

Community Preservation Plan Public Comments

Public Comments from Public Hearing

Dear Community Preservation Committee,

I'm Renée Scott of Green & Open Somerville. Thank you for inviting us to speak to you this evening.

Our mission to increase healthy green space in Somerville is based in some cold hard facts:

- * of US cities with 75,000 people or greater, Somerville is second only to New York City in density;
- * we are the least green city in the Commonwealth;
- * we fall short on all metrics for the amount of green space that is considered healthy for people in urban areas;
- * we have high rates of asthma and heart disease;
- * our trees are dying faster than we can replace them; we lost around 2,000 in 2018 alone. We only plant a few hundred each year;
- * studies have linked proximity to green space and increased mental and physical wellbeing;
- * Somerville isn't close to meeting its SomerVision goal of 125 additional acres of open space;
- * green spaces help ameliorate the serious impacts of climate change. They cool temperatures, improve air quality, sequester carbon, and reduce flooding.

For these reasons, we strongly advise that the proportion of CPA funds going to open space be increased. We would like to see equal amounts given to open space and affordable housing. These two needs go hand in hand. Everyone needs a place to live that is both affordable and healthy. One without the other is ignoring basic human rights. I'd like to note that the definitions of open space and green space are often confused or combined. The spaces we want to see funded are natural planted areas. Plazas and playgrounds are important parts of a healthy community, but we already have nice ones in Somerville. We need to focus on ecological restoration and hope you are interested in helping us.

In general, we agree with the priorities as listed in the 2020 draft plan. Acquiring new open space, especially in our riparian zones, is vital to expanding wildlife habitat, protecting Somerville from the higher tides and severe storms we will increasingly experience, and will also help to buffer our rivers from the pollutants coming from land.

We would like to see increased focus on ecosystem restoration, native plants, and the creation of wildlife and pollinator corridors. We have covered our land with pavement and plastic and have driven the vast majority of the native plants and animals that were part of a thriving ecosystem away. I was listening to an interview with Doug Tallamy, the University of Delaware professor who wrote "Bringing Nature Home" and he had a lovely explanation of why strong ecosystems are so important. He said, even if you don't personally like other lifeforms, "we need other species on planet earth because those are the species that run the ecosystems that support us. Ecosystems are comprised of plants and animals. Research has shown that every time you take away a species, the ecosystem performs more poorly. It is less productive. It doesn't make as much oxygen, clean water, and food. It behooves us to keep our ecosystems diverse and stable." And it would behoove Somerville to follow suit.

The lowest priority we see is restoring existing open spaces. The need for more natural planted spaces

outweighs upgrading existing ones and we believe that's where our money should be focused.

Voting Results from Public Hearing

Category	Total	Percent
Affordable Housing	32	32%
Historic Resources	39	39%
Open Space/Recreational Land	25	25%
Flexible	4	4%
Total	100	100%

Sticky note comments on priorities

Open Space

- Think about open sky as well! Get rid of extra telephone lines, etc.!

Historic Resources

- Artifacts too, and monuments and other
- Historic resources should include views- like from Prospect Hill
- Please contact Historic Somerville and Somerville Museum for input on historic resources

Written Comments

Received: March 27, 2019

From: Tony

It saddens me that funding for historic preservation and open space is allocated to 15% and 20% of cpa funds respectively. Apparently your board doesn't represent the betterment of the city as a whole with tangible results that can be enjoyed by all and chooses to focus on one topic.

Please dont reply and tell me subsidized housing is more important when it has numerous resources compared to open space and historic preservation. I prefer my tax dollars be utilized differently and in this case have any subsidized housing funds only help senior citizens and disabled. If any money is available outside of the allocations, I prefer open space and historic preservation receive the funds.

Thanks,
Tony

Received: March 27, 2019

From: Lynn Laur

Kristen,

The CPA money should be divided 3 ways equally to support Historic Preservation, Open Space/Recreation and Affordable Housing.

Sincerely,
Lynn Laur
15 Greenville Street

Received: March 27, 2019

From: Renée Scott

Dear CPC,

After hearing the sheer desperate need that Ellen Schacter spoke of, I had two thoughts. One, that maybe CPA funds are not best used for green space. We would need funds from somewhere else, but to really provide serious ecosystem restoration will cost far more than a CPA grant would provide. My other thought, and maybe better, is that the percentage could stay the same, but the funds for open space could be concentrated on projects that are environmentally rigorous. That could make the same money go farther towards restoration. My third thought is that this is all terribly hopeless and I don't know any answers.

Thank you for listening tonight.

Renée Scott
Green & Open Somerville

Received: March 29, 2019

From: Cory Mian

Hi Kristen--

I wanted to put my comments in on the allocation of the CPC funds. I strongly believe that the largest percentage of the CPC dollars should be allocated to the affordable housing pool. At its core, affordable housing is the backbone of any healthy community, both at the macro level of a functioning City, but also at the micro level of a functioning household. Without affordable housing, we cannot fuel our economy, we cannot adequately provide for our children's needs, and we cannot build a better future. While I am lover of open space and historic preservation, I believe that they are secondary to the fundamentals of affordable housing protections and production. I strongly recommend that the largest percentage possible of the CPC funds be allocated to affordable housing.

Thank you.

Cory Mian

Somerville Resident
6 Austin Street

Received: March 29, 2019

From: Haris Domond

Hi Kristen,

I am a Somerville resident and wanted to put my comments in on the allocation of the CPA funds.

I strongly believe that the largest percentage of the CPA dollars should be allocated to the affordable housing pool. At its core, affordable housing is the backbone of any healthy community, both at the macro level of a functioning City, but also at the micro level of a functioning household. Without affordable housing, we cannot fuel our economy, we cannot adequately provide for our children's needs, and we cannot build a better future. While I am lover of open space and historic preservation, I believe that they are secondary to the fundamentals of affordable housing protections and production. I strongly recommend that the largest percentage possible of the CPA funds be allocated to affordable housing.

Home address: 20 Wesley Park Apt #1, Somerville, 02143

Best,
Haris Domond

Received: March 29, 2019

From: Nick Mian

Hello,

I am writing to submit comments regarding how the CPC funds should be allocated. My opinion is that the lion's share of the funds should go toward affordable housing. While open space and historic preservation very important, they mean little in terms of community building if only the wealthiest citizens can afford to live here to appreciate them. I am a Clinical Psychologist, treating emotional disorders in young children. The research on social-emotional development in children is clear that stable housing in good communities is crucial for healthy child development. Continuing to focus on affordable housing is the most important way that the CPC can fulfill its mission.

Thank you.

Nick Mian
6 Austin Street

Received: March 29, 2019

From: David Parker

Hello,

I am a resident at 22 Oxford st apt 2L, Somerville MA 02143. I would like to comment on the allocation of the the CPC funds. I believe the largest allocation of funds should be for affordable housing. While open space and historic preservation are key elements of a great community, affordable housing plays a much larger role. Without affordable housing, neighborhoods may fall victim to a homogeneous form of gentrification that caters only to the wealthy, and strips Somerville of its historic working-class charm and eclecticism. Please prioritize affordable housing as the largest allocation of funds.

Thank you,
David

Received: March 31, 2019

From: Alex Epstein

Hi Kristen,

Thanks for the opportunity to comment and weigh in on how to spend the \$2m CPA annual budget.

To be brief, I would like to see as much funding as possible spent on open space projects and on rehabilitation of historic city buildings such as the libraries and other venues that routinely host public meetings.

On the open space side, I would particularly like to see

- upgrades to the Community Path
 - improve drainage at Cedar Street
 - rehabilitate the sorry brick area at Highland Road
 - build a matching landscaped path through the CHA parking lot between Junction Park and Central Street
- expansion of Kenney Park using the space that is currently a municipal parking lot on Grove Street
- playground and/or workout equipment in or around the paved basketball court at the JFK School
- conversion of a street to a permanent linear park (like Bell Street Park in Seattle), subject to resident approval. Note that there is some precedent for this in Somerville--as I understand when the Community Path was built, the connection between Hancock Street and Highland Road was turned into a linear park connector. One street that might be a great candidate is Osgood Street, a dead-end for cars but home to two playgrounds and a walk-through staircase.

Thanks for your consideration.

Alex Epstein

5 Windsor Road