



JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

Somerville CPA



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 4, 2015**

MEMBERS
Michael A. Capuano, Chair
Dick Bauer, Vice Chair
Tanya Cafarella
Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello
Michael Fager
Arn Franzen
Ezra Glenn
Courtney Koslow
Uma Murugan

STAFF
Emily Monea

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) held a meeting at 7:00pm in the third floor community room at the Visiting Nurse Association, 259 Lowell Street, Somerville, MA 02144. An audio recording of the meeting is available upon request.

- Members Present** Chair Michael Capuano, Vice Chair Dick Bauer (arrived late), Tanya Cafarella (arrive late), Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello, Michael Fager, Arn Franzen, Ezra Glenn, and Courtney Koslow (arrived late)
- Members Absent** Uma Murugan
- Staff Present** Emily Monea
- Others Present** Marilyn Sager

The Chair opened the meeting at approximately 7:05. The Committee members referenced the materials listed at the end of these minutes, all of which are available upon request.

Agenda item 1: Public comment period (10 minutes)

Marilynn Sager was present and stated that she did not have comments.

Agenda item 2: Committee business

a. Approve minutes from January 7th and January 12th community meetings

The Chair noted that he had requested that Emily Monea identify which Committee members asked which questions at the community meetings in the minutes. Ms. Monea said she had amended the minutes accordingly.

Ms. Koslow arrived at approximately 7:07.

Ezra Glenn stated that on page two of the January 7th minutes, Ms. Monea attributed a comment to him that he did not make. Ms. Monea stated that Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello asked this question and that she would amend the minutes accordingly.

Upon motion from the Chair, seconded by Michael Fager, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the minutes from the January 7th meeting as amended. Ms. Koslow was not present for the vote.

Upon motion from the Chair, seconded by Mr. Fager, the Committee voted 4-0 to approve the minutes from the January 12th meeting as amended, with Mr. Glenn abstaining as he was not present at the meeting. Ms. Koslow was not present for the vote.

b. CPC meeting schedule

The Committee members agreed to try to find a back-up meeting date in February in the event the February 9th meeting is canceled due to snow. Ms. Monea said she would send out a Doodle. The members agreed that the plan is to vote at the March 4th meeting and that a second March meeting has been scheduled on March 25th and can be used as a back-up as well.

The Vice Chair arrived at approximately 7:12, and Tanya Cafarella arrived at approximately 7:14.

c. Somerville Neighborhood News

Ms. Monea noted that Jane Regan from the Somerville Neighborhood News contacted her and the Chair about doing a story on the CPA. One of the News' reporters intends to film at the February 9th CPC meeting and would like to interview a few members.

Agenda item 3: Discuss and evaluate FY15 applications

The Chair stated that unlike the other applicants, the City has the ability to pay for many of its projects through its own means outside of the CPA. He stated that he does not support funding West Branch Library or City Hall and that the City should pay for these projects with its own funds. By doing so, the CPC would almost be able to pay for all of the other projects.

Arn Franzen noted that the City could have invested in West Branch Library and City Hall but has chosen not to to date and that projects that do not receive funding in this cycle can be resubmitted in the future.

Ms. Duclos-Orsello noted that many of the applicants, especially the community organizations, demonstrated extensive work to raise funding from other sources and were very specific and detailed in their requests. She also noted that CPA funds should be spent as broadly as possible to have the communitywide impact that many citizens expect and that tying up funds by paying for some of the large-ticket City items, especially in the first funding cycle, would hinder the Committee's ability to do this.

While generally agreeing with these statements, the Vice Chair noted that the CPC should be sensitive to the fact that the City put in its own funding into the CPA Fund. It could have held on to this funding and

used it to fund some of the proposed projects but instead put it into the CPA Fund in order to receive a match on it.

Ms. Cafarella generally agreed with these statements but noted that the CPC could strike a balance by recommending to pay for a portion of the high-request City projects while also providing funding to the other important projects.

Mr. Glenn noted that the requests for the high-request City items appear to include renovation costs that are not associated with historic preservation. He noted that this contributes to the large amounts requested and recommended that the CPC separate out these costs.

Ms. Fager inquired whether CPA money can be used to fund the historic preservation of religious structures. The members requested that Ms. Monea share documentation on this and ask the City's law office to write a brief memo addressing the issue.

Ms. Monea noted that she had been working with Kelly Donato, who staffs the Affordable Housing Trust (Trust), to get some clarification on the Mystic Water Works request. She stated that the \$500,000 request is both for CPA historic resources funding and for CPA community housing funding and that the applicant indicated that the CPC and the Trust should determine what portion of the funding should come from each funding source. She noted that she and Ms. Donato had encouraged the applicant to give the CPC and the Trust specific items that they still needed funding for and that Paul Mackey had sent her an email detailing roughly \$700,000 in historic costs, though he did not indicate which had been funded and which had not. Ms. Koslow noted that some of the project's funding sources do not cover specific items; they just contribute to the overall cost of the project. Mr. Mackey also said in his presentation at the community meeting that the Housing Authority would find a way to fill the gap on this project even if they did not receive CPA funds. She said that the CPC could therefore determine what amount they want to recommend giving to the project and then ask the applicant to indicate what this amount will pay for.

Ms. Duclos-Orsello noted that some applicants were incredibly detailed in their budgets and requests while others were not. She indicated that the lack of specificity demonstrated by some applicants is not in keeping with the process established by the CPC and may set the wrong precedent.

The Vice Chair updated the Committee members on the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission CPA Advisory Committee (SHPC CPA Advisory Committee). The SHPC Committee is working on a letter that they will submit to the CPC by the written comment deadline. The SHPC Committee members generally share the concerns expressed by some of the CPC members regarding the high-request proposals submitted by the City. The SHPC Committee was generally supportive of all of the historic resources proposals with a few exceptions, including portions of the application from First Church Somerville, as many of the members felt the work the applicant had done already was historically inaccurate. The SHPC Committee members would like the CPC to require historic resources projects,

even those that are not in Local Historic Districts (LHDs), to go before the HPC for an informal advice and comment session.

The members discussed the extent to which the CPC can attach restrictions and contingencies to the CPA funding recommendations. Ms. Duclos-Orsello expressed concern that the CPC had not stated publicly that it reserves the right to attach conditions to CPA funding offers. Ms. Monea said that the CPC included language addressing this issue in the application packet. A few members noted that there can be a discussion between the CPC and the applicant regarding the conditions.

The members decided to discuss each proposal and to begin with the recreational land proposals.

Community Growing Center

Several members spoke to the value the Community Growing Center provides in the community as well as its financial constraints and the extent to which it operates on volunteer labor.

Mr. Fager expressed concern that the proposal does not include specifics regarding what the applicant wants to do with the funds. Ms. Koslow noted that the applicant is calling primarily to fund staff time to develop a design for the rehabilitation of the space as well as some material costs.

Mr. Franzen noted that the project is well timed because the City intends to renovate the adjacent Nunziato Field in the near future, which will provide the opportunity to make a stronger connection between the Field, the dog park, and the Growing Center.

Ms. Duclos-Orsello said she supports the project but expressed concern that the proposal calls for funding programming, which the CPA cannot pay for, and confusion regarding what the material costs would cover, especially without a design in place. She also noted that the Growing Center did not have site control at the time they submitted an eligibility determination form and asked whether this had changed. Ms. Monea stated that the Growing Center and the City had agreed to a license agreement.

Mr. Fager, the Vice Chair, and the Chair wondered whether the work covered by the proposal is maintenance or rehabilitation and wondered how to draw the line between the two. The Vice Chair said he supports the project as long as the proposed work qualifies as rehabilitation and not maintenance. Ms. Monea noted that she asked the Coalition about this issue in the past. They told her that they have very little guidance on this issue beyond the definitions in the CPA legislation, in part because the legislation did not include a definition of maintenance until the 2012 amendment.

Mr. Fager suggested asking the Growing Center to reapply next year given how confusing the proposal is.

Healey School to Mystic

The Chair expressed concern about funding the proposal give that it is coming from a Friends group and not the City, that it would take 20 years to complete the project and/or it wouldn't be completed, and that it would require getting sign-offs from several stakeholders, including the City and the State. He expressed concern that funding the proposal would set a bad precedent for using CPA funds to investigate purchasing private property without consent from the property owner.

Mr. Franzen agreed that it is a far-reaching plan and that the group is likely taking on more than they can handle. However, he noted that they are tackling a valuable project that the City has talked about for a long time but has not been willing to take on. He suggested placing conditions on the CPA funding offer to address practicality concerns.

A few members discussed who owns the parcels that the proposal wants to investigate and whether they are willing to sell. Mr. Glenn noted that the purpose of the master plan is to answer questions like these. He wondered what happens if the plan is not implemented or the conclusion is that the project is infeasible. Are the CPA funds expended on the plan considered recreational land funding or admin funding? Ms. Monea said it is her understanding that feasibility studies and master plans count as project funding.

Ms. Duclos-Orsello stated that the project is valuable to all of the individuals who live in the area, use the space, want to see it improved, and don't care about who owns the various properties. However, she is concerned that the project principals do not have the expertise or capacity to oversee the master plan, though it would be fine if they intend to hire someone to complete the plan. Ms. Koslow spoke highly of Josh Safdie and Arn Franzen of Greg Nadeau.

Mr. Fager asked whether the Friends of the Healey is a 501(c)(3), noting that they did not include this documentation in their application. Ms. Monea said the group is a 501(c)(3) and that she would request this documentation.

Ms. Cafarella noted that this project is similar to the Assembly Square master plan, which took decades to implement.

Mr. Franzen stated that on the Parks and Open Space Department's list of projects is the improvement of the open and recreation space at three schools, one of which is the Healey.

Ms. Monea noted that she asked Mr. Nadeau how they had arrived at the budget for the project when they submitted the application and said that she felt he did not have a sufficient answer. The Vice Chair suggested that the CPC could give grant a smaller amount of money to begin planning for a master plan, which may be a more manageable step for the group. The CPC recommended that Ms. Monea reach out to the applicant again for specifics on the project budget.

Prospect Hill Park

The members generally spoke in favor of both the Prospect Hill Park and Tower projects. Mr. Fager noted that one of the documents in the tower application was dismissive of the site because it is in Somerville and wondered how we can elevate the site in order to make it noteworthy beyond neighboring municipalities. Ms. Duclos-Orsello responded that the project will use the open space to interpret the site, which will show all users of the space what happened at the site and why it is important. She said municipalities around the state are doing the same thing with their historic spaces and noted that a similar project in Salem used low-tech but innovative interactive tools that have completely changed how people interface with the open space around the wharves and public waterfront.

Several members noted that doing one part of the project without the other would be nonsensical.

The Vice Chair noted that both the park and the tower are in LHDs and that the recreational land request is only for planning money and therefore the City may request additional funds to complete the actual work on the park. He noted that the HPC will have to approve the plans for the park and that the HPC is requesting that the City come to the HPC early in the design process.

Mr. Fager noted that the reason the tower is in such bad condition today is because the City neglected it for so long. He asked how the CPC can be assured that this will not happen again if it is rehabilitated with CPA funds. Ms. Koslow suggested attaching a condition to the funding offer requiring maintenance on the tower. Ms. Monea noted that the City now has a Capital Projects and Planning Department that is in the process of creating preventive maintenance plans for all City buildings, so the CPC could request the department send it preventive maintenance reports for the tower on a regular basis.

School Garden Classrooms

The members generally spoke in favor of this proposal. Mr. Fager asked how the proposal qualifies as recreational land, and Ms. Monea said that urban agriculture is included in the definition of recreational land in the CPA legislation. Mr. Franzen wondered whether Groundwork has the capacity to provide staff for all of the projects it takes on. Mr. Fager asked what Groundwork does, and several members discussed the many projects and programs the organization has been involved with.

56 Bow Street

The members briefly discussed the 56 Bow Street project. The Chair noted that the applicant essentially told the Committee that he does not need the money. Ms. Duclos-Orsello noted that the CPC needs to be aware that it would set a precedent by funding the project. Mr. Glenn stated that it would make more sense to use CPA money for a historic homeowner grant fund that would be administered by the

City. Ms. Monea said that Cambridge has a similar program and that she has requested that the historic preservation plan consultants investigate programs like this.

Agenda item 4: Next meeting: Monday, February 9th at 7pm (Visiting Nurse Association)

Meeting Adjournment

Upon motion from the Chair, seconded by Mr. Glenn, the Committee voted 8-0 to adjourn at approximately 8:35.

Documents and Exhibits:

1. Meeting agenda
2. Draft minutes from January 7, 2015 CPC meeting, prepared by Emily Monea
3. Draft minutes from January 12, 2015 CPC meeting, prepared by Emily Monea
4. Draft evaluation forms for recreational land and historic resources proposals, prepared by Emily Monea
5. "Placing Preservation Restrictions on Historic Resources," prepared by the Community Preservation Coalition, February 2007
6. Summary of FY15 CPA project proposals, prepared by Emily Monea