is important but needs to be maintained. She suggested that grantees be asked to credit CPA on their social media. Cameron brought up an idea to use curb markers for signage. Heimarck suggested that the City's language liaisons might be able to help reach broader audiences to cultivate a more diverse applicant pool. The goal should be to foster a sense of public ownership of CPA, to let them know that the funding is available. It is important not to disadvantage any community. Habib, Heimarck, and Bingham offered help to design materials for outreach.

Cameron showed a calendar of upcoming events where the Committee can set up a table and invited committee members to let her know when they would be available to attend and conduct outreach. Beretsky and Heimarck stated that they would attend upcoming farmer's markets.

Agenda Item 6: Other Business

Cameron announced that the Community Preservation Coalition would be conducting a statewide training in the next few months and she will share more information about it when it becomes available.

Inacio suggested extending the deadline for full applications by one week, and Committee members agreed.

Beretsky announced that the next meeting will be on September 22, and will be held virtually.

Bingham moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Heimarck. The motion passed unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits

1. Agenda
2. Draft Minutes 6/23/21
3. Eligibility Determination Forms

- a. Land Acquisition Fund
 - b. Junction Park
 - c. Glen Street Community Garden
 - d. Somerville Hispanic Church
 - e. 24 Walnut St
 - f. 33 Bow St
 - g. 1783 Adams Magoun House
 - h. Somerville Museum
4. Draft CPC Evaluation Chart
 5. CPC Public Engagement Strategy
 6. Upcoming Somerville Events