

City of Newton



Ruthanne Fuller,
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Department of Planning and Development
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone
(617) 796-1120
Telefax
(617) 796-1142
TDD/TTY
(617) 796-1089
www.newtonma.gov

Community Preservation Committee

APPROVED MINUTES

August 9, 2022

Barney S. Heath
Director

The virtual meeting was held online on Tuesday, August 9, 2022, beginning at 7:00 P.M. Community Preservation Committee (CPC) members present included Mark Armstrong, Dan Brody, Eliza Datta, Byron Dunker, Susan Lunin, Robert Maloney, Jennifer Molinsky, Martin Smargiassi, and Judy Weber. Community Preservation Program Manager Lara Kritzer was also present and served as recorder.

Chair Jennifer Molinsky opened the Community Preservation Committee's public meeting at 7:00 P.M and introduced the CPC members present at this time.

General Discussion on Current CPA Program Finances and Potential FY23 Proposals

Ms. Molinsky explained that this was a general discussion on the "Big Picture" concerning anticipated funding requests and how the CPC might approach them moving forward. Members had received a list of potential projects in the meeting packet which were reviewed at this time. It was noted that these were all projects that were expected to come in in the next 2-4 years.

Ms. Datta noted that the CPC could expect to see a request for annual funding amounts for these projects for the next three years. Ms. Webber noted that these amounts did not include the annual Affordable Housing Trust fund requests. Mr. Brody noted that the Committee could consider bonding for some of the proposed projects. He noted that the CPC had done this 4 or 5 times in the past and that it did not need to be a huge amount of money. He explained that if the CPC was interested in bonding, then they needed to make a case that the project will last a long time so that there is no worry that the funding will not be paid off before the work is out of date. He noted that projects like the Gath Pool were once in a generation projects that could qualify for bonding and thought that the fields work might be harder to justify as there were so many of them.

Mr. Dunker explained that the proposed field work would get the City to where it wanted to be by renovating the large fields at Albemarle Park, Burr School, and the middle schools. He stated that this work would take care of all of the projects that the Recreation Commission had discussed and did not think that there were any other large recreation projects to be done. Mr. Brody suggested that it might make sense to bond all of the field projects together for a ten year bond. He noted that the work was within the Committee's goals for recreation funding and thought that they should be able to do it. Mr. Dunker agreed and noted that if the City spread this work over the next ten years, that there would be kids who never got to see the fields renovated whereas if they did all of the work at this time, including adding new lighting, they would deal with a lot of the existing pressures for additional sites.

website www.newtonma.gov/cpa

staff contact Lara Kritzer, Community Preservation Program Manager

email lkritzer@newtonma.gov, *phone* 617.796.1144

Ms. Molinsky noted that the CPC had updated its Guidelines in 2021 and that the funding spent by category was pretty close to the funding targets over the life of the program. She noted how CPA funding had been used to leverage project funding over time and liked to see the 50% match for CPA funding. It was noted that affordable housing projects were often able to use State and Federal funds to match projects while Historic Resource projects generally used more grassroots sources. Recreation and Open Space projects often had a lower match from Friends groups or were City or City related projects. Ms. Molinsky suggested that the Committee encourage the City to search for more potential matching funds for these projects.

Members noted that the type and timing of CPA projects could be hard to predict and that the submission of new proposals was outside of the CPC's control. Members discussed the review considerations, uncertainties in the process, and the potential to bond or request additional funding sources. Ms. Weber raised the question for the City projects of whether it would be advisable to have more involvements with long range planning. Members discussed the question of whether a project was maintenance or a capital improvement and whether the CPC should try to work more closely with the City to plan for these projects. Mr. Dunker thought that it would be nice to know more about what the City can contribute to a project and noted what projects were underway elsewhere. He offered to talk with Commissioner Banks and thought that it would be good to see when the City's ARPA or other funds could be used for these projects.

Ms. Weber agreed and thought that it would also be good to know more about the timing of the projects. Mr. Dunker agreed and noted that the City cannot do all of the recreation projects at one time as they will need to always have some available. He believed that the plan was to do the Burr School Fields first followed by Albemarle Park. Ms. Datta agreed with the point that the athletic fields will be a rolling project for some time. Ms. Lunin felt the same way about the housing projects and asked if the new Trust could be used as a way to plan for future housing projects. She noted that they had not considered that a project would want to come in again for more funding in the future.

Ms. Weber provided a brief update on the status of the new Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) and their work to date. Ms. Lunin noted that the CPC had pledged to provide 35% of its annual funding to the Trust and wanted to work with that number while also considering what will be needed for other funding categories. Mr. Brody noted that a long range possibility for the program could be to increase the funding surcharge level. However, he thought that that idea would need to come from the City if it was ever to be done. He added that he had heard rumors about a tax override in the next year but thought that the CPC should not forget its options. Ms. Datta was glad to see that bonding was under consideration for larger projects. She asked what parameters the CPC should be considering and was happy to volunteer to dig into these options for the future. She stated that she was curious to better understand what this would translate into as a regular payment and thought it would be helpful to inform their future considerations.

Mr. Brody stated that when the CPC was in conversations over Webster Woods, they had considered the big picture in terms of future impacts and the 20% funding target. The CPC was comfortable committing half of their Open Space funding stream to the project over thirty years. He explained that the City issued bonds had a fixed amount owed each year over the term of the bond. He stated that they were able to plan for the bonding costs over time and that while it was a high percentage of the

Open Space funds in the early years, over time its impact was reduced as the annual revenue grew. While they paid more up front, they were able to have more flexibility for the funding in the future.

Ms. Molinsky asked if there was a creative way that the CPC could extend the fields costs out over time. Mr. Brody thought that the Committee should speak with the City's Treasurer but that it was possible. Ms. Webber thought that the CPC should get a better handle on what was needed and how it could be financed. She supported any program that would allow the CPC to be more proactive instead of just responding to requests. It was suggested that the CPC as a Committee should institute conversations with other organizations to gather more information on their potential projects and needs. Members discussed the CPC's responsiveness to past funding requests and ability to plan ahead.

Mr. Armstrong thought that the CPC did need to increase its marketing as there was funding that was available for use. He thought it was premature to discuss increasing the CPC funding surcharge and suggested that the Committee invite Public Buildings Commissioner Josh Morse to come in to talk about what is out there that may need funding in the future. Ms. Molinsky noted that the CPC did currently have a cushion and that the question was whether the Committee felt comfortable spending it. Mr. Armstrong noted that those questions were raised with the Trust and that it was good to hear what they might do in the future. Ms. Weber suggested that the Committee add a future agenda item to meetings for reporting to the CPC on the AHT.

Public Hearing on the Newton Affordable Housing Trust Funding

Affordable Housing Trust Chair Ann Houston and Vice Chair Peter Sargent introduced themselves as the officers of the newly established Affordable Housing Trust (AHT). Ms. Houston thought that the CPC had placed an instrumental role in creating the Trust and that its early support for the program had been crucial. She explained that they were before the CPC at this time for their first official funding request for the Trust. She stated that early and timely funding of the AHT was absolutely crucial to its work and explained how she had seen affordable housing projects fall apart while waiting for funding approvals. The AHT had just met with the Zoning and Planning Committee which was also discussing an amendment to the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. The amendment would add a second funding source for the Trust for future affordable housing projects.

Mr. Sargent noted that this was a unique application for CPA funding in that they were asking for a transfer of funds but did not yet have a specific project. He explained that this was step one in their mission to make funding more quickly and easily available for affordable housing development. This funding would allow the City to support affordable housing and they were asking for the funds at this time so that the AHT could begin to look at what could be funded. Mr. Sargent also noted that the Trust members had excellent and varied backgrounds in affordable housing and included the Mayor and members with backgrounds in accounting, contracting, management and public housing. Ms. Houston added that it was a lively group and that they were ready to honor the spirit behind the ordinance.

Ms. Lunin asked to clarify the future affordable housing project review process and Mr. Maloney asked if all future affordable housing projects would go to the Trust rather than the CPC. Mr. Sargent answered yes that that was the idea behind the program. He added that the CPC would still control the

annual allocation of fund to the Trust. Ms. Weber noted the CPC's previous discussions about funding. She suggested that with several large future requests anticipated for other funding categories that it would be helpful for the CPC to consider how these annual requests would be made and to consider how to incorporate it into the CPC's long range planning. Mr. Sargent agreed and thought that the AHT and CPC should have regular contact and an understanding of where each group stood and what they needed.

Ms. Datta was thrilled to see the Trust up and running and thought that it was important to see more affordable housing for all household types. She was excited about the other funding sources for the Trust and thought they had good partners in the inaugural crew to help them work out this process.

Mr. Smargiassi asked if the Trust would continue to be reactive or if they would also create housing. Ms. Houston stated that they had had two meetings so far and that their third meeting would delve into what will be the Trust's priorities and what types of projects they wanted to do. She stated that they had already had several lively discussions about funding services. Their September meeting would focus on setting the initial priorities for the program's first year. Ms. Houston stated that over the course of the next year, the Trust would continue to consider and refine these goals and that they would love to get input from members and the CPC on this. She added that their work was also raising questions about zoning and other factors which impact the development of affordable housing in Newton. Mr. Sargent added that the Trust was also looking at downpayment assistance programs and had discussed what supporting resident services might look like.

Ms. Molinsky asked about questions of community benefit and sustainability goals and asked where the Trust stood on these issues. Ms. Houston noted that the Trust was brand new and that these were exactly the sorts of considerations that they hoped to delve in to in September. She added that in principle, they did not want to reinvent the process and that as much as possible they hoped to use the programs and systems that were already in place. Ms. Molinsky asked if this funding was for FY22 or FY23. Ms. Kritzer explained that the funding was based on the approved budget for FY23 and reviewed how the dollar amount had been reached.

Ms. Molinsky opened the discussion to the public at this time. Fran Godine stated that she felt strongly about the Trust and that it would only be successful with adequate funding resources. She supported the full funding of the project and appreciated this conversation.

The public hearing was closed at this time. Mr. Maloney moved to approve the full funding request as proposed. Ms. Lunin seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote.

Request to include additional work in scope of CPA funding uses for Nonantum Village Place Senior Housing Preservation Project

Marcia Hannon from CASCAP stated that they appreciated the CPC's support for the project over the years and noted that Nonantum Village Place had been one of the first CPA projects constructed in Newton. She explained that their project to restore and rehabilitate the building was now also working in part to de-carbonize the building. She noted that the property was a HUD202 building and that they could not do this work without the CPA funding.

Ms. Hannon explained that she was before the CPC at this time to clarify the use of the CPA funds that had previously been awarded to the building. She explained that they were requesting other funding sources to do a solar installation and energy storage for the site while the CPA funding was being used to replace the roof and HVAC systems. For their solar funding grant, it would be helpful if they could state that any CPA funding that was left over once the HVAC and roofing work was complete could be used for the solar installation. She also noted that the HVAC systems that were to be installed on the roof for the common areas would now not be available until March 2023 and that this exceeded their time frame for using the CPA funding. As a result, they were also requesting an extension of the time period for the use of the CPA funds.

Ms. Datta asked for more information on the solar installation and grant funding. Ms. Hannon explained that the building was eligible for grants and that they had received one from the Resident Energy and Solar Design Association. She explained that they were already doing an electrical update for the building and were already pretty far along in the design of the solar elements. Newton was just beginning to look at battery backup systems as well so they were working to address some of those questions now.

Mr. Maloney asked if the solar system was to replace the energy used at the site. Ms. Hannon answered yes that the solar system would be exclusively used by the building and that they were working on those agreements now. Mr. Maloney asked if there were tax credits available for this work. Ms. Hannon answered that there were no tax credits but that there were some subsidies that would be helpful.

Ms. Lunin thought that the greener the building could be the better. Ms. Datta agreed that it was a great idea and was glad to see that they were adding solar. Ms. Molinsky asked how much of an extension they would need. Ms. Hannon answered that they would like to have the deadline extended to June 2023 as there were still a lot of uncertainties in the building process.

Members asked if there were any legal issues with expanding the use of the funds. Ms. Kritzer confirmed that she had checked with the Law Department and they had agreed that since the solar installation was on the roof that it could be considered as part of the original approval for roof work. It was also noted that the extension was a change to the grant agreement for the work, not the original City Council approval. Ms. Weber moved to accept the amendments to extend the deadline of the project to June 2023 and to allow leftover funds to be used for the solar installation as proposed. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Hannon thanked the Committee and noted that switching the building from gas to electric would be important in keeping its maintenance costs down.

OTHER BUSINESS

Review of Updated Logo Design

Ms. Kritzer stated that they were waiting for the updated design from the Newton North High School Program. Mr. Armstrong offered to review it as soon as it was available.

Approval of June 14 and July 12 Minutes

There were no minutes ready at this time.

Other Business

Ms. Lunin moved to adjourn. Ms. Data seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 P.M.