



JOSEPH A. CURTATONE  
MAYOR



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE  
RESIDENT FEEDBACK ON DRAFT COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN  
JUNE 2, 2014**

**TESTIMONY FROM MAY 7<sup>TH</sup> PUBLIC HEARING**

**Erin DeBenedetto** suggested adding longstanding small business owners to the set of organizations from which the Committee prioritizes projects.

**Mimi Graney** asked whether the Committee intends to establish and communicate rough estimates of how much CPA funding it intends to devote to projects in each focus area and to short- versus long-term projects prior to releasing the application to the public. She said it would be helpful to give applicants a sense of how much money is realistic to apply for. The Committee responded that this issue is closely related to another specific question the Committee has for the public – whether the Committee should prioritize projects in certain CPA focus areas or whether it should strive to allocate CPA funding equally across the areas – and that it welcomes feedback on both. The Committee also noted that the pre-application phase of the application process is intended both to give applicants some feedback on their project with minimal effort from them and to give the Committee a sense of what the projects coming in look like. Ms. Graney also encouraged the Committee to prioritize projects that create long-lasting value. She supported the idea of thinking vertically and taking advantage of rooftops. She encouraged the Committee to ensure that a portion of the funds are reserved for community-sponsored projects and not just City-sponsored projects every year so that the community remains engaged in and supportive of the CPA.

**Alan Moore** encouraged the Committee think more about general priority 2b (“demonstrate that CPA funds are a source of last resort”), noting that he wouldn’t want the Committee to not fund a project simply because it might get funding sometime in the distant future. He also encouraged the Committee to set goals, but not requirements, for how much CPA funding is devoted to each focus area and encouraged the Committee to strive to have a fair distribution across the three focus areas. Finally, he noted that a few communities barely spend their CPA funding and encouraged the Committee to avoid this in Somerville and to prioritize spending the funding, while acknowledging that it is reasonable to save in some years to afford larger projects down the line. He encouraged the Committee to be explicit about what urban agriculture means by adding language about community gardens and to add a priority about maintaining and improving paths and trails in Somerville, including the Community Path and paths along the Mystic River and Alewife Brook, if that is allowable under the CPA. He also suggested the Committee share its draft set of priorities with other municipalities and with the Community Preservation Coalition to see if it is missing anything important.

**A resident from Winter Hill** (name inaudible) said the following are important: art and public art space; preserving the character of neighborhoods; preserving the security of the community, perhaps by

**MEMBERS**

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**STAFF**

Emily Monea

acquiring property to prevent permeation of drugs; encouraging youth to participate in the CPA process as a mechanism for them to participate in government; improving common transportation areas (e.g., bus stops) with, for example, better benches; preserving space that drives innovation and/or commerce or interdisciplinary interaction between, for example, art and youth. He also voiced his support for open WiFi and open technology access in public spaces; using rooftops of buildings to create new recreational land; and free public parking.

**Brandon Wilson** encouraged the Committee to consider how to fund expensive, multi-year projects like restoring Prospect Hill Tower. She also asked the Committee to be transparent about how exactly it will select projects (for example, if it intends to use a point system based on the priorities in the Plan, that system should be released along with the Plan and the application). She supports projects that impact two or more focus areas and encouraged the Committee to encourage the Board of Aldermen to participate in the CPC process since they have final say on projects. She also encouraged the Committee to consider less well known historic properties like the Somerville Museum, which is a great resource for the community and also needs assistance urgently as it is not ADA accessible and therefore cannot be used for City functions. The museum has a grant for \$85,000 that they need to match for a \$200,000 shovel-ready project. She also encouraged the Committee to consider a program that would help historic property homeowners who don't have the resources to maintain or improve their homes, noting that this would also people to get their homes designated or keep them designated. Ms. Wilson encouraged the Committee to maintain control over community housing funding rather than transferring it to the Affordable Housing Trust and to maintain flexibility over CPA funding and not to commit in advance to devoting funding to any of the focus areas beyond the required 10% minimum. She also encouraged the Committee to prioritize projects that preserve owner-occupied two- and three-family structures, to consider co-housing projects, to consider projects that allow seniors to stay in their own homes, and to consider ways to preserve the historic character of Somerville's houses.

**Joanna Variotis** voiced her support for all of the Committee's draft priorities and in particular supported priorities 6 ("creatively and coherently combine multiple uses that meet community need") and 7 ("expand urban agriculture opportunities"). She encouraged the Committee to include community gardens in any project possible, noting that there is a multi-year wait for existing community garden plots and a growing interest in them. She noted that there are nooks and crannies all around the City that could hold 4-6 community garden plots and that community gardens can be used instead of landscaping. She also encouraged the Committee to prioritize projects that preserve owner-occupied two- and three-family structures.

**Jeff Myers** encouraged the Committee to devote resources to the Somerville Museum, which is a critical resource for the City. He also voiced support for a comprehensive census of all historic properties in the City. He also noted that Committee will have to deal with competing priorities (specifically, preserving owner-occupied two- and three-family homes and creating transit-oriented, mixed-use development) and encouraged the Committee to try to strike a balance between them. With regard to allocating funding across the CPA focus areas, he encouraged the Committee to err on the side of flexibility, especially so as to respond to urgent, time-sensitive needs, and to reevaluate in the future.

**Lai Ying Yu** would like to see the West Somerville Library improved, and she encouraged the Committee to prioritize projects that provide for affordability into perpetuity, projects with two- to three-bedroom units, and elderly housing. She also encouraged the Committee to maintain flexibility with regard to spending CPA funds and to spread the word about the CPA and future public hearings as widely as possible and be creative in doing so.

**Alex Bob** seconded Ms. Yu's comments about the community housing priorities. He emphasized that with the Green Line Extension, we are facing an exceptional, time-sensitive opportunity and that we should capitalize on it. He encouraged projects with two- to three-bedroom bedroom units and encouraged the Committee to keep track of how Somerville's median income compares to HUD's area median income.

**A resident** (who did not identify himself) encouraged the Committee to have translators at future meetings to engage the non-English speaking portion of the community.

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#### TESTIMONY FROM MAY 12<sup>TH</sup> PUBLIC HEARING

**Mary Cassesso** shared information about the Affordable Housing Trust. The Trust has a representative appointed by the Mayor, a member of the Board of Aldermen, a representative from the non-profit world, a tenant, and a homeowner. Several of the members have expertise in banking, finance, real estate, and housing. In its 25-year history the Trust has spent \$3.5 million on more than 350 affordable units, assisted 60 to 70 renters in stabilizing their residency in Somerville, and assisted about a dozen individuals with purchasing their homes. The Trust has great flexibility in spending money and using this flexibility to leverage other resources. The Trust is currently undergoing a strategic visioning process, which it does every five years. Ms. Cassesso emphasized the Trust's deep experience, expertise, and breadth and encouraged the CPC to allocate community housing funding to the Trust.

**Courtney O'Keefe** encouraged the Committee to invest in Hoyt-Sullivan Park and Junction Park (which she mentioned is the perfect location for a community garden), both of which are underutilized. She also encouraged the CPC to integrate with the City's Capital Investment Plan. Finally, she is concerned about associations of Committee members and Board of Aldermen members with applicants; she wants an even, level playing field for CPA funding.

**Ellen Shachter** encouraged the Committee to allocated percentages for the focus areas ahead of time. While she supports all three areas, she emphasized that the majority of the funding should be dedicated to affordable housing. The City has prioritized anti-displacement and can't do this without a commitment to affordable housing. Housing is also more politicized than the other two areas, so the Committee needs to take a strong leadership role in expressing the importance of affordable housing. She encouraged the distribution of community housing funding through Trust to take advantage of its expertise and experience and avoid further politicization of the issue. She encouraged the Trust to have a designated open process or public hearing targeted to projects being considered for funding. With regard to specific housing priorities, Ms. Shachter encouraged the Committee to devote additional resources to homelessness prevention and also encouraged the Committee to link unit-size prioritization with wait times for housing, noting that the longest wait time is for single disabled people.

**Abby Freedman** suggested increasing the minimum percentage for each focus area to 20 or 25%, allowing the bulk of the funding to be distributed equally while maintaining leeway for special projects. She noted that the Historic Preservation Commission is working on a Union Square Historic District. She encouraged the Committee to support projects like the preservation and ADA compliance of the Somerville Museum, the Union Square Post Office, and the West Branch Library and to combine historic preservation with affordable housing. She emphasized that preservation is about more than just

buildings and should be extended to artifacts, art work, documents, oral history, and more.

**Barbara Mangum** said that historic preservation is an underdog in Somerville and tends to be taken for granted and is therefore underfunded. She said the CPA was formed to give voice and support to historic preservation needs, in addition to open space and affordable housing. She supported Ms. Freedman's suggestion to increase the minimum percentage allocated to each focus area to 20% and noted that Brandon Wilson has many studies of buildings that need to be preserved. She also encouraged the Committee to engage the public in discussions of what has historical significance.

**Danny LeBlanc** said the need for affordable housing is well documented and that the smoothest way to spend community housing money is through the Affordable Housing Trust, which has a tried and true record of supporting affordable housing projects. He also emphasized his support for general priority 2a ("leverage other public or private funds"), noting that the CPA funding will not cover all of the needs in Somerville.

**Jim McGinnis** supported Ms. Freedman's suggestion to increase the minimum percentage allocated to each focus area to 20 or 25%. He noted that less than 3% of City has been surveyed despite the fact that it isn't very expensive and said that more surveying should be done before commissioning a consultant to create a historic preservation plan. He noted that development tends to target older properties since they have larger lots and with the development pressures in Somerville, time is of the essence to preserve these properties. He supported the Prospect Hill Tower and West Branch Library projects but emphasized that CPA historic resources money should also be equally devoted to homeowners who need assistance taking care of their historic properties.

**Stephanie Hirsch** said that she is interested in ease of access to and leveraging existing open spaces and suggested purchasing easements to parks to preserve pedestrian access. She also suggested taking advantage of small pockets of space by making them more accessible and enjoyable. She emphasized that all open spaces should be available to multiple users and that all of our open space should be used all day every day. She is opposed to locking spaces, including community gardens. She encouraged the Committee to take advantage of underutilized school playgrounds. She also encouraged the Committee to be creative, to invest in interesting, unique ideas, and to take risks and experiment with new ideas. For example, the Committee could require public open space with every housing project it supports or prioritize historic preservation projects that maximize community impact and involvement (e.g., the Somerville Theater).

**Donna Hayes** said that the preservation of our community means preserving people and that investing in affordable housing is the best way to preserve Somerville's people. She emphasized that affordable housing is the most serious need of the CPA areas.

**Annette McGloin** questioned whether we need a consultant to tell us which historic properties are worth preserving and said that the City should be able to do this with current resources and talent. She also encouraged grassroots historic preservation and exploring public-private partnerships to achieve historic preservation and other goals (e.g., housing, recreation).

**Fred Berman** encouraged continuing the partnership between historic preservation and affordable housing that led to the passage of the CPA. He encouraged projects that maximize public benefit. For example, the West Branch Library should be a higher priority than assisting with someone's historic property, and funding should go toward the Community Path and those parks that are most widely

used. He encouraged the Committee to use the CPA to leverage other money and also encouraged the Committee to use deed restrictions to maintain the public purpose of investments in the future. He also supported transferring community housing money to the Affordable Housing Trust.

**Judy Jacobs** said the highest priority for CPA funding is affordable housing and encouraged the Committee to use an open and transparent process while accepting applications and selecting projects.

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#### WRITTEN COMMENTS

**From: Robin Ray**  
**Received: May 13, 2014**

Hi Emily,

I was not able to get to the meeting last night but I wanted to put in my two cents about what the CPA budget should be used for. I support the priorities of the Friends of the Community Path which are (as I'm sure you know):

1. *Expansion and general maintenance of walking and cycling trails/paths, such as (though not limited to) the Community Path and the paths along the Mystic River and Alewife Brook.*
2. *Creation of new community garden plots, and the maintenance and planting of existing and new trees, grass, and other vegetation wherever possible, including along walking/cycling trails/paths, as well as along the future GLX right-of-way. The City of Somerville can be responsible for maintenance of Gardens and vegetation along the GLX MBTA corridor, similar to the agreement when the Red Line was built.*

I also feel that **street trees** and **affordable housing** must get more attention and money than they has up to now. Too often I see big old trees taken down and small ones **or nothing** put in their place. A good tree canopy is absolutely essential for keeping Somerville livable as climate change makes the summers hotter, and I don't see Somerville working effectively toward that goal.

Thank you,  
Robin Ray  
37 Cherry St

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Robin Hazard Ray 37 Cherry Street Somerville, MA 02144 home/office +1 (617) 629-2241 mobile +1 (617) 230-5577

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**From: Renée Scott**  
**Received: May 13, 2014**

Dear Ms. Monea,

I am interested in so much of what you all have to decide on. A few things of specific interest: fixing the Prospect Hill Monument, which has fallen into disrepair, and maintaining our grass fields. Speaking to

the latter: the few grass fields our city has are poorly maintained and very overused. Many people are talking about using artificial turf to allow for more use on these fields. I do not believe this is the answer. Once these are turfed over, they will eliminate most of their use for anything other than organized sporting events. Anyone who currently uses them for picnics or lying in the grass or playing catch with their kids will most likely not use them anymore. Who wants to lie on plastic carpet? Food isn't even allowed on artificial turf, so that eliminates picnics and any gathering which includes food.

What we need is two-fold: additional space for more fields, and better maintenance of our grass fields.

I noticed that the reply to email listed in your message leaves an "e" out of Somerville, so it is not getting sent to you. It's written as [emonea@somervilllma.gov](mailto:emonea@somervilllma.gov) (note missing "e" after "vill").

Thank you.

Renée Scott

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**From: Zachary Zasloff**  
**Received: May 13, 2014**

Hello,

I'm writing to provide my feedback on how the CPA funding should be distributed. I would like to see a strong commitment to restoring and fixing up the Prospect Hill Tower and adjacent green space. By allocating funding for the Prospect Hill Tower it would allow for two categories to be fulfilled (Historic Preservation & Open Space). I hope the committee gives serious consideration to allocating the necessary funding to preserve such a great piece of American history within our City.

Sincerely,

Zachary Zasloff  
205 Washington St.  
Somerville, MA 02143

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**From: George Born**  
**Received: May 13, 2014**

Emily Monea,

Thanks for the e-mail soliciting my comments on Somerville's priorities for implementing the CPA ordinance. I did not attend the public hearing the other night, so I am glad I can comment now.

As a resident of East Somerville and as an alternate member of the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission, I supported Somerville's adoption of a CPA ordinance, and I believe that historic preservation should be a major priority for CPA funding. Dick Bauer, my able colleague on the HPC and its chair, has no doubt voiced support for this, too.

The CPC's stated belief that Somerville should have an historic preservation plan is valid. In fact, my understanding is that all municipalities whose historic preservation programs participate in the National Park Service's Certified Local Government (CLG) Program, as Somerville's does, must have such an historic preservation plan. Therefore, my only quibble with the CPC's recommended priorities for historic preservation is that this necessary element of city planning should be paid for by general funds, so that CPA moneys can get out "on the street" to help fund bricks-and-mortar preservation projects.

In short, CPA funds should be used to pay for tangible and visible projects that the public can readily see and benefit from. While I am a strong supporter of city planning, funneling CPA moneys to develop internal planning documents does not seem to me to be the best use of this revenue stream. Many of Somerville's historic buildings need immediate help.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to comment.

George Born

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**From: Dr. Daisy Obi**  
**Received: May 13, 2014**

Cheers Emily,

It was a great meeting despite the temperature. I am looking forward to more opportunities. I believe the Committee is in the right direction and making progress from my limited observation.

Always so grateful to God to live in such a great City and committee of people who care for our environment so we can pass something beautiful to the next generation.

Question: I do not remember if this was already in the presentation, but it would be insightful to know if once a project is approved according to the guidelines, (and I am thinking of the SCC as an example, is their a time frame for using the allotted or grant money within the same year and if the project spills over to another fiscal year, will it affect the grant? I was going to ask that question yesterday.

Thanks again for being custodians of the earth's resources to make sure our limited space is used for the good of all to the best of your ability.

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**From: Ellen Shachter**  
**Received: May 15, 2014**

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Community Preservation Act Committee (CPA) on Monday May 12, 2014. As you know, I have been representing low income tenants and homeowners in Somerville for the last twenty-five years. I want to very briefly set out my thoughts, some of which, but not all of which, I presented at the hearing.

1. I strongly believe that 80% (or as close thereto as possible) of the CPA funds should be allocated to affordable housing. While I strongly support the creation and preservation of open space and historic structures, art, etc. the housing crisis in Somerville is more dire every day. With thousands of families and individuals on waitlists for subsidized units and with outrageously

spiraling rents, a strong financial commitment to affordable housing and tenant protection is essential to any realistic plan to prevent further displacement incident to the public transportation improvements coming to the City. The anticipated gentrification effect due to transportation improvements, has been well documented by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and others. I personally think it would be unconscionable not to take the opportunity offered by the CPA to stave off, even if only a to a small degree, the devastating effects of rents that are out of control and only getting worse by producing the greatest number of affordable units possible. Currently the majority of Somerville families with Section 8 subsidies have to LEAVE the City because there are so few rents reasonable enough to fit within the Section 8 guidelines. The Somerville Homeless Coalition has funding for units they have NOT been able to lease because of increasing rental prices. Unfortunately, with housing, later is often too late. The City is and will continue to change rapidly and wonderful and devastating ways.

2. I think you should allocate the percentage funding before deciding on individual projects. I don't see how you can meaningfully decide what to fund without knowing what your budget for each category will be. I don't think the best answer is to have individual projects competing with one another. I think this will create more dissension than is necessary.
3. I think that monies allocated for housing should be funneled through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. As you know, I sit on the Cambridge CPA which funnels all funds through its AHTF. While personally I would love to have a say in what specific projects are funded through the CPA as a member of the Commission, I know that that is not what is best for the community. One off and haphazard decisions about funding for affordable housing without comprehensive planning City-wide does not make sense. The AHTF has the expertise and knowledge to weigh different needs and opportunities and it makes no sense to try to recreate all of this in a new CPA committee. I do, however, think the AHTF should have a public meeting about its funding criteria and decisions that is well publicized through the CPA networks and elsewhere to get community input. I don't think there is sufficient opportunity to impact the decisions of that body.
4. I would like the CPA committee and/or AHTF to consider allocating some portion of CPA funds for **homelessness prevention**. Specifically I would like to see funding for short term "bridge" subsidies for families at imminent RISK of displacement due to rising rents or falling income. My hope is that we could have some two to three year subsidies for persons who may be able to access permanent affordable housing within that period of time but without a bridge subsidy will be homeless. In my experience the PASS program (funded through City HOME or ESG funds or both – I can't remember) has been one of the only programs to actually prevent homelessness for those who simply can no longer afford their rent. PASS runs out of funds extremely quickly every time it is funded. While generally I am in greater support of housing programs with permanent (or as close as possible) affordability I think this program addresses a gap where there really are no other resources. Building permanent affordable housing should be our #1 housing goal. However it does NOT really help to prevent the displacement of specific families and individuals in Somerville due to gentrification. Some balance in this regard – to build stock but also help individuals to remain in Somerville – may be the right approach.
5. I do not agree with targeting those under 50% and over 80% but excluding those between 50% and 80%. Most of the available new and existing "affordable" units in Somerville are tax credit units which really only work for those between about 40% and 60% of AMI. This is a generalization but those with under 40% AMI cannot afford the "affordable" rents without their own tenant based vouchers. Those over 60% are ineligible for tax credit buildings. So if you are going to target a mid-range population I think it should start at 60% and go up. Additionally if people under about 40% of income don't have their own vouchers already they cannot live in



tax credit buildings. So very few tenants below 30% are getting any new deeply affordable housing (except the small number that get in off the SHA waitlist into public housing). I think more targeting (or all targeting) should go to the lowest income and most vulnerable.

6. I think we should prioritize funding for specially vulnerable populations such as the formerly homeless, those at imminent risk of homelessness, formerly incarcerated persons or immigrant families lawfully present in the US but not eligible for federal housing programs.

Thanks for considering my comments and for all you do to staff the CPA committee. It is so great to have a staff person (and you in particular) dedicated to CPA.

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**From: Carrie Dancy**  
**Received: May 16, 2014**

Emily,

Did preservation of middle income affordable housing come up (110% of area median income)? East Somerville Main Streets is very concerned about affordable housing across the board, but we are especially concerned that a spectrum of people can continue to afford East Somerville and Somerville and not just the very poor and the very rich.

Thank you,  
Carrie

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**From: Linda Conte**  
**Received: May 18, 2014**

Hi Emily,

I think I've submitted this idea a couple of places already, but for some reason I can't get this idea out of my head, so I'm going to share it again with you and see what happens. I would love for the major squares of Somerville to have 2 really useful things: A recycling area for take out containers, etc., and a fountain to drink from and to rinse take out plastics for recycling. This way there would be a lot less sludge oozing from trash barrels. These fountains could be really attractive (run another artist contest!) and could be made to conserve water as much as possible. Oh gosh, there is something else I'd love to see: public restrooms. Not trivial, I know.

I'll look forward to see how the planning goes!  
Thanks, Linda Conte

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**From: Alex Lessin**  
**Received: May 20, 2014**

To: Community Preservation Committee, c/o Emily Monea  
From: Alex Lessin, Resident, 15 Belmont Square, Apt. 2  
Date: May 20, 2014

These comments are submitted following my attending the public meeting at East Somerville Community School on May 12, 2014. Answers to specific questions are followed by general comments.

### Specific Questions

I. "Should the committee prioritize projects submitted by non-profits....?"

No, I do not believe the committee should prioritize projects based on the residential or corporate status of the applicant. Projects should be evaluated based on the merits and guidelines within each category, regardless of status. That said, the source of each application should be clear and transparent, including a scanned or digital copy of each application available for download.

II. Re: Housing Priorities

1. The committee should prioritize projects that provide for affordability pegged to the federal affordability guideline in perpetuity.
2. The committee should prioritize projects over 5 units.
3. The committee should prioritize projects that preserve owner occupied structures, irrespective of family size.
4. Yes, the Committee should transfer funding to the Affordable Housing Trust for CPA-eligible projects -- this is efficient and respects an already democratic process.

III. Should the Committee prioritize projects in certain CPA focus areas or strive to allocate CPA funding equally across the focus area?

The committee should prioritize housing, followed by open space/recreation, followed by historic preservation.

### General Comments

- Committee members should follow the same guidelines as municipal employees regarding ethics and conflicts of interest. Should a member have a financial stake in a given project, this stake must be disclosed and approved by the respective 'approval authority.' If this does not exist, I recommend the Somerville Ethics Commission act as the approving authority.
- I support the Historical Resources Priority to hire a consultant. This consultant should be chosen following the same guidelines as the state's mandated procurement policy

Sincerely,

Alex Lessin

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**From: Linda Carrubba**  
**Received: May 21, 2014**

Hello,

I went to the CPA meeting on May 12 at the East Somerville School. While all the designated uses (affordable housing, open space, historic preservation) of the CPA money are worthwhile & needed in Somerville, I think that (unfortunately) the immediate emphasis should be to spend the money on affordable housing -- creating & preserving.

It seems like the increase in housing costs (for both purchasers & renters) has been going up exponentially in the past few months. I fear that this trajectory will only accelerate after the green line comes. The new apartments at Assembly Square start at about \$2000 for under 500 sq ft. single bedrooms. if this is the way that development will be done in Somerville, clearly many people already living here will be priced out. My daughter is in the 8th grade at Argenziano, and in her class of 32 students, 2 are moving (to Everett and Malden). There may be many reasons they would move but it's hard to believe that housing cost is not among them.

Regards,

Linda

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Linda Carrubba  
20 Wesley St.  
Somerville, MA 02145

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**From: Danny LeBlanc**

**Received: June 2, 2014 (technical issue prevented sending prior to May 31<sup>st</sup> deadline)**

Emily Monea  
Community Preservation Act Manager  
Mayor's SomerStat Office  
City of Somerville  
93 Highland Ave.  
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Ms. Monea:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the City of Somerville's allocation of the first year of the new Community Preservation Act funds. As one of the organizations leading the campaign to pass the CPA in 2012, on behalf of Somerville Community Corporation, we're thrilled to be approaching the first year of full funding and excited to see CPA projects gearing up!

I offer the following points for consideration by the Community Preservation Committee:

1. We believe the CPC should consider spending as much as 75% of the available funds on affordable housing, and should absolutely allocate at least 50% of funds to affordable housing. As the City's only CDC and CHDO, SCC knows what it takes to produce more affordable housing in Somerville, and also witnesses daily the crisis faced by Somerville residents due to rapidly escalating rents and purchase prices that are increasingly out of reach for most. Enabling the development and preservation of more affordable housing is quite simply the best way for Somerville to remain the diverse, vibrant community we all enjoy, to "not lose our soul" as we've often heard Mayor Curtatone say. Lack of affordable housing options, by contrast, is the quickest way for us to lose the diversity of people we prize so much. While we strongly support

funding for good historic preservation and open space projects as well, we believe that affordable housing must be our highest priority for the use of CPA funds.

2. We believe that the percentage allocations to affordable housing, historic preservation, and open space should be established up front each year. We also advocate allocating the affordable housing monies over to Somerville's Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Unlike many communities that have adopted CPA, Somerville is blessed with an Affordable Housing Trust Fund with a 25-year track record of awarding and monitoring funds for affordable housing projects and programs, as well as to assist Somerville renters and home buyers (Full disclosure – I have been a Trustee of the SAHTF since 2001). The Trust has allocated nearly \$4 Million in its history, and has leveraged its funds wisely so that both rental and ownership projects totaling hundreds of units of affordable housing have resulted. The AHTF has both statutory requirements, as well as internally adopted guidelines and a strategic plan that will serve well the Community Preservation Committee's interest in spending its affordable housing dollars for maximum impact.
3. The questions of whether to prioritize rental or ownership housing, and what income levels of residents to be targeting, are very tricky questions for all of us, including the CPC and the AHTF. As Somerville's primary developer of new affordable rental housing, we know well the need for rental housing serving households earning at or below 60% of Area Median Income. On the other hand, as a community based organization with hundreds of members who rent housing in the private market, we also understand that households earning between 60-80% AMI, and even higher, are finding it increasingly difficult to find suitable housing they can afford on the private market. We also know that there are presently no federal or state programs supporting the development of affordable rental housing for households earning above 60% AMI. While such households are certainly better able to find housing they can afford in other communities than are households earning under 60% AMI, they are increasingly less likely to find that housing in Somerville. The situation for households who want to be first-time home buyers, and whose incomes range between 70% and 110-120%, is equally challenging, and warrants consideration of the development of deed-restricted affordable ownership opportunities.

The bottom line with respect to the targeting of income levels to be served by CPA-supported affordable housing is that, again, the Somerville AHTF has good guidelines for allocating affordable housing dollars, and is also experienced in both spreading its dollars to assist households of a range of incomes, but who face affordable housing challenges, but also is nimble enough to pursue opportunities as they arise and to adjust income targeting as circumstances change.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony. We look forward to working with you and with the Committee to effectively implement CPA in the coming years to provide the greatest benefit possible for everyone in Somerville.

Sincerely,

Danny LeBlanc

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**From: Steve Mulder**

**Received: August 20, 2014 (originally emailed on May 18, 2014; technical issue prevented receipt of original email)**

Hi Emily -

I couldn't make the recent community meetings but wanted to send a quick email with my perspective as a resident (Union Square area).

One thing I think is critically important is how the money is distributed among the three priorities of the CPA: historic preservation, open space/recreation and affordable housing. The campaign for the CPA clearly covered all three, and it would be a mistake to fund one area much more than the other two. If funding is unbalanced, it would go against the mandate of the CPA.

I'm not requesting exactly 33% for each area, but please try to balance them as closely as possible. In particular, there are fewer other sources of funding for historic preservation and open space, so it's important these aren't underrepresented (e.g., less than 25% each). As an aside, much-needed work on the Prospect Hill monument would fall into these two categories nicely.

This spending is rare and important, so obviously it's important to use it well!

Thanks for asking for community feedback on this.

Steve Mulder  
42 Stone Ave

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# SHC

## Somerville Homeless Coalition Support, Housing, Community

P.O. Box 440436, Somerville, MA 02144  
P: 617.623.6111 F: 617.776.7165 TTY : 617.776.0750

*Homeless Prevention  
Case Management  
Supportive Housing  
Family & Adult Shelter  
Project SOUP*

May 14, 2014

Community Preservation Committee  
Somerville City Hall  
93 Highland Ave  
Somerville, MA 02144

**Board of Directors**

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Thomas White  
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To whom it may concern:

Thank you for holding the public meeting on Monday May 12, 2014 at the East Somerville Community School and for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the expenditures of these new funds made available due to the passing of the Community Preservation Act in Somerville.

Jeffrey Bernstein  
Dia Black  
Rachel Borgatti  
Amy Checkoway  
Tom Cornu  
Conrad Crawford  
Laura Gitelson  
Rachel Heller  
Michelle Kinberg  
Gisela Margotta  
Richard Rawal  
Diane Sullivan  
Thalia Tringo  
Lars Unhjem  
Jeffrey Waxman

My name is Lisa Davidson and I am writing on behalf of two entities within the city of Somerville. The first is as an employee of the Somerville Homeless Coalition, where I have been employed for the past 14 years. The second role is as the newest member of the Affordable Housing Trust.

During the presentation Monday night there were a number of questions presented to the audience in attendance; I would like to take this time to answer three of the questions. The first question I would like to respond to is regarding prioritization of projects submitted by non -profits, the City and residents over projects submitted by for-profits? I would recommend not prioritizing projects based on the requesting applicant status. I would, however, suggest prioritizing projects based on the need and how the project will benefit the residents of the City.

**Executive Director**

Mark Alston-Follansbee

**Chief Operating Officer**

Warren McManus

**Deputy Director**

Michael Libby, LCSW

**Director of Programs**

Lisa Davidson

**Director of Development**

Kathryn Benjamin

The next question I would like to respond to is should the Committee transfer community housing funding to the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust (SAHTF) for it to allocate to CPA eligible projects? My response to this question would be YES, the committee should allocate the fund to the SAHTF to allocate to CPA eligible projects. As you heard Monday night through the testimony from Mary Cassesso, Managing Trustee, Daniel LeBlanc and Donna Haynes, both fellow Trustees, the SAHTF has 25 years of experience working towards the goal of preservation and creation of affordable housing in the City of

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# SHC

## Somerville Homeless Coalition Support, Housing, Community

P.O. Box 440436, Somerville, MA 02144  
P: 617.623.6111 F: 617.776.7165 TTY : 617.776.0750

Somerville and has created programs that directly assist renters and homeowners.

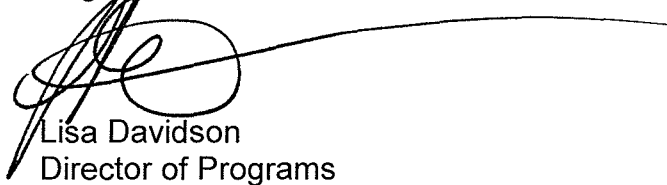
The Trust has made over \$3.48 million available through loans or grants since its inception. This has resulted in the creation of over 350 affordable housing units. The Trust also assists roughly 10-15 first-time homebuyers annually with closing cost assistance, assists 60-70 renters through the Tenancy Stabilization Program annually, and grants roughly \$60,000 to non-profit housing agencies annually for program support.

Finally the Trust undertakes a strategic visioning process every five years to review performance, analyze needs and develop updated goals and procedures. The Trust is currently wrapping up its most recent version of this Strategic Visioning process.

The last question I would like to respond to is whether the CPC should allocate a set amount to each eligible funding activity. Again I would respond YES. I do believe that in order to be the most objective in the deciding which application should be funded we should evenly distribute the funding. During the presentation there was a minimum of 10% that needed to be distributed to each eligible expense. I would suggest allocating a minimum of 25% to each eligible expense. There are so many needs within the City that without setting aside a designated amount for each eligible expense the decision process can become a more daunting experience than necessary to be when picking between Open Space, Historic Preservation and Housing needs.

Thank you for taking the time out of your already busy days to ensure that this process as has much input as possible from the entire Community.

Regards



Lisa Davidson  
Director of Programs

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PO Box One  
Somerville, MA 02143

May 30, 2014

Emily Monea  
Community Preservation Committee  
93 Highland Avenue,  
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Ms. Monea and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to give comment on the disbursement of Community Preservation Act funds in the City of Somerville.

As you likely know, Union Square Main Streets is the economic development program for this Somerville neighborhood. Union Square Main Streets creates a vibrant neighborhood by enhancing the Union Square business district and surrounding neighborhoods through active community collaboration. We engage the model of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a preservation-based that leverages local assets with a particular emphasis on historic, cultural, and architectural resources.

The Community Preservation Act funds provide a great opportunity to support projects that have previously been poorly funded in the city. The increasing pace of development in Union Square gives urgency to protect, preserve and reuse historic properties, improve and enlarge public open spaces and expand affordable housing near new Greenline Extension stations.

The campaign to pass the CPA gave equal emphasis to affordable housing, open space and historic preservation. This balanced approach is one that Union Square Main Streets heartily endorses and we urge that funding be allocated with the same balanced approach and with close to equal amounts designated for each of the three focus areas.

Significant needs exist in Union Square for each of these priority areas. Union Square has little usable public open space, with the plaza the only suitable location for most community events. While reclaiming the streets for events sometimes happens, sitting at the center of a "lively crossroads" means that such traffic diversions cause significant disruption. Union Square has significant historic buildings both publicly and privately owned, worth saving and adapting to



modern uses. From the SCAT building to the former court house on Walnut Street to the Prospect Hill monument, this neighborhood is rich with iconic, historic structures falling into disrepair. The post office too could maintain its public use if public support could be garnered. Private properties such as Barristers Hall and the Backer Building stand in faded glory, awaiting renewal with the development on our horizon. And for affordable housing, Somerville Community Corporation is seeking funds for new housing at 181 Washington Street. To meet the requirements for the higher percentage of affordable units here, additional resources will be needed.

Similar to the balance in project areas, we recommend a balanced approach in the support of long term and short term commitments of CPA funds. There will undoubtedly be some high cost initiatives deserving of a multi-year allocation of CPA funds. At the same time, we encourage a set aside of funds for smaller projects as well that can respond to the inevitable new needs that will emerge over time. Providing annual grants keeps the community aware of the goals of the CPA and the committee actively engaged in decision-making over time. Designating a pool of funds for smaller projects keeps the CPA accessible intimate scaled community initiatives, efforts that often can provide a high return in community impact.

Thanks for your service on the committee and for your attendance to the worthy mission of the CPA.

Cordially,

Mimi Graney  
Executive Director  
On behalf of the Board of Directors

# UNION SQUARE NEIGHBORS

[www.unionsquareneighbors.com](http://www.unionsquareneighbors.com) | [usnsomerville@gmail.com](mailto:usnsomerville@gmail.com)

May 30, 2014

Emily Monea  
Community Preservation Committee  
Somerville City Hall  
93 Highland Ave.,  
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Ms. Monea,

The Somerville Community Preservation Committee recently held two public meetings about how the City should prioritize spending Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding and invited residents to submit written comments through May 31, 2014. The CPA revenue stream, supported by over three-quarters of Somerville voters in 2012, is a tremendous opportunity to invest in historic preservation, affordable housing, open space, and outdoor recreation. Union Square Neighbors (USN) submits the following letter in response to the Committee's request for written comments.

## **About Union Square Neighbors**

USN is a recently-formed grassroots, independent neighborhood association dedicated to helping residents and stakeholders of Union Square shape the future of their community. Our vision is for a healthier, greener, and more vibrant Union Square that includes buildings and places that reflect the inventive, unique, and historic character that people love about our neighborhood. We seek to help inform and engage people in these issues and advocate for Union Square.

## **Allocation of CPA Funding Across Focus Areas**

The Community Preservation Committee asked the public to comment on whether it should prioritize projects in certain CPA focus areas or strive to allocate funding equally across the focus areas. USN believes that CPA funding should be distributed with approximate parity among the three areas of historic preservation, open space/recreation, and affordable housing. All three of these spending priorities are important elements of SomerVision and were part of the overall campaign to pass the CPA ordinance. Moreover, each focus area represents a distinct, and typically underfunded, investment opportunity to preserve and enhance the qualities that make Somerville a unique and exciting place to live, work, play, and raise a family. As such, USN believes it is appropriate to strike a roughly equal balance among the funding priorities.

## **Restoration of Prospect Hill Monument and Park**

As the Committee considers projects and investments that CPA funding can support, USN urges consideration of repair and restoration of the Prospect Hill monument and park, which together date back to 1902. The monument, which is in visible and longstanding disrepair, commemorates the fortifications atop the hill during the Revolutionary War and is site of the first raising of the Grand Union Flag on January 1, 1776. The original effort to create the park and monument dates back to the 1870s when the Prospect Hill Improvement Society and other civic improvement groups started lobbying to

preserve the hill and build a park to commemorate its historic role. In the 1890s, the Prospect Hill Park Association formed and sent a petition with over 500 names to City Council to argue for a park. Since its construction in 1902, the monument and park remain largely unchanged with the exception of the concrete retaining walls built around the monument in 1955. Today, the monument, which is a visible historic landmark from Union Square, is in need of repair and restoration. Additionally, existing walkways contain uneven pavers (some of which are missing) that are a safety hazard for those who have difficulty walking or are otherwise disabled. Repair and restoration of the Prospect Hill monument and park aligns with the Community Preservation Committee's goals to 1.) prioritize projects that address crucial, longstanding needs in Somerville's historic landmarks and properties, and 2.) rehabilitate and restore existing recreational land. The monument and park are important assets to Union Square's overall character and future as a destination and economic engine in Somerville.

USN looks forward to working with the Committee as it prepares a Community Preservation Plan, which establishes priorities and evaluation criteria for funding projects, and makes budget and project recommendations to the Board of Alderman. We thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the Committee's priorities.

Sincerely,

Union Square Neighbors

Submitted with support by:

Suzanne Bremer  
Robert Buchanan  
Stuart Dash  
Janine Fay  
Reebee Garofalo  
Andy Greenspon  
Jim McGinnis  
Erik Neu  
Evelyn Rosenthal  
JT Scott  
Shu Talun  
Tim Talun  
Bonnie Tominack  
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Emily Monea  
Community Preservation Act Manager  
City of Somerville  
Email: [emonea@somervillema.gov](mailto:emonea@somervillema.gov)

May 30, 2014

Dear Mayor Curtatone, Ms. Monea, CPC members, colleagues, and neighbors:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments regarding Somerville's draft Community Preservation Plan. I am writing as a community member with a breadth and depth of experience. My experience includes acting as Assistant Managing Trustee of the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund; working as a consultant with more than 20 years of experience and work in the public and nonprofit sectors on affordable housing, community development, and nonprofit management; and living in our community – as a proud, third generation Somerville resident – for the past 20 years.

I support the funding priorities outlined in the draft Community Preservation Plan for Community Housing, Historic Preservation, and Open Space.

My thoughts and comments center on two key issues:

- (1) The portion of CPA revenue that the CPC will allocate for Community Housing; and,
- (2) Management of the distribution of funding for Community Housing projects.

I have watched Somerville change significantly over the past 20 years, and am deeply concerned about the displacement of residents and the increasing lack of affordability of both rental and ownership housing. As a Union Square resident, I have very mixed feelings about the impacts of the Green Line extension on both residents and businesses. The only way to maintain the richness of our community - which comes from its income, racial, and ethnic diversity - is to create opportunities for individuals and families to live affordably in Somerville.

Our community's housing environment currently includes a high percentage of residents facing a cost burden (more than 40% of all Somerville households, and almost 75% of lower income households); extremely low vacancy rates – 2.9% for rental units and 1.2% for ownership units - resulting in extreme competition for both rental units and homes that are for sale; older housing stock, with many units in need of significant repair; years long waiting lists for public housing and vouchers; and upward pressure on housing costs citywide, but especially in neighborhoods that will benefit from the Green Line extension.

To preserve our community's vitality, we need more housing that is affordable for a range of income levels. The private market is actively creating housing for higher income households in Somerville; however, even with federal and state funding and our own Inclusionary Housing and Linkage Ordinances, we have extremely limited resources for increasing the supply of housing that is affordable to the moderate and lower income families and individuals that make up the majority of Somerville's longtime residents. For years, the City has creatively and effectively used federal, state, local, and private funds to preserve and create affordable housing, but the need for housing has continued to grow as funding resources have become more limited, and potential sites have become more scarce,

more difficult to develop, and more expensive to acquire. **I am pleased to see Mayor Curtatone attempting to access the highest state CPA match possible for our community.**

**The CPC should allocate a significant portion of CPA funds to Community Housing – 40% or more of the annual CPA revenues and available state match this year, and potentially more in future years.**

**I also urge the CPC to transfer whatever portion of funding that is allocated for housing to the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund for distribution to community housing projects that are CPA-eligible and consistent with local priorities.** The Affordable Housing Trust Fund has explored adding a member of the CPC as a Trustee, which will promote collaboration, communication, and consistency between the two entities.

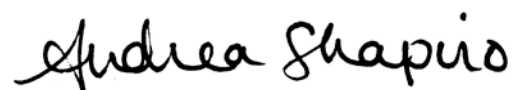
Somerville's Affordable Housing Trust Fund is recognized as one of the more advanced and innovative municipal housing trust funds in Massachusetts. Municipalities in Massachusetts and beyond have looked at Somerville's housing trust fund as a model for their own. Since 1989, the Trust Fund has committed nearly \$3.5 million toward housing development and preservation as well as housing-related programs – creating more than 350 affordable housing units, assisting 10-15 homebuyers with closing cost assistance each year, helping 60-70 renters to avoid eviction each year, and supporting additional housing-related services provided by 5-10 local nonprofits each year. The Trust Fund's nine (9) members have a broad range of experience and deep expertise in housing, finance/banking, and real estate, as well as representation from local government, nonprofits, residents, and tenants.

The Trust is effective, efficient, and accountable. Grants and loans made through the Trust are available to awardees quickly, so they can access time-sensitive opportunities, like site acquisition, quickly and successfully. Grants and loans are monitored and administered by the City's housing staff and staff to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. This spring, and approximately every five years, the Trust has undertaken a visioning and planning process to review its performance, analyze community needs, and develop updated procedures and goals that coordinate with other municipal plans and market conditions. Throughout this year's process, we consulted with other City planning documents and priorities to ensure that our strategic plan synchronized with others. Once complete our planning documents and principles are available to the public and guide the Trust Fund's work for the next five years. Trustees and staff consult the strategic plan whenever a grant or loan is being considered.

It has been an honor to serve our community as a Trustee and as a nonprofit and public management professional, I can confidently say that this board that takes its responsibility to the community seriously; has a well-functioning and thoughtful process; and collaborates and coordinates with other boards, departments, and constituents. **Somerville's Affordable Housing Trust Fund is a knowledgeable, experienced, collaborative, accountable, effective, and efficient board to manage the distribution of CPA funds to community housing projects.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the draft Community Preservation Plan.

Sincerely,



Andrea Shapiro  
Assistant Managing Trustee, Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund  
Principal, Andrea Shapiro Consulting  
Resident, Ward 3